

Constructivism in English Language Teaching: From Policy Vision to Classroom Practice Under NEP 2020

JASEEL K S

Freelance Educator in English at Higher Secondary Level, Malappuram, Kerala

Correspondence e mail : Jaseelkskvk03@gmail.com

Abstract : -

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a learner-centred, competency-based and experiential approach to education in India. This paper explores how constructivist learning theory aligns with the pedagogical reforms proposed in NEP 2020 and examines its implications for English Language Teaching (ELT). Constructivism is a novel approach gives space for student centric learning experience and they are able develop their language competency by interacting with one another and drawing on prior experience s. By analysing policy provisions and classroom practices, the study bridges the gap between policy discourse and pedagogical implementation. The paper argues that constructivism offers a viable framework for transforming English classrooms into interactive, skill-oriented and reflective learning spaces.

Keywords : NEP 2020, Constructivism, English Language Teaching, Experimental Learning, Competency Based Education, Multilingualism.

1. Introduction

The introduction of National Education Policy 2020 marks a paradigm shift in Indian education. It emphasizes:

- Experiential learning
- Competency-based education
- Critical thinking
- Multilingualism
- Flexible curriculum

These principles strongly resonate with constructivist learning theory, which views learners as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), this transition demands a move away from rote grammar instruction toward communicative, task-based, and inquiry-driven approaches.

The Union Cabinet of India was approved the National Education Policy (NEP) on July 29, 2020 to promote school education to higher education. The NEP covers elementary education to university both in rural and urban India. The first NEP was launched by Government of India in 1968, the second in 1986, and the third in 2020. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) was launched to promote outlines the vision of India's new education system. The policy is comprehensive framework for pre elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India.

In January 2015, a committee under Former Cabinet Secretary T. R. Subramanian Started the consultation process for the New Education Policy in India. Based on the committee report, in June 2017, the draft NEP was submitted in 2019, the Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019, was later released by Human Resource Development (MHRD), followed by a number of public consultations and finally The Union Cabinet of India was approved the National Education Policy (NPE) on 29 July 2020. It was 34 years long that the country waited to get such document approved. National Education Policy 2020 introduces an India-centric education system that influences directly to transforming nation sustainably into an equitable and sounding knowledge society by providing high quality education to all. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2021 all over sectors of education.

Traditional ELT in India has largely been examination-oriented, grammar-focused, and teacher-dominated. However, NEP 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, critical thinking, flexibility, and learner autonomy. These principles resonate strongly with constructivist educational theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction and reflection.

2.Objectives of the Study

- Examine constructivist theory as a pedagogical foundation.
- Analyse NEP 2020 through a constructivist lens.
- Explore practical implications for English language and literature classrooms.
- Identify challenges and suggest strategies for implementation.

3.Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in documentary analysis and interpretative inquiry. The research seeks to examine how constructivist principles are embedded in the National Education Policy 2020 and how these principles can be translated into English Language Teaching (ELT) practice. The necessary primary and secondary data was collected from various websites including those of Government of India, magazines, journals, other publications, etc. This collected data was analysed and reviewed according to the objectives of the study.

4..LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Historical Context of English Education in India

English education in India has a complex socio-political background, given its colonial origins and association with socio-economic advancement. Post-independence, English retained its prominence as both a medium of instruction and a key subject of study. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) acknowledged English as an essential “link language,” which bolstered its status in academia and beyond (Kothari, 1966). English became indispensable for access to higher education, technical Disciplines, and global opportunities, making it a significant part of the curriculum at the higher secondary level.

4.2 The Role of English in Indian Education

English functions as a bridge language in India, connecting diverse linguistic groups and providing students with access to global knowledge and resources. Studies indicate that English proficiency often correlates with improved career prospects and socio-economic Mobility (Annamalai, 2005). However, disparities in English education across urban and rural areas present challenges to equitable access. Variations in the quality of English instruction impact students’ performance and preparedness For higher education (Mohanty, 2009).

5. Theoretical Framework: Constructivism in Education

Constructivism emerged in the 20th century as a reaction against behaviourist models of learning.

5.1 Cognitive Constructivism – Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget proposed that learners construct knowledge through cognitive processes such as assimilation and accommodation. Learning is developmental and depends on interaction with the environment.

5.2 Social Constructivism – Lev Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky emphasized the social dimension of learning. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights the importance of collaborative learning and scaffolding.

5.3 Discovery Learning – Jerome Bruner

Jerome Bruner advocated discovery learning, where students explore concepts through guided inquiry rather than direct instruction.

5.4 Core Principles of Constructivism

1. Learner-centered approach
2. Active engagement
3. Collaborative learning
4. Contextualized knowledge
5. Reflective thinking
6. Teacher as facilitator

There is multiple Constructivist strategy for instruction in the class room. Different pedagogies and researches have introduced various strategies in varying degrees for the benefit of classroom instructors. According to Constructivism theories education is a learner centred process and the teacher is only a facilitator and mentor. Learning depends on interaction with peers and teachers and collaboration and cooperation is a major teaching method. Learners actively explore and use hands-on experience. The cognitive constructivist views knowledge as being constructed according to the maturation, understanding of learners. Cognitive constructivism is showed as an approach that emphasizes the external character of knowledge (Abraham, 2003). The social constructivist views knowledge as being constructed in a social context. It is an active social process where learners cannot construct understanding alone; they do it collaboratively, through interactions with others. Constructivism is neither a person nor a method, but a theory of knowledge. Social constructivism and cognitive constructivism accepts the view that one can arrive at the knowledge of reality, or truth, which exists outside of individuals and their experiences (Watson and Plymale, 2011).

These principles align closely with the pedagogical recommendations of NEP 2020.

6. Constructivist Foundations within NEP 2020

NEP 2020 explicitly moves away from rote memorization toward conceptual understanding.

6.1 Experiential Learning

The policy recommends experiential, inquiry-driven, and discussion-based pedagogy. English classrooms can adopt role-play, debates, project work, and real-world communication tasks.

6.2 Competency-Based Education

Assessment reforms aim to measure application, analysis, and critical thinking rather than recall.

6.3 Multilingualism

The policy advocates mother-tongue instruction in foundational years and supports multilingual competence. In ELT, translanguaging strategies become pedagogically relevant.

6.4 Holistic and Interdisciplinary Learning

Integration of arts, humanities, and sciences encourages contextual understanding, especially in literature teaching.

7. Review of the NEP 2020 with respect to constructivist Approach

7.1 Constructivist Strategies for School Education: New Pedagogic and curricular structure in pre-primary : Restructure of education from 10+2 pattern to 5+3+3+4. New pedagogical and curricular structure included in pre-primary years. It is a good departure as this was ignored in education policy documents, and referred to in informal sense. NCERT will focus on the development of new curriculum and pedagogical structure for ECCE.

7.2 Freedom to school readiness: The NEP 2020 speaks about ‘School readiness’ which is an incredibly good concept than previous NEP. It has tried to provide priority to lay a foundation of learning to every new learner that is added to the education system. The Anganwadi centres and the primary schools were given the freedom to try new ways of learning and pedagogical practice.

7.3 Training of Anganwadi trainers: Policy also give emphases into the development and training of Anganwadi trainers through short-term and long-term programs. A positive thrust towards formalization and implementation of ECCE structure and delivery.

7.4 National book policy: NEP focuses on attaining literacy by grade 3. The Ministry of Education will strengthen this, and run it in a separate national mission. A separate national book policy develops libraries in the country and instills love of reading in children. Public libraries in India are scarce and this could be strengthened through the public education policy.

7.5 Up-gradation of Mid-day meals scheme: Midday meals scheme up-gradation in nutrition component, wherever possible, local alternatives to be provided according to the scheme. Design of programs reduces dropouts in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

7.6 Local language policy: Medium of instruction section for some reason has received lot of undue attention. Medium of instruction is more flexible. Policy doesn't force or prefer any particular language and encourages learning with multiple languages. It also recommends teaching foreign languages at secondary level: French, Japanese, German, Korean, Thai, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian.

7.7 No discrimination of social category: Policy Includes a new term called SEDGs (socio-economically disadvantaged groups). This hitherto hasn't been used as a social category in technical documents. Though later sections highlight Categories as caste, tribe, disability, transgender and have passing references to term minority. Technical criticism aside, policy initiatives to be targeted at these groups to increase enrolment and retention in school.

7.8 PARAKH: It is a new body focuses on assessments as NAS (National Achievement Survey) and SAS (State Achievement Survey). It could be an important tool to look at learning gaps and support targeting of various ministry goals and programs.

7.9 Implementation of Vocalization in Primary Stage : New Education Policy is all talking about being modernized in thoughts and action. NEP 2020 talks about vocational education from elementary schools.

7.10 Creation of National Education Technology Forum: NEP 2020 gives emphasis on founding a National Education Technology Forum to advance digital learning and develop e-content at school level. It also has a plan to create the same content in eight different regional languages to create job opportunities.

7.11 Constructivist strategies for Higher Education: The National Education Policy is expected to bring positive impact on the higher education System in India.

7.12 Diversity in Higher Education: NEP 2020 is Opening the doors for foreign universities to establish campuses in India. The fact that foreign universities will be allowed to open campuses in all over India is a diversity initiative by the government of India. This will help the Indian students to gain degree and global experiences in their very own country.

7.13 Multidisciplinary institutions: Multi-disciplinary institutes will provide to a renewed focus on every field such as art, humanities, science and this form of education will help students to holistically.

7.14 Common Entrance Test: Introduced the idea of a common entrance test for universities, reforms in the school examination system and encourages learners for simple preparation. The common entrance examination for all higher education institutes to be held by National Testing Agency (NTA) and it will be optional. Thus, students will be making ready with stronger knowledge base and it will reduce the stress of multiple competitive exams.

7.15 Establishing Academic Bank of Credit: There Will be multiple credit options for those who wish to leave the course in the middle. It is a sound idea to store the academic credits that students earn by taking courses from various recognized higher education institutions in India. A student can earn scores by completing a course and these scores will be credited to the ABC account. If a student ever drops out

for some reasons, these credits will remain intact which means they can come back years later and pick up from where the student had left course.

7.16 Enhance Multimedia learning: Quality technology-based options for adult learning such as TV channels, apps, online courses/modules, Online books, satellite-based, and ICT-equipped libraries and Adult Education Centres, etc. will Be developed.

7.17 Multi language instruction and contents: The e-contents will be provided in regional languages, starting with 8 major languages such as Kannada, Odia , and Bengali among others to join the e-courses available in Hindi and English also.

7.18 Integrated Course: NEP 2020 says that higher education institutions will be given the freedom to start PG courses there may be faceted some difficulty in designing One Year PG Degree for students who have completed 4 Year UG Degree and a Two Year PG Degree for students who have completed 3 Year degree once

8. Implications for English Language Literature Teaching

- Encouraging reader-response criticism
- Allowing multiple interpretations
- Connecting texts to lived experience
- Promoting interdisciplinary analysis
- Incorporating marginalized voices

For instance, instead of explaining a poem’s “correct meaning,” teachers facilitate interpretative dialogue.

9. Assessment Reforms in Constructivist ELT

NEP 2020 recommends competency-based assessment, including:

- Portfolio assessment
- Project evaluation
- Oral presentations
- Peer assessment
- Continuous internal evaluation

Assessment becomes formative rather than summative.

10. From policy to practice : Constructivism in ELT Classrooms

A. Classroom Strategies

Traditional ELT	Constructivist ELT (NEP Aligned)
Grammar drills	Task based activities
Lecture method	Group discussion
Text Explanation	Project based learning
Memorization	Reflective journal

Source: compilation of NEP 1986 and NEP 2020

11. Traditional ELT VS Constructivist ELT under NEP 2020

Traditional Model	Constructivist Model
Teacher- cantered	Learner – cantered
Grammar - translation	Communicative and task based
Memorisation	Critical engagement
Fixed Curriculum	Flexible- interdisciplinary
Summative assessment	Formative assessment

Source: *compilation of NEP 1986 and NEP 2020*

Constructivist ELT foster communicative competency rather than linguistic accuracy alone.

12. Challenges in Implementation of National Education Policy 2020

12.1 Skill Development: One of the major issues of the policy is skill development, especially life skills and vocational training. The life skills training prepares learner to be skilful in social behaviour, making learner socially adaptable and is comparatively easier to implement. But vocational training as there is a danger of attributing certain vocations to specific communities who have been traditionally dependent on occupations for many generations. The vocational training should be based on the identified aptitude of the learners.

12.2 Requirement of Trained Teachers: Implementing this policy will need adequate trained teachers, facilitators and support staff and learning need to be made an engaging and enjoyable activity than the monotonous routine and unhealthy attachment. Hence, the policy will have to develop a learning paradigm that takes into account the cultural and geographical diversity of learning pace of each pupil. The upcoming technology based teachers will act as mentors to students in guiding their students about new technologies and will be the actual motivators and initiators of the IT implementation at schools.

12.3 Change Management: NEP 2020 expresses not only to improve the cognitive skills in students where in developing high level thinking, skill and critical thinking along with building the foundation of literacy which will prepare them for the Varied challenges in their adult life. Hence needs to be changed in the curriculum contents and teaching methods. NEP demands a value oriented education system along with pedagogical and curriculum changes. Hence, new methods of teaching need to be improvised and innovated for the successful application of new Policy.

12.4 Legal Complexities: To implement the policy, It must be in coherence with various laws acts and regulations. There is a legal complication in implementing this policy as per The Right Education Act, 2009 with respect to age. Age of Starting school will need to be clarified and resolve all problems between the Acts.

12.5 Interdisciplinary Higher Education: An interdisciplinary approach that will provide flexibility to the students to study the subjects of their own choice and interest. To implement the interdisciplinary higher education the teaching faculty needs a subject expert as well as leans on into other disciplines.

12.6 Digital Connectivity: NEP 2020 introduces digital infrastructure include digital classrooms online teaching models technologies to overcome gaps in physical teaching and lab infrastructure. This will continue to be a major challenge of teacher in the next decade.

12.7 Curriculum and Content: NEP seeks to introduce early childhood education will be a part of formal education. The NEP 2020 focuses on reducing the curriculum content to make space for critical thinking and in turn, develop individuals thinking with 21st-century skills instilled in them. Hence, all aspects of the curriculum and pedagogy need to be restructured and modified to attain these goals. Also, teacher needs to rethink the learning content rubric and modify the textbooks accordingly.

12.8 Re-thinking assessment: The NEP focuses on formative assessment for learning. The primary purpose of changing the assessment system is to promote continuous ways of learning outcomes. Continuous assessment requires teachers to use innovative evaluation approaches and techniques. The boards that conduct school level examinations will have to re-think their assessment parameters for students and also identify the appropriate learning content rubric. School textbooks will have to be accordingly redesigned.

Despite its promise, several barriers exist:

- Large classroom sizes
- Exam-oriented culture
- Institutional resistance
- Limited resources
- Teacher workload

13. Summary and Conclusion

Constructivism provides the philosophical foundation for NEP 2020's pedagogical vision. However, implementation must be contextualized within institutional realities. English departments must redesign syllabi, assessment patterns, and teaching strategies to align with competency-based outcomes.

In the e traditional approach, the teacher is given more weight. The classical approaches are characterized by repetitive practice, mechanical exercises, and memory. Because English is the world's official language, it's critical that it's taught in a way that allows us to communicate with others rather than merely speak, write, and listen. As a result, creative ways contribute to change, which is usually for the Better. It enables students to learn more quickly, efficiently, and interactively, and it is the job of the instructor to move away from old ways and implement creative strategies such as cooperative learning, smart classrooms, multidisciplinary approaches, and flipped classrooms. Constructivism is one of these approaches, in which learners generate new knowledge by linking it to previous experiences. This method is extremely beneficial in the development of basic communication skills in the English language. As a result, the constructivism method has become a vital tool in English language schools for determining the most successful ways for both students and teachers to learn. The National Education policy brings some fundamental changes to the current education system. In light of constructivist approach, researcher summarized that the multidisciplinary subject from different streams i.e., science, Humanities and Commerce can be chosen any student to promote innovative, creativity and ingenuity among them. The policy emphasized on skill development among students particularly of vocational crafts and life skills. The key highlights are multidisciplinary colleges and universities, with at least one in or near every district, revamping student curricula, pedagogy, evaluation, and support for enhanced student experience. The policy includes comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational education in both rural and urban India. The National education Policy reflects on Constructivist approach all over the frameworks. Student have been encouraged merit-based admissions with scholarships, research based continuous performers. For implementing the National Education Policy 2020 multiple measures should be taken al local level to central level. The NEP 2020 is expected to fulfill its objectives by 2030. It is only possible to have a policy where need to build a complete infrastructure, frameworks and regulation s by centre and state.

References

- Essien, E. E., & Undie, J. B. (n.d.). *Promoting Quality Education in Social Studies through Constructivist Teaching Model*.
- Kalyani, P. (2020). *An Empirical Study on NEP 2020 [National Education Policy] with Special Reference to the Future of Indian Education System and Its effects on the Stakeholders*. Journal of Management Engineering and Information Technology (JMEIT), 7(5).
- McCray, K. (2007). *Constructivist Approach: Improving Social Studies Skills Academic Achievement*. Online Submission

- Rani, R. (2022). *National Education policy-2020: Issues and Challenges*. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 10(2). Retrieved from : <http://www.questjournals.org/> on 10-7-2022.
- Aithal, P. S., & Shubhrajyotsna, A. (2020). *Analysis of the Indian National Education Policy 2020 towards Achieving its Objectives*. *International Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences (IJMTS)*, 5(2), 19-41. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3988767>
- Ambika, M. (2021). *National Education Policy-2020: Issues and Challenges in implementation*. *University news Vol.59, no-5, April 12-18*. p.146. retrieved from: a-reality-checkon-nep-2020-major-challenges-in-implementation-1711197
- Ministry of Education (2020), *The role of early childhood education in national development Government of India*. (2020) <https://www.mhrd.gov.in/>
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.
- Mohanty, A. K. (2009). *Multilingual Education for Social Justice: Globalising the Local*. Orient BlackSwan.
- Mohanty, A. K. (2019). *The Multilingual Reality: Living with Languages*. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Rajendran, S., & Shukla, P. (2023). *NEP 2020: Emphasizing Experiential Learning and Inquiry-Based Approaches in Higher Education*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publications/371779045>
- EduBull. (2022). *NEP 2020 Reforms: Subject wise Committees and Strategy*. <https://www.edubull.com/nep-2020-reforms-subject-wise-committees-and-strategy.html>
- Bharadwaj B.P (2016) DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION National Council of Educational Research and Training Syllabus for Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) Program Retrieved on December 11, 2021 from:
http://www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/dtee/activities/pdf/syllabus_bed.pdf
- Sharma, S. (2006). *Constructivist Approaches to Teaching and Learning*. New Delhi, India: NCERT.
- Piaget, J. (1926). *The Language and thought of the child*. New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited.

IJRTI