



# Evaluating the Effectiveness of NEP 2020 Reforms in Fostering Critical Thinking among Under Graduate Students in West Bengal

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## Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, aims to significantly reform the educational landscape by emphasizing critical thinking and holistic development. This study evaluates the effectiveness of NEP 2020 in fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, the research involved document analysis and the use of secondary data from five key districts in West Bengal. The findings indicate that NEP 2020 has led to positive shifts towards interdisciplinary learning and increased critical thinking activities within the classroom. However, challenges such as inconsistent implementation across institutions and inadequate teacher training have been identified as significant barriers. Despite these challenges, the policy demonstrates potential in enhancing critical thinking skills, contingent on sustained efforts in policy execution and resource allocation. The study underscores the importance of strategic enhancements and continuous support to maximize the impact of NEP 2020 on critical thinking among undergraduate students.

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, critical thinking, undergraduate education, educational reforms

## 1.0. Introduction:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, aims to revolutionize the Indian education system by emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and holistic development (Ministry of Education, 2020). This policy outlines a comprehensive framework to improve the quality of education at all levels, with a significant focus on higher education. In West Bengal, the implementation of NEP 2020 has brought about various reforms designed to foster critical thinking among undergraduate students. These reforms include changes in curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methods, all intended to enhance students' analytical and problem-solving abilities (Chakraborty, 2021). Evaluating the effectiveness of these reforms is crucial to understanding their impact on students' cognitive skills and overall educational outcomes. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of NEP 2020 reforms in fostering critical thinking among

undergraduate students in West Bengal. The research focuses on students from five key districts, examining the extent to which the policy changes have influenced their critical thinking abilities.

**Table:1**

**Critical Thinking Skills Improvement among Undergraduate Students in West Bengal (2023)**

District	Number of Students Surveyed	Average Critical Thinking Score (Pre-NEP)	Average Critical Thinking Score (Post-NEP)	Improvement Percentage
Kolkata	200	65	78	20%
Howrah	150	62	74	19%
Darjeeling	120	60	73	22%
Bardhaman	180	64	77	20%
Siliguri	140	63	76	21%

Source : Critical Thinking Skills Improvement among Undergraduate Students in West Bengal (2023). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11109580/>

## 2.0. Operational definition:

- **NEP 2020:** The NEP 2020 (National Education Policy 2020) is a comprehensive policy framework aimed at overhauling the Indian education system to foster innovation, critical thinking, and holistic development from early childhood to higher education.
- **Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking is the ability to analyse and evaluate information or arguments in a disciplined and systematic manner to make reasoned judgments.
- **Under Graduate Students:** Undergraduate students are individuals enrolled in a college or university program leading to an associate's or bachelor's degree.

## 3.0. Review of related literature:

1. **Banerjee, R., & Sen, A. (2023).** "Early Impact of NEP 2020 on Undergraduate Education in West Bengal." **Introduction:** Analyze the early impact of NEP 2020 on fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal, highlighting initial reactions and changes in educational practices. **Objectives:** The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of NEP 2020 reforms in enhancing critical thinking skills and to identify challenges in its implementation. **Methodology:** The authors conducted surveys and interviews with students and educators across various universities in West Bengal, complemented by an analysis of curriculum changes and academic performance data. **Findings:** The study found a positive shift towards interdisciplinary learning and increased critical thinking activities in classrooms, though challenges such as inadequate teacher training and resource constraints persist. **Conclusion:** While NEP 2020 shows promise in

improving critical thinking among undergraduate students, sustained efforts in policy execution and resource allocation are crucial for long-term success.

2. **Chakraborty, S. (2022).** “Implementing NEP 2020 in West Bengal: Challenges and Opportunities.”

**Introduction:** It explores the challenges and opportunities in implementing NEP 2020 in West Bengal, focusing on its potential to transform the state's educational landscape. **Objectives:** The study aims to identify the key obstacles and potential benefits associated with the implementation of NEP 2020 in West Bengal. **Methodology:** Chakraborty utilized a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys of educational institutions with qualitative interviews of policymakers, educators, and students. **Findings:** The research revealed significant enthusiasm for NEP 2020's reforms but highlighted issues such as insufficient infrastructure, lack of teacher training, and funding constraints. **Conclusion:** Despite the challenges, NEP 2020 presents substantial opportunities for educational improvement in West Bengal, contingent on addressing implementation barriers and ensuring adequate support for all stakeholders

3. **Kumar, A., & Sharma, P. (2021).** ‘Impact of NEP 2020 on Higher Education in India’.

**Introduction:** The article by Kumar and Sharma (2021) explores the implications of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on the higher education sector, highlighting the transformative changes aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of education. **Objectives:** The primary objectives of the study are to analyse the key provisions of NEP 2020, assess their potential impact on higher education, and evaluate the challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation. **Method:** The authors employ a qualitative research approach, reviewing existing literature, policy documents, and conducting interviews with educational experts to gather comprehensive insights on the subject. **Findings:** The study finds that NEP 2020 is poised to enhance flexibility in higher education, promote interdisciplinary studies, and improve institutional governance. However, it also identifies potential challenges such as the need for substantial funding and infrastructural development. **Conclusion:** conclude that while NEP 2020 has the potential to revolutionize higher education in India, its success largely depends on effective implementation, adequate resource allocation, and stakeholder collaboration.

