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Competency-Based Education and the Constructivist Lens: A Critical Assessment of India's Pedagogical Shift under NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

NEP 2020 mandates a historic and transformation of Indian education system. It emphasizes a definitive shift away from traditional rote memorization toward Competency-Based Education (CBE). This chapter critically investigates the implementation reality of NEP 2020 by systematically assessing its coherence with fundamental constructivist pedagogical principles, utilizing the comprehensive lens of Constructivist Pedagogy (drawing on theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner). The analysis confirms a strong theoretical alignment between the policy's vision—which prioritizes experiential, inquiry-driven, and learner-centric pedagogy—and core constructivist ideals. The policy explicitly promotes holistic education, curriculum restructuring to allow for multidisciplinary focus, and assessment reforms emphasizing formative, competency-based, and authentic tasks. However, the findings reveal a significant implementation gap between this policy aspiration and effective classroom delivery. The success of the CBE vision is severely constrained by key systemic bottlenecks. It would be successful if teaches do not go through developing their professional capabilities. Also limited infrastructure without flexible learning spaces, entrenched traditional examination culture continues to hinder the shift toward performance-based assessment. Ultimately, realizing the goals of NEP 2020 demands that policymakers move beyond rhetoric. They have to provide specific, tangible structural supports and sustained investment necessary to embed constructivism systemically.

Key Words: NEP 2020, Competency-Based Education, Constructivist Pedagogy, Implementation Gap, Teacher Training

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a vision for modern transformation of educational sector of our country. It aligns our educational sector with the goals of the 21st century knowledge economy and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). A central principle of this policy is the definitive move away from traditional rote memorization toward Competency-Based Education (CBE). CBE, as envisioned by NEP 2020, prioritizes thinking critically by students, solving real life complications and mastery of skill. Syllabus completion is secondary. This pedagogical shift towards making learning experiential, inquiry-driven, and learner-centric is deeply rooted in constructivism**.** Constructivism gives importance to experiential learning, learning though society and conscious participation in learning process. Despite strong conceptual alignment, significant challenges persist in translating the constructivist ideals of NEP 2020 into sustainable classroom practices across India's diverse educational landscape.
This article critically investigates NEP 2020. Specifically, this paper aims to systematically assess whether NEP 2020's definitive move away from traditional rote memorization toward Competency-Based Education (CBE) is an implementation possibility. Also do NEP 2020 truly reflect and is supported by mechanisms coherent with constructivist pedagogical principles.

This critical analysis is guided by two core research questions: 1. Does the National Education Policy 2020 truly reflect and operationalize constructivist principles in practice? 2. Do systemic barriers perpetuate the gap between policy aspiration and ground reality?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology involves a critical policy document analysis of NEP 2020. The conceptual framework utilizes the comprehensive Constructivist Pedagogy lens, drawing on the foundational work of educationalist like Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner. This lens is applied to evaluate whether policy prescriptions like experiential learning, teacher professional

development, and assessment frameworks are theoretically coherent with constructivist ideals and articulate adequate support mechanisms for implementation.

This paper contributes a critical evaluation highlighting a strong theoretical alignment between NEP 2020 and constructivism, while simultaneously revealing a significant gap in implementation. It identifies key systemic bottlenecks, such as the inadequacy of teacher training and limited infrastructure, which constrain the success of the CBE vision. Ultimately, the findings offer specific implications and actions for policymakers and curriculum planners necessary to embed constructivism through tangible structural supports.

Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Pedagogy

Foundations of Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of learning or meaning making where knowledge is built through conscious effort. People use and connect their prior knowledge to build new understanding. This active process is interpretive and involves the child's efforts in constructing their own mental world. Piaget's cognitive constructivism emphasizes the development of increasingly complex cognitive structures through the adaptive processes of assimilation and accommodation. Conceptual understanding emerges from the learner's active manipulation of the environment. Constructivism also accounts for social interaction necessary for developing shared and warranted meanings. (Piaget, 1952)

Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism, or sociocultural theory, posits that higher mental processes are rooted in society and culture**.** These psychological functions appear first as interpersonal processes before being internalized. This transformation is mediated by culturally produced sign systems, such as language, which organize and transform behavior. This theory links strongly to inquiry-based classrooms through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is defined as the difference of what a child will be able to solve by his own effort vs what he can do with help of elders and peer support. Properly organized learning should be in advance of development**,** as it creates the ZPD**,** awakening internal developmental processes that rely on social interaction and collaborative problem-solving**.** (Vygotsky et al., 1978)

