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The Role of Innovation in Modern Education: A Comparative Analysis of NEP 2020 and OECD

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Abstract:

In current times, innovation has become an essential emphasis in modern education systems, which are adapting to fast technological changes, globalization, and growing socio-economic circumstances. Traditional exam oriented and heavy content teaching models have become less effective in making learners that is the demands of critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning. The present study compares National Education Policy of India (NEP) 2020 and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It's innovation frameworks examine how innovation shapes modern education. Based on educational theories, policy evaluations, and contemporary studies, it argues that innovation in education extends beyond merely incorporating technology; it encompasses significant pedagogical changes, adaptable curricula, innovative assessment strategies, teacher autonomy, and governance that is attuned to needs. Through analytical tables and an integrated innovation ecosystem model, this study classifies both parallels and variances between NEP 2020 and OECD perspectives, accent challenges such as digital inequality, teacher training, and institutional apathy. It concludes

that while NEP 2020 make parallel conceptually with global best practices, its success depends on system wide readiness, continuous professional development, and equitable implementation.

Keywords: Modern Education, Innovation, NEP 2020, OECD Frameworks, Pedagogical Reform

Introduction

Educational systems worldwide are undergoing significant transformations due to rapid technological advancements, globalization, and evolving requirements in the workers. In this context, innovation has become a symbol of modern educational policy and practice. Traditional teaching methods and exam-oriented systems that depend deeply on rote learning and information delivery which are now widely seen as insufficient for equipping students to handle intricate and uncertain futures. John Dewey warned,

If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow (Dewey, 1938).

It highlights the continual need for innovation in education. In the current landscape, advancements in educational methods are no longer optional or experimental—they have transformed into a fundamental requirement. In India, this overbearing is clearly recognized through NEP 2020, but globally, it is personified in OECD-led education reform frameworks. This paper places NEP 2020 in the wider global discourse on educational innovation and offers a comparative evaluation to examine its theoretical richness and the practical difficulties in its implementation.

Conceptual Framework of Educational Innovation

Educational innovation can be understood as a purposeful and context-aware initiative aimed at fostering improvement in learning experiences and results. It encompasses teaching methods, curriculum development, evaluation techniques, organizational frameworks, and governance models. Significantly, innovation does not equate to discarding tradition;

instead, it represents a considered revival of educational practices to fit contemporary circumstances.

Philosophers such as Dewey, Freire, and Rogers have laid the philosophical groundwork for the current discussions around innovation. Learner autonomy, experiential learning, and reflective thinking are emphasized in constructivist and humanistic theories; these ideas continue to influence contemporary educational practices.

Innovation is seen by both the OECD and NEP 2020 frameworks as an all-encompassing, systemic change as opposed to discrete experiments. This common viewpoint sets real educational innovation apart from surface-level changes motivated only by market factors or technology.

Pedagogical Innovation in Modern Education

Learner based Pedagogy

The shift from teacher-based instruction to learner-focused teaching is one of the most significant developments in contemporary education. This method presents students as active creators of knowledge rather than passive consumers by encouraging inquiry, teamwork, candid discussion, and reflective learning. Carl Rogers provides a concise explanation of this change:

“The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change” (Rogers, 1983).

The emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, and self-directed learning in NEP 2020 and OECD innovation principles is all highly compatible with learner-centered pedagogy.

Project-Based Learning

Project-based and problem-based learning are examples of experiential learning, which is another significant breakthrough in education. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, these techniques enable students to apply what they have learned in practical settings. According

to numerous studies, such tactics increase engagement, enhance comprehension, and develop transferable abilities. While OECD frameworks emphasize problem-solving and teamwork as essential future skills, NEP 2020 heavily emphasizes experiential learning, internships, and community involvement.

Curriculum and Assessment

a. Multidisciplinary Curriculum Design

Transdisciplinary learning, which addresses the growing complexity of real-world problems that cannot be resolved within the confines of a single discipline, has emerged as a key component of innovation in contemporary education. Conventional curricula, which are inflexibly separated into discrete disciplines, frequently fragment knowledge and make it difficult for students to make connections between concepts from various fields. A multidisciplinary approach, on the other hand, promotes a more comprehensive understanding and intellectual flexibility by encouraging students to draw links between topics such as science, humanities, social sciences, arts, and technology.

Contemporary education policies increasingly recognize that creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving thrive when students engage with diverse viewpoints. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 firmly opposes narrow disciplinary boundaries and promotes curricular models that enable students to study across streams. Multidisciplinary learning reflects the interconnectedness of knowledge in today's society by permitting pairings like literature with data science or ethics with engineering.

Multidisciplinary curriculum design enhances experience and inquiry-based learning from a teaching standpoint. In order to go beyond rote memorization and toward synthesis and application, it encourages students to investigate topics, challenges, and projects that draw from several academic disciplines. This change is highly compatible with the progressive educational concept. According to John Dewey:

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

Dewey's observation emphasizes the necessity for education to reflect the intricacy of lived experience, which is intrinsically multidisciplinary.

Multidisciplinary curricula make a strong intellectual case, but their successful implementation depends on faculty cooperation, institutional readiness, and flexible evaluation methods. Such initiatives run the risk of becoming superficial subject combinations rather than fully integrated learning experiences in the absence of adequate teacher preparation and careful curriculum design.

b. Assessment Innovation

Innovation in assessment is now a key part of modern education since people are becoming more and more critical of old exam-based systems that encourage rote memorization instead of real learning. Traditional high-stakes and summative assessments often emphasize ranking and certification over developing of understanding, creativity, and higher-order thinking abilities. As modern education is based on competency and assessment which evolves toward transform accordingly.

This assessment of innovation focuses on assessment of learning where evaluation becomes an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Techniques such as formative assessments, ongoing feedback, peer reviews, self-reflection, and performance tasks enable students to identify their improvement and strengths and. Such methods of learning engage learners in fostering critical thinking, problem solving abilities, and self-awareness . Black and Wiliam, observes this learning and say:

“What students learn is largely determined by how they are assessed” (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

This observation underscores the failure of numerous pedagogical and curricular improvements when assessment systems stay unchanged. As long as examinations perpetuate the emphasis on rote memory, creative pedagogical approaches cannot genuinely flourish. Policy frameworks like the OECD innovation models and India's National Education Policy (NEP)

2020 emphasize competency-based evaluations like projects, portfolios, and practical assignments in order to address this. However, the teachers who have well trained in curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation and strong institution backing in innovation assessment can improve the whole process of assessment.

Comparative Analysis: NEP 2020 and OECD

According to a comparative research, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the innovation frameworks of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have a strong conceptual similarity. The systematic process of the both institutions is isolated effort that rejects fragmented reforms in favor of coordinated change across pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and governance. However, the OECD frameworks are primarily based on evidence and data-driven, while NEP 2020 implants innovation with culturally rooted and value-oriented educational objectives.

The OECD emphasizes learner autonomy and agency, whereas NEP 2020 merges student-based learning with a focus on ethical values and holistic development in Pedagogy. The distinction also in curriculum design is evidence :

NEP 2020 directives on multidisciplinary structures as part of a broader systemic reform and making its more ambitious while OECD models encourage flexible interdisciplinarity system. The practices of assessments are different ; although both promote formative and competency-based assessment. The OECD maintains a measures, evaluative approach to technology while NEP 2020 functions based on examination and traditional that obstacles reform. Despite obstacles to fairness and accessibility, NEP 2020 strongly encourages widespread digital integration. In both models, teachers are known as central figure of transformation in India, they often remain under-supported in terms of professional development and institutional empowerment.

Key Similarities and Differences

Dimension	OECD Framework	NEP 2020
View of Innovation	Systemic, evidence-based	Systemic, culturally grounded
Pedagogy	Learner agency	Learner + values
Curriculum	Flexible interdisciplinarity	Mandated interdisciplinarity
Assessment	Formative, competency-based	Reform-oriented but exam-heavy legacy
Technology	Cautious, evaluative	Ambitious, equity-challenged
Teachers	Central change agents	Central but under-supported

Conceptual Model of Educational Innovation

The conceptual framework of educational innovation presented in this study regards innovation as a comprehensive and integrated system rather than a series of isolated reforms. It is necessary to change in policy and governance, which provide the strategic vision, regulatory backing, and institutional autonomy. These foundational elements empower teachers through continuous professional development, collaboration, and pedagogical independence which positioning them as a key agent of innovation.

Building on this base, pedagogical innovation, such as learner-centered, experiential, and project-based learning; serves as the driving force behind genuine classroom transformation. Pedagogy in this model is closely integrated with curriculum and assessment reform to promote interdisciplinary learning and competency-based evaluation. Importantly, technology functions as a supportive tool rather than the primary driver of change. As Fullan says:

“Technology is a powerful accelerator, but it does not replace good teaching” (Fullan, 2013).

Model Description (Textual Representation)

POLICY & GOVERNANCE

(Autonomy, Regulation, Vision)



TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

(Training, Autonomy, Collaboration)



PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

(Learner-Centered, Experiential, PBL)



CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

(Interdisciplinary, Competency-Based)



TECHNOLOGY AS ENABLER

(Digital Tools, AI, Platforms)



LEARNING OUTCOMES

(Critical Thinking, Creativity, Equity)

When these frameworks work together, they lead to stronger learning outcome that fostering critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and equity. The model emphasizes on educational innovation depends on a harmonious connection between policy, pedagogy, and classroom practice.

Challenges in Implementation

Digital divide: The dissemination of new techniques remains hindered by unequal access to infrastructure and technology, especially in rural and impoverished areas.

Teacher readiness: Teachers are unable to successfully implement new teaching and assessment techniques due to a lack of proper training and regular professional development.

Institutional resistance: The implementation of educational changes is slowed down by bureaucratic conservatism and resistance to change.

Assessment inertia: Exam-oriented systems continue to prioritize rote memorization, thereby constraining the advancement of pedagogical innovation.

Resource limitations: Inadequate funding and inconsistent policies undermine the long-term sustainability and scalability of innovative initiatives.

Discussion

The analysis shows that NEP 2020 is far from being a narrow or outdated policy; instead, it aligns closely with global conversations on educational innovation. However, true innovation cannot be achieved through policy declarations alone—it depends on how teachers and institutions interpret and implement these reforms in practice. As Hargreaves says,

“Educational change depends on what teachers think and do; it is as simple and as complex as that” (Hargreaves, 2003).

Teachers, therefore, are not peripheral actors but the primary representatives of educational innovation.

Conclusion

Innovation in today’s education system is no longer a luxury, it is a structural need driven by rapid social, technological, and economic transformations. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a bold and progressive step toward Indian education consistent with global best practices. NEP 2020 seeks to promote critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning by emphasizing learner-centered pedagogy, flexible

curricula, revised evaluation techniques, and increased institutional autonomy.

However, the real power of educational innovation lies not merely in policy vision but in its execution. Its success depends on systemic readiness, continuous teacher empowerment, and a firm commitment to equitable implementation; specially within a diverse and unequal educational landscape. Strong agreement between pedagogy, policy, and classroom practice is necessary for innovation to be profoundly transformative. Innovation has the risk of becoming symbolic rather than producing significant and long-lasting advancements in education when innovations are not coordinated or implemented inconsistently.

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