4. **Brown & Zhao. (2021).** “Importance of teacher training, resource allocation, and continuous assessment in achieving these outcomes”

**Introduction:** The review explores the significance of teacher training, resource allocation, and continuous assessment in the effective implementation of educational reforms aimed at fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students. Drawing on international experiences, it highlights how these factors contribute to successful educational outcomes. **Objectives:** The primary objectives are to analyze the role of teacher training in equipping educators with the skills to teach critical thinking, the impact of adequate resource allocation on educational quality, and the effectiveness of continuous assessment in monitoring and enhancing student progress. **Method:** The study reviews empirical research and case studies from countries like Finland, Singapore, and Canada. It examines various academic articles and policy reports that document the

implementation and outcomes of educational reforms focused on critical thinking. **Conclusion:** The literature indicates that teacher training, resource allocation, and continuous assessment are critical for the success of educational reforms. Teacher training ensures educators can effectively foster critical thinking, resource allocation provides the necessary tools and environment, and continuous assessment helps track and enhance student progress. These findings underscore the potential effectiveness of NEP 2020 in fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal if these factors are prioritized.

**4.0. Need of the study:** The study is needed to assess how effectively NEP 2020 reforms are fostering critical thinking skills among undergraduate students in West Bengal. Understanding the impact of these reforms can guide future educational strategies. It will also provide insights into the necessary adjustments for achieving the policy's objectives.

**5.0. Philosophical aspects of the study:** The study's philosophical aspect explores the epistemological foundations of education reforms, emphasizing the cultivation of critical thinking as a vital intellectual virtue. It aligns with constructivist theories that view knowledge as actively constructed by learners. This perspective underscores the transformative potential of NEP 2020 in shaping informed, analytical minds.

**6.0. Theoretical aspects of the study:** The theoretical aspect of this study investigates the application of constructivist and critical pedagogy theories in the context of NEP 2020 reforms. It examines how these educational theories support the development of critical thinking skills among undergraduate students. This analysis provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented reforms in fostering analytical and reflective thinking.

**7.0. Rationale of the study:** The rationale for this study lies in the need to understand the impact of NEP 2020 reforms on enhancing critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal. Evaluating these reforms will provide insights into their effectiveness and areas needing improvement. This assessment is crucial for ensuring that educational strategies effectively nurture critical and analytical skills in students.

**8.0. Significance of the study:** The significance of this study is to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of NEP 2020 reforms in fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal. The findings will inform policymakers and educators about the success and areas for improvement of these reforms. This study aims to contribute to enhancing educational practices and outcomes in the region.

**9.0. Delimitation of the Study:** The delimitation of this study includes focusing solely on undergraduate students in West Bengal, thus excluding other educational levels and regions. The study will only assess the impact of NEP 2020 reforms on critical thinking skills, not other cognitive or behavioural outcomes. Additionally, the research will rely on self-reported data and academic performance, potentially limiting the scope of measurable effects.

### 10.0. Objective of the study:

- To assess the impact of NEP 2020 reforms on the development of critical thinking skills among undergraduate students in West Bengal.
- To compare the critical thinking abilities of students before and after the implementation of NEP 2020 reforms.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of specific pedagogical approaches introduced by NEP 2020 in fostering critical thinking.
- To identify challenges and barriers faced by educators in implementing NEP 2020 reforms aimed at enhancing critical thinking.
- To provide recommendations for improving the integration of critical thinking skills within the undergraduate curriculum in West Bengal based on the study's findings.

### 11.0. Research Questions:

- How have NEP 2020 reforms influenced the critical thinking skills of undergraduate students in West Bengal?
- What differences, if any, can be observed in the critical thinking abilities of students before and after the implementation of NEP 2020 reforms?
- Which specific pedagogical approaches introduced by NEP 2020 are most effective in fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students?
- What challenges do educators face in implementing NEP 2020 reforms aimed at enhancing critical thinking skills?
- What strategies can be recommended to further integrate and improve critical thinking skills in the undergraduate curriculum in West Bengal based on the study's findings?

### 12.0. Methodology of the Study:

This study will employ a qualitative research methodology, focusing on document analysis and the use of secondary data to evaluate the effectiveness of NEP 2020 reforms in fostering critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal.

#### 1. Document Analysis:

- Scope: Review policy documents, academic papers, government reports, and institutional records related to NEP 2020 reforms.
- Purpose: To extract relevant data on the objectives, strategies, and outcomes of the reforms, specifically those aimed at enhancing critical thinking skills.
- Process: Systematic coding and thematic analysis of documents to identify key trends, implementation challenges, and successes.



## 2. Use of Secondary Data:

- Sources: Utilize existing datasets, academic studies, and institutional reports that have evaluated the impact of NEP 2020 reforms.
- Analysis: Conduct a thematic review of secondary data to support findings on the reforms' impact on critical thinking development.
- Integration: Synthesize secondary data with primary findings to provide a comprehensive overview of the reforms' effectiveness.

By integrating document analysis and secondary data, this qualitative approach aims to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the NEP 2020 reforms' impact on critical thinking skills among undergraduate students in West Bengal.

## 13.0. Discussion and Findings:

The analysis of policy documents and secondary data reveals that NEP 2020 reforms have made notable strides in promoting critical thinking among undergraduate students in West Bengal. Key strategies, such as revised curricula and active learning techniques, have shown positive impacts. However, challenges persist, including inconsistent implementation and lack of adequate training for educators. Thematic analysis highlights successes in institutions that have fully embraced the reforms, while others lag due to resource constraints. Overall, the findings suggest that while NEP 2020 reforms are promising, continuous efforts and support are essential for widespread and sustained effectiveness.

## 14.0. Conclusion:

The NEP 2020 reforms have positively influenced the development of critical thinking skills among undergraduate students in West Bengal, as evidenced by document analysis and secondary data. While the implementation has been successful in some areas, challenges such as resource limitations and educator training need addressing. Institutions that fully adopted the reforms show significant improvement in critical thinking outcomes. Continuous support and strategic enhancements are necessary to maximize the reforms' impact. Overall, NEP 2020 holds promise for fostering critical thinking if implemented comprehensively.

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