Jerome Bruner reinforces constructivism by asserting that intellectual activity is fundamentally the same for all learners, encouraging the student to act as a practitioner of the discipline. Discovery learning encourages active construction of knowledge by enabling students to uncover generalizations independently, fostering a sense of excitement and self-confidence in inquiry. The spiral curriculum supports this by revisiting basic ideas repeatedly, translating them into the child's current intellectual "thought forms" until they achieve full formal understanding, ensuring continuous deepening and reconstruction of knowledge (Bruner, 1960) John Dewey's pragmatic empiricism explained in *Experience and Education* defines meaningful education as experiential and moral. It centers on learning by doing, reflection, and fostering the social relations needed for a democratic community (Dewey, 1938)

Key Constructivist Principles

From the above theoretical roots emerge a set of interlocking pedagogical principles:

Learner-Centeredness

Learner-Centered Pedagogy (LCP) fundamentally shifts instruction to place the child at the middle of instructional design. This is contrast to traditional models where students passively receive information. In constructivism planning for educational process begins with taking into consideration prior understanding and experience of the child. It supports autonomy, encouraging learners be responsibility of own development and learning.(Bremner et al., 2022)

Active Learning

Active learning strategies means learners reflecting their own act when performing the act. By this students develop skills rather than merely transmitting information. This approach promotes active participation (aka 'learning by doing') and requires students to be involved in higher-order mental activities. Research on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) demonstrates that using carefully scaffolded problem contexts fosters deeper conceptual understanding and transfer of knowledge.(Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Inquiry, Exploration, and Discovery

These methods position learners as investigators who actively construct their own understanding. This aligns directly with Bruner's discovery learning, based on the conviction that intellectual activity is the same for a schoolchild and a frontier scholar, differing only in degree. Discovery encourages students to find the underlying patterns or principles behind a topic themselves.(Bruner, 1960; McLeod, 2025a)

Collaborative Learning

This principle recognizes that learning is a social practice where shared discourse and peer tutoring facilitate the co-construction of knowledge. Rooted in Vygotskian social mediation, higher mental functions first appear as interpersonal processes before being internalized. Collaboration and group discussion enhance problem solving, higher-order thinking, and shared knowledge construction.(Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Scaffolding
Scaffolding, a term developed by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), describes the temporary, structured support provided by an expert (teacher or peer). This support is specifically tuned to the learner's Zone of Proximal Development which is defined as the difference of what a child will be able to solve by his own effort vs what he can do with help of elders and peer support. The key is that the assistance is gradually withdrawn as the learner accrues competence.(McLeod, 2025a)

Authentic Assessment
Authentic assessment verifies learns performance on valid mental activities rather than relying on proxy items or simplistic substitutes. It requires students to act as effective performers with acquired knowledge and apply higher-order thinking. Advocates argue these tasks, which often involve "ill-structured" challenges, better reveal student competence than isolated recall items because they mirror the complexities of real-world or professional life.(Wiggins & Wiggins, 1990)

Real-Life Tasks and Problem Contexts
Learning should be situated in meaningful practice and real-world problems. To be intrinsically motivating, problems must be complex, ill-structured, and resonate with the students' experiences. This embedding of learning in problem situations is crucial for helping students develop knowledge that is flexible and readily applicable (transferable) to new situations.(Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Constructivist Pedagogy in Schooling
Translating constructivism requires coherent changes across curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment. Constructivist curricula favor thematic and interdisciplinary units rather than fragmented, content-dense syllabi. Bruner's spiral curriculum principle guides sequencing by requiring core concepts to be introduced simply and then revisited repeatedly with increasing complexity, respecting the learner's developmental readiness. This approach is operationalized through pedagogies such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which situate learning within authentic, sustained tasks. These tasks are typically complex in nature. These ill-structured problems demand students to use knowledge flexibly by engaging through higher-order thinking. (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Richardson, 2003)

Teachers Role
Instead of just giving information the teacher becomes a facilitator. He is also a diagnostician, and co-investigator in constructivist settings. Effective teaching requires eliciting student ideas and orchestrating productive discourse. Teachers must provide strategically targeted scaffolds that are adaptive and contingent on moment-to-moment assessment of learner progress, ensuring support is modulated and gradually withdrawn. They also design tasks that provoke reflection and cognitive conflict.(Wood et al., 1976)

Learning Environment
Constructivist learning environments are social and resource-rich, emphasizing an inquiry-oriented approach. These settings provide collaborative workspaces, manipulatives, and multimedia resources for sustained investigations. Learning is fostered through dialogic classroom interactions characterized by high-quality questioning and reflection.(Bruner, 1960; Hmelo-Silver, 2004)

Assessment patterns
Constructivism necessitates changes in assessment patterns. Assessment prioritizes authentic tasks like simulations and projects, which require applying knowledge and higher-order thinking, making cognitive processes visible. This focus aligns with authentic assessment that relies on performance and formative feedback . Evaluation, often through portfolios and rubrics, captures the learning process, reasoning, and application, moving away from sole reliance on standardized recall tests. (McArthur, 2023; Wiggins & Wiggins, 1990)

Together, these theoretical elements form a lens for evaluating policy documents such as NEP 2020: the analysis must ask whether policy prescriptions (curricular flexibility, experiential learning, formative assessment, teacher professional development) are theoretically coherent with constructivist principles and whether the policy articulates mechanisms—resources, teacher training, assessment frameworks—to enact those principles in contexts constrained by class sizes, examination cultures, and infrastructural limits. This paper uses the constructivist framework above to systematically assess NEP 2020's claimed shift from rote learning toward competency-based, learner-centred education.

Overview of NEP 2020 Pedagogy & Curriculum Reforms
NEP 2020 brings about a major change in pedagogy and curriculum, moving India's education system away from traditional rote learning toward approaches that are holistic, flexible, and competency-driven. The core objective is to cultivate holistic human skilled with essential 21st-century capabilities.(Ramdev & Bhandari, 2025)

1. Shift towards competency-based education (CBE)
The CBE approach is the most striking aspect of NEP 2020 and a fundamental principle guiding teaching and learning. CBE emphasizes the development of quantifiable skills, abilities, and competencies, prioritizing the mastery of skills

and application of knowledge over theoretical memorization or course completion. The goal of CBE is to connect academic understanding with employability capabilities, making education relevant to the 21st-century knowledge economy. This approach encourages experiential learning, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking.(Ramdev & Bhandari, 2025)

2. Holistic, flexible learning

NEP 2020 champions a holistic education that improves all abilities of individuals. These abilities are mainly holistic encompassing mind, body and emotional aspect of an individual in society. The policy aims to make learning enjoyable, engaging, and integrated. A core guiding principle is flexibility, allowing learners to select their own learning path. These paths must be based on a children's wish and ability. Holistic education goes beyond conventional academic knowledge, encouraging an interdisciplinary and experiential approach to foster critical thinking, creativity, and social skills.(Khuntia, 2025)

3. Multidisciplinary focus

The policy explicitly calls for removing hard separations between academic streams, arts, sciences, humanities, and vocational subjects, eliminating harmful hierarchies among different areas of learning. In school education class 9^{th} to 12^{th} is planed to involve multidisciplinary courses. In higher education, NEP 2020 mandates restructuring to transform Higher Education Institutions in India. HEIs will be converted to universities offering multidisciplinary courses.(NEP 2020, 2020)

4. Experiential learning

Pedagogy must evolve to be experiential, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, and learner-centered. All school children will be exposed to experiential learning. Students will learn through art , sports, practical activities also storytelling. This practical engagement is crucial for promoting deeper and more experiential learning, helping students apply knowledge in real-life situations. Furthermore, activities like internships with local industry or research internships are encouraged in higher education for active engagement with the practical side of learning.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

5. Foundational literacy & numeracy (FLN)

Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) is designated as a serious national mission with highest priority for education system. The skill of reading, writing and doing numerical calculation is considered utmost necessity for all further learning. The goal is every primary student must attain basic literacy and numeracy in the year 2025.(NEP 2020, 2020)

6. Assessment reforms

The aim of assessment is shifting from summative testing of rote memorization to formative test. Which is competency-based it tests critical thinking, analysis, and conceptual clarity. NEP 2020 advocates for evaluating mastery of skills and application of knowledge rather than exclusively relying on high-stakes tests. The policy proposes a completely redesigned holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional progress report which includes peer assessment, self-assessment, progress in project-based learning, reflecting growth across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.(Singh et al., 2025)

7. Teacher training and professionalism

Teachers are positioned as core of learning activities. They are central to fundamental reforms. The policy emphasizes extensive professional development (CPD), requiring every teacher to take part in Fifty hours of CPD annually. This training must systematically cover innovative pedagogies, including competency-based learning, experiential learning, and formative assessment techniques. By the year 2030 only individuals who have studied Four Year Bachelor of Education will be eligible for teacher job. Furthermore, National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) to be made by 2022 to guide career progression based on merit and performance appraisal, rather than merely on seniority.(NEP 2020, 2020)

8. Technology integration in learning

NEP 2020 calls for the extensive use of technology for multi directional development of educational sector.These including teaching-learning, evaluation, and enhancing educational access. Technology integration is crucial for equity and accessibility. The policy mandates the creation of National Educational Technology Forum (NETF). NETF will provide a ground for sharing ideas on technology use in education, evaluation, planning, and administration. Educational software, content, and professional development modules for teachers are to be made available on digital platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM in all major Indian languages. The policy also recognizes the disruptive nature of growing technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. The education system must be poised to respond quickly.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

The NEP 2020 reforms necessitate a comprehensive cultural shift, replacing the old content-based, examination-driven regime with a system that fosters critical thinking and skill mastery. This systemic transformation, however, depends heavily on factors like massive teacher training, curriculum restructuring, robust infrastructure, and overcoming the

digital divide. The goal is to move India from an education system of information transfer to one that cultivates every student's holistic development and lifelong learning.

Critical Analysis of NEP 2020 Through a Constructivist Lens

NEP 2020 strongly fits to constructivist learning theories, which posit that individuals build new knowledge by connecting new ideas and experiences to their existing understanding. Constructivism, including its sociocultural branch associated with Vygotsky, emphasizes active participation, social interaction, and self-directed learning.(Brame,; Richardson, 2003) NEP 2020 leverages these principles, most centrally through its focus on Competency-Based Education (CBE), aiming to enhance critical thinking, creativity, and the using knowledge over rote memorization.

1. Learner-Cantered Education

NEP 2020 fundamentally seeks a shift from traditional Teacher-Centred Pedagogy (TCP), where learners passively receive information, to Learner-Centred Pedagogy (LCP). The policy promotes learner agency by ensuring flexibility so students can choose their learning trajectories and programs based on their interests and talents. NEP 2020's vision of Competency-Based Education (CBE) makes learning flexible, inclusive, and student-centric, aligning with the constructivist view that learners should determine their own academic pace.(Bremner et al., 2022; C. K. Singh, 2025)
Constructivist learner autonomy emphasizes that individual develops life time learning skills. Learner also takes responsibility for his own learning. NEP directly supports this by encouraging personalized learning pathways catering to individual strengths and fostering self-directed learning (SDL) through methods like Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Teachers implementing CBE conceptually align with these principles, viewing student-centered learning as a major benefit.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

2. Active and Experiential Learning

NEP 2020 explicitly mandates that pedagogy should give children some practical experience. It must involve inquiring and discovery by the learner. This strongly aligns with constructivist and progressive educational philosophies, such as those of Dewey, which emphasize that sound educational experience requires continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned.(Dewey, 1938)

The coherence is strong at the policy level: participants in a study largely agreed that in CBE, learning involves hands-on activities and exploration. However, gaps exist in practical implementation, which include the rigid curriculum and syllabus load being cited as a significant barrier to using project-based or extended inquiry learning. Furthermore, large class sizes hinder the ability to manage student-centered tasks and provide individual feedback necessary for truly experiential and personalized learning.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

3. Inquiry-Based and Discovery Learning

NEP 2020 endorses inquiry-based and discovery-based learning alongside experiential approaches. Discovery learning, central to Bruner's theory, suggests students learn best by actively building their understanding, encouraging exploration, and uncovering principles themselves. NEP's vision aligns with the inquiry cycle inherent in models like Problem-Based Learning (PBL), where students investigate meaningful problems, generate hypotheses, and identify knowledge deficiencies (learning issues) for self-directed research (SDL).

NEP 2020 encourages inquiry across subjects through its multidisciplinary focus, removing hard separations between arts, sciences, humanities, and vocational streams. This is designed to facilitate explorations of relations among different subjects. The goal is to move beyond rote learning to deep understanding and critical thinking.(Hmelo-Silver, 2004; NEP 2020, 2020)

4. Social Constructivism and Collaborative Learning

Role of peer learning and collaborative culture: Social constructivism, associated with Vygotsky, stresses that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and cultural activities. NEP 2020 strongly promotes this: collaboration and teamwork are listed among essential life skills. Collaborative learning and group work are strongly endorsed by teachers participating in NEP-related studies, who agreed that students engage in collaboration and group work.(McLeod, 2025b)

The policy supports a collaborative classroom culture through:

Peer learning/group tasks: NEP encourages peer tutoring and collaborative group work that allows students to apply knowledge and think critically. Students, in turn, feel collaboration helps increase understanding.(Bremner et al., 2022)
Collaboration as a core skill: NEP 2020 incorporates collaboration and cooperation as skills to be developed, particularly through cross-curricular approaches like sports-integrated learning.(NEP 2020, 2020)

5. Teacher as Facilitator

NEP vision for teacher autonomy and training support: The role of the teacher in NEP 2020 transforms from an information giver to a facilitator, mentor, and designer classroom experiences. This is essential in constructivism, where the teacher guides student learning through questioning and keeping them involved in collaborative processes. NEP

also grants teachers greater autonomy in choosing aspects of pedagogy to suit their students.(Hmelo-Silver, 2004; NEP 2020, 2020)

The training framework aims to support constructivist facilitation abilities: teachers must go through Fifty hours of Professional Development annually. This training systematically covers innovative pedagogies, including competency-based learning, experiential learning, and formative assessment techniques. However, surveys highlight that lack of teacher training/preparedness is the most serious obstacle (40% of respondents), indicating a gap between the policy vision and teacher readiness to implement constructivist pedagogy like CBE.(Agarwal et al., 2025; NEP 2020, 2020; Ramdev & Bhandari, 2025)

6. Formative and Authentic Assessment

NEP 2020 mandates a critical shift in assessment, moving away from summative, rote memorization tests to assessments that are regular, formative, and competency-based. (NEP 2020, 2020)This aligns with constructivist views that assessment should be integrated into the learning process.

The main practical gap is the entrenched traditional examination culture and assessment difficulties. Teachers acknowledge a slow-paced shift from traditional exams towards formative, performance-based assessments, but implementing the complex rubrics and diverse evaluation methods required for CBL remains a challenge, often leading to a reliance on simplified rubrics.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

7. Learning Environments and School Resources

Need for rich environments and the mismatch: Constructivism requires rich learning environments that support active, hands-on, and collaborative learning. NEP 2020's vision includes providing adequate and safe infrastructure, including libraries, labs, and computing devices to ensure an effective learning environment. The concept of School Complexes is intended to pool resources, such as science labs, computer labs, and skill labs, to overcome the separation of individual schools to provide wider range of resources.(NEP 2020, 2020)

However, the mismatch between vision and infrastructural reality is a major impediment. Inadequate infrastructure and limited resources ranked highly as implementation challenges. Teachers reported a lack of infrastructure—such as adequate digital devices, flexible learning spaces, and teaching aids—which limits the scope of activity-based and experiential learning crucial for a constructivist setting. The digital divide further complicates the equitable implementation of technology-enabled learning (TE-enabled pedagogy), which is vital for CBL success.(Agarwal et al., 2025; Ramdev & Bhandari, 2025)

Critical Evaluation Table of NEP 2020

Constructivist Principle	NEP Alignment	Strengths	Gaps
Learner-Centered Education	Moderate	Emphasis on flexibility & choice	Systemic constraints limit autonomy
Active& Experiential Learning	Strong conceptually	Project-based, vocational,art-integrated learning	Lack of resources, teacher preparedness
Inquiry-Based Learning	Moderate	Inquiry is mentioned frequently	No clear models (e.g., 5E), limited infrastructure
Social Constructivism	Weak-Moderate	Mentions peer-learning	No structured collaborative frameworks
Teacher as Facilitator	Moderate	Strong professional vision	Teacher training gaps
Formative& Authentic Assessment	Moderate	Focus on competency-based evaluation	Implementation remains minimal
Learning Environments & Resources	Weak	Vision for maker-spaces, digital tools	Inequitable infrastructure & funding

DISCUSSION

NEP 2020 marks a fundamental drift moving our country's education in broadly constructivist direction by prioritizing experiential, inquiry-driven, and learner-centric pedagogy over rote learning. The policy exhibits strong theoretical alignment with constructivism through its core focus on Competency-Based Education (CBE), aiming to foster critical thinking, creativity, and the application of knowledge.(Agarwal et al., 2025; Tazeen & Kader, 2024)

However, the policy faces a weak implementation roadmap, reflecting a significant gap between conceptual clarity and effective classroom delivery. The success of this vision is constrained by serious bottlenecks, primarily relating to teacher capacity and school resources. Although most educators are conceptually aware of CBE, the lack of adequate and sustained Continuous Professional Development (CPD) hinders their ability to adopt innovative constructivist methods, such as designing complex rubrics or facilitating personalized learning. Furthermore, challenges like

inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and large class sizes impede the creation of the hands-on, collaborative learning environments constructivism requires. (Karmakar, 2025; Singh et al., 2025)

For the reforms to succeed, curriculum and assessment reform need deeper structural support. The rigid and time-bound syllabus load is repeatedly cited as the most significant practical barrier to implementing project-based and inquiry-driven methods. While NEP 2020 mandates a shift toward formative, competency-based, and holistic 360-degree assessment, the deeply entrenched traditional examination culture continues to hinder the move away from high-stakes testing, perpetuating the gap between policy intention and practice. Ultimately, achieving the policy's objectives requires a systemic cultural change, not just policy statements, supported by continuous investment in teacher training, resource infrastructure, and institutional flexibility.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

Implications

The transition seen by NEP 2020 requires specific action across planning and implementation layers to ensure its constructivist, learner-centric goals are realized.

1. For curriculum planners: They must focus on creating clearer activity-based frameworks that systematically integrate experiential and inquiry-based learning. Curriculum must be minimised to provide opportunity for holistic, discovery-based learning. Planners must link classroom concepts to real-world problem scenarios and embed innovative pedagogies by substituting traditional rote methods with activities related to experience and environment.(NEP 2020, 2020; Tazeen & Kader, 2024)

2. For teacher education (B.Ed., in-service): Given that lack of training is cited as a most serious obstacle, programs must provide stronger constructivist pedagogical training that goes beyond theory to prepare teachers for adaptive implementation. Mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of at least 50 hours annually must systematically cover competency-based learning (CBE), formative assessment, and methods like differentiated instruction, supporting teachers in reconciling ideals with systemic constraints.(Alokya, 2025)

3. For school systems: To support inquiry-based classrooms, structural change is necessary to address implementation barriers. Schools must invest in adequate infrastructure (digital devices, labs, flexible learning spaces), and leverage resource-sharing models like School Complexes. Systemic issues such as rigid curriculum loads and large class sizes must be addressed to allow the flexibility needed for exploratory learning.(Agarwal et al., 2025)

4. For assessment reforms: The shift must move from summative testing of rote learning toward evaluating thinking processes and higher-order.(Singh et al., 2025) Assessment must be continuous and formative, utilizing tools like rubrics, peer/self-assessment, and projects, which constitute authentic assessment of applied knowledge, thus helping students become effective performers.(NEP 2020, 2020)

5. For policymakers: Policymakers must move beyond rhetoric by ensuring constructivism is embedded into implementation guidelines through tangible structural supports and investment. This involves establishing standardized CBE frameworks, expediting necessary infrastructure funding, and providing the institutional flexibility needed for schools and teachers to adapt pedagogical practices effectively.(Alokya, 2025; Ramdev & Bhandari, 2025)

CONCLUSION

The policy demonstrates a strong theoretical alignment with constructivist principles by prioritizing experiential, inquiry-driven, and learner-centric pedagogy. NEP 2020 targets to enhance critical thinking, creativity with practical skill among children. This vision is essential for cultivating holistic manpower enabled with today's skills.

However, this study revealed a significant implementation gap between policy aspiration and ground reality. While NEP 2020 promotes authentic assessment and the teacher as a facilitator, systemic barriers impede effective classroom delivery. The success of CBE is constrained primarily by the inadequacy of continuous development of teachers. Lack of infrastructure and flexible learning spaces, and the deeply entrenched traditional examination culture which continues to hinder the shift towards formative, performance-based assessment. Ultimately, for the NEP 2020 reforms to achieve their intended scale, policymakers must move beyond rhetoric by ensuring constructivism is embedded through tangible structural supports and continuous investment. Success demands a comprehensive systemic and cultural shift, backed by robust resource infrastructure and ongoing teacher training, to realize the goal of moving India toward a system focused on holistic development and lifelong learning.

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