



From Policy Rhetoric to Teacher Realities: NEP 2020's Provisions and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction

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Abstract : By assimilating the provisions for teacher autonomy, fostering continuous professional development for lifelong professional learning and sustainable teaching practices, workload streamlining, and transparent appraisal systems, NEP 2020 puts itself as a reformative blueprint for Indian education. While its provisions reflect strong policy rhetoric of empowerment, the gap between target and practice raises concerns about sustainability and long-term impact. This quantitative correlational survey analysed the association between provisions for teachers enunciated in India's NEP 2020 and teachers' professional satisfaction. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from in-service 80 school teachers across the state of West Bengal, employing a researcher-developed NEP 2020 provisions inventory and a validated professional satisfaction scale. Pearson's r assessed pairwise associations between NEP 2020's provisions and professional satisfaction of teachers. As finding, some provisions like CPD, NPST and Career Management & Merit-based Progression have shown high positive association with teachers' professional satisfaction.

Index Terms - NEP 2020's provisions for teachers, Teaching as Profession Teachers' professional satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Across multicultural circumstances, teachers play the most influential factor to improve learning quality and reducing educational disparities. Teachers enact a central role in shaping the quality and equity of education, as their motivation, satisfaction, and professional agency directly influence student outcomes and institutional effectiveness (Day & Qing, 2009; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Research consistently highlights that empowered and professionally satisfied teachers are more likely to engage in innovative pedagogical practices, foster inclusive learning environments, and contribute to the overall resilience of education systems (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). As an alternatively, low satisfaction and limited autonomy often correlate with higher attrition rates, diminished instructional quality, and inequitable learning opportunities (OECD, 2020). Within the Indian context, the National Education Policy 2020 acknowledges this centrality by proposing provisions such as Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Career Management and Merit-based Progression, the establishment of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and like these. The policy foregrounds teachers as "the heart of the learning process," promising structural supports such as workload rationalization, transparent appraisal mechanisms, and capacity-building opportunities. While some teachers view the policy as an opportunity for professional empowerment, others express scepticism regarding its feasibility in the absence of systemic reforms. This resonates with broader concerns that ambitious policy rhetoric often diverges from lived classroom realities, particularly when systemic challenges like inadequate resources, bureaucratic constraints, and uneven policy implementation are undermined reform intentions (Batra, 2020). Teacher satisfaction, understood as the degree to which educators' professional expectations align with their actual working conditions, is shaped not only by material provisions but also by perceptions of recognition, autonomy, and professional growth (Dinham & Scott, 2000). Teachers generally welcomed NEP 2020 reforms like professional development, curriculum flexibility, competency-based assessment, and digital integration but expressed concerns over inadequate resources, inconsistent training, and increased workload, highlighting a gap between policy vision and classroom realities (Majumdar & Bairagya, 2025).

NEP 2020's provisions for Teachers:

The NEP 2020 provisions aim to empower teachers through structured professional development, transparent career pathways, and enhanced autonomy in teaching practice. Provisions are briefly portrayed.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a pillar for enhancing teacher quality and sustaining professional growth. In the paragraph 5.15, the policy mandates that every teacher should engage in a minimum of 50 hours of CPD annually, encompassing workshops, seminars, and online learning opportunities at local, regional, national, and international levels. CPD is envisioned not merely as a formal requirement but as a self-directed and interest-driven process, enabling teachers to keep pace with pedagogical innovations, subject knowledge, and technological integration (NCERT, 2022; MHRD, 2020).

Career Management & Merit-based Progression

Career management and merit-based progression constitute a central reform in the NEP 2020, which emphasizes recognizing, and rewarding teachers' professional excellence rather than relying on seniority or tenure. As outlined in Paragraphs 5.17–5.19, the policy calls for a robust merit-based system of promotion, tenure, and salary progression grounded in transparent, multi-parameter performance appraisals that include peer reviews, classroom commitment, engagement in continuous professional development, and contributions to the school community (MHRD, 2020). As teaching is a profession of growth and recognition, thereby strengthening both teacher agency and the overall quality of education.

National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)

NPST, proposed in NEP 2020, Para 5.20, represents a landmark initiative to establish a common, nationally recognized framework for defining teacher quality, competencies, and career progression in India. Its aims to articulate clear expectations for teachers at different career stages like beginner, proficient, expert, and lead across domains such as pedagogical knowledge, professional practice, ethical values, and continuous learning. The policy envisions NPST as the foundation for performance appraisal, professional development, salary increments, promotions, and recognition, shifting advancement away from seniority-based norms towards a competency- and merit-driven system (NCTE, 2023; MHRD, 2020).

Teacher Autonomy and Pedagogical Innovation

NEP 2020 underscores teacher autonomy and pedagogical innovation as pivotal to improving learning outcomes and professionalizing teaching. As stated in Para 5.14, teachers are to be granted greater freedom in selecting pedagogical approaches that best meet their students' needs, while being recognized and rewarded for innovative practices that enhance learning (MHRD, 2020). This emphasis on autonomy acknowledges teachers as reflective practitioners rather than passive implementers of top-down curricula, aligning with global research that links professional autonomy to higher job satisfaction, creativity, and commitment.

Reduced Non-Teaching Duties & Transparent Transfers

NEP 2020 acknowledges that excessive non-academic responsibilities and opaque transfer processes undermine teachers' professional focus and morale. As articulated in Paras 5.3, 5.7, and 5.12, the policy explicitly directs that teachers should dedicate their time and energy to pedagogy and student development (MHRD, 2020). Moreover, the policy calls for transparent, technology-enabled teacher transfer systems to ensure equitable distribution of teachers across schools, particularly in rural and underserved areas, while minimizing favouritism and political interference.

Special Educator Provisions

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes inclusive education by mandating the provision of special educators to support children with disabilities and learning differences. As articulated in Para 5.21, the policy requires that all general teachers gain at least some exposure to special education during pre-service or in-service training, while specialized educators with expertise in cross-disability and specific disabilities will be recruited at the school complex/cluster level to provide targeted support (MHRD, 2020). These special educators are expected not only to teach but also to act as resource persons for mainstream teachers, enabling them to adapt pedagogy, assessment, and classroom practices to diverse learners' needs.

Teacher Education

Para 5.22 to 5.29, in NEP 2020 envisions a comprehensive restructuring of teacher education to enhance quality, professionalism, and accountability in the teaching workforce. It mandates the establishment of a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme in multidisciplinary institutions, gradually replacing substandard teacher training colleges. The policy emphasizes rigorous pre-service preparation, competency-based curriculum, and extended field experience to equip future teachers with strong subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (MHRD, 2020).

Teaching as Profession in the light of NEP 2020:

NEP has emphasized "teaching is considered one of the noblest professions globally and is associated with social progress" (NCTE, 2023). The assertion that teaching is a profession, not merely a job underscores the idea that teaching demands specialized knowledge, ethical commitment, and a sense of vocation beyond routine employment. A profession is characterized by continuous learning, autonomy, accountability, and service orientation, which distinguishes it from a conventional job focused only on livelihood. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly reinforces this view by situating teachers at "as the heart of the learning process" (MHRD, 2020) and emphasizing their role as nation-builders who require sustained professional development, autonomy, and recognition (NCTE, 2023; MHRD, 2020). Unlike a job that is task-oriented, NEP 2020 frames teaching as a lifelong professional pursuit, advocating for continuous professional development (CPD), career progression pathways, and autonomy in curriculum and pedagogy. This aligns with the idea of teaching as a dynamic profession requiring innovation, adaptability, and reflective practice. However, scholars argue that systemic barriers like inadequate training quality, resource constraints, and policy-implementation gaps sometime reduce teaching to a mechanical job rather than enabling it as a professional vocation (Majumdar & Bairagya, 2025).

Professional Satisfaction of Teachers:

Teachers' professional satisfaction reflect the degree to which educators feel fulfilled, motivated, and supported in their work, influencing both their effectiveness and student outcomes. High professional satisfaction is linked to enhanced instructional quality, reduced turnover, and greater organizational commitment, while dissatisfaction can lead to burnout and attrition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Teacher professional satisfaction is a multidimensional construct encompassing intrinsic, extrinsic, and relational aspects. Intrinsic satisfaction arises from joy in teaching, autonomy, and a sense of competence, which NEP 2020 fosters through provisions for teacher autonomy, pedagogical innovation, and continuous professional development (Day & Qing, 2009; MHRD, 2020). Extrinsic satisfaction relates to workload, salary, resources, and appraisal, addressed by the policy via merit-based career progression, reduction of non-teaching duties, and transparent evaluation mechanisms (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; MHRD, 2020). Relational satisfaction involves support from peers, leaders, and students, which the NEP encourages through collaborative practices, mentoring, and inclusive classroom strategies (MHRD, 2020, 2020). By integrating these three dimensions, NEP 2020 offers a holistic framework to enhance teacher well-being and professional fulfilment.

Objectives:

- 1) To analyse the provision- wise association between the NEP 2020 for teachers and teachers' professional satisfaction.

Hypothesis:

- 1) H₀1. There is no provision- wise association between the NEP 2020 for teachers and teachers' professional satisfaction.

Methodology of the study:

The study adopted a quantitative correlational survey design to analyse the association between provisions wise NEP 2020 for teachers and teachers' professional satisfaction. The study targeted in-service school teachers working in government, private, and aided institutions at the primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels across West Bengal. From this population, a sample of 80 teachers (N = 80) was selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring adequate representation across different school stages, management categories, and varying levels of teaching experience. For this study researcher developed NEP-Provisions Inventory and Standardized Teachers' Professional Satisfaction Scale was employed to assess teachers' professional satisfaction.

Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to ethical research guidelines. Institutional ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the objectives of the research and their voluntary participation was emphasized, with the assurance that they had the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Informed consent was sought and obtained before administering the research instruments. To protect the rights and dignity of participants, complete anonymity and confidentiality were maintained; no identifying information was disclosed at any point, and the collected data were stored securely. Furthermore, the information provided by the respondents was used solely for academic and research purposes, and every effort were made to ensure that the findings were presented with honesty, integrity, and respect for the participants' contributions.

Result:

Sl. No.	NEP2020's Provisions	Correlation with Teachers' Professional coefficient (r)	p- value	Significance
I	Continuous Professional Development	0.52	0.0000002	p < .001
Ii	Career Management & Merit-based Progression	0.45	0.00003	p < .001
Iii	National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)	0.49	0.000002	p < .001
Iv	Teacher Autonomy and Pedagogical Innovation	0.37	0.0007	p < .01
V	Reduced Non-Teaching Duties & Transparent Transfers	0.29	0.009	p < .05
Vi	Special Educator Provisions	0.32	0.004	p < .01
Vii	Teacher Education	0.35	0.0014	p < .01

Statistical Expression and Interpretation:

As per the objective and hypothesis the result of the study has analysed. The objective of the study is **to analyse the provision-wise association between the NEP 2020 for teachers and teachers' professional satisfaction** and the null hypothesis formulated. Provision-wise interpretation has been expressed.

i) Association between CPD and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between CPD and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.52, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.0000002. It means using t-distribution, the probability is extremely small. So the association is Strong positive and very highly significant (p < .001). It indicating that higher engagement in CPD activities is highly significant association with teacher professional satisfaction.

ii) Association between Career Management & Merit-based Progression and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between Career Management & Merit-based Progression and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.45, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.00003. So the association is moderate positive correlation, very highly significant (p < .001).

iii) Association between National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between NPST and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.49, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.000002. So the association is Moderate-to-strong positive correlation and very highly significant (p < .001).

iv) Association between Teacher Autonomy and Pedagogical Innovation and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between Teacher Autonomy and Pedagogical Innovation and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.37, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.0007. So the association is moderate positive correlation, highly significant (p < .01)

v) Association between Reduced Non-Teaching Duties & Transparent Transfers and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between Reduced Non-Teaching Duties & Transparent Transfers and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.29, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.009. So the association is weak-to-moderate positive correlation, and statistically significant (p < .05).

vi) Association between Special Educator Provisions and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between Special Educator Provisions and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.32, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.004. So the association is moderate positive correlation, and highly significant (p < .01).

vii) Association between Teacher Education and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction:

The Pearson correlation value (r) between Teacher Education and Teachers' Professional Satisfaction is 0.35, when the n=80, df=78, the p≈0.0014. So the association is moderate positive correlation, highly significant (p < .01).

So, from the above interpretation it is shown that the null hypothesis is rejected, means there is provision- wise association between the NEP 2020 for teachers and teachers' professional satisfaction.

Discussion:

The correlational analysis between the provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for teachers and their professional satisfaction among in-service teachers ($n = 80$) revealed statistically significant positive associations across all analysed provisions. The coefficients of correlation ranged from $r = 0.29$ to $r = 0.52$, with p -values consistently below the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the observed relationships were not due to chance. In line with Cohen's (1988) benchmarks, the associations fell within the weak-to-strong range, suggesting that the NEP provisions exert a meaningful influence on teachers' professional satisfaction. The strongest correlation was observed for CPD. This result resonates that systematic opportunities for professional growth enhance teachers' confidence, competence, and job satisfaction. The NEP's provision of 50 hours of annual CPD and institutional support for lifelong learning thus appears to be well aligned with teachers' professional needs. The weakest correlation was observed for Reduced Non-Teaching Duties & Transparent Transfers, indicating that the relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This suggests that policies aimed at minimizing teachers' non-instructional workload and ensuring fair, transparent transfer mechanisms contribute meaningfully, and moderately, to enhancing professional satisfaction.

Conclusion:

After interpreting the correlational analysis it proclaimed that the provisions of NEP 2020 for teachers are significantly associated with professional satisfaction, with correlations ranging from weak to strong ($r = 0.29$ – 0.52 , $p < .05$). The results showed that all provisions make a positive association, but their relative influence varies. The strongest relationship was observed for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), underscoring that opportunities for sustained professional growth are central to enhancing teachers' confidence, competence, and satisfaction. By institutionalizing annual CPD requirements and fostering lifelong learning, NEP 2020 aligns closely with teachers' developmental needs and global best practices in teacher policy. Conversely, the weakest correlation was recorded for Reduced Non-Teaching Duties and Transparent Transfers, which, despite its lower strength, remained statistically significant. This indicates that structural and administrative reforms—such as reducing ancillary tasks and ensuring fairness in transfer processes—function as supportive conditions that prevent dissatisfaction and create an enabling environment for professional engagement. Overall, the results suggest that NEP 2020 provisions collectively strengthen the professional ecosystem for teachers, with growth-oriented measures like CPD serving as primary drivers of satisfaction, and administrative reforms like workload reduction and transparent transfers serving as essential but complementary factors. This dual emphasis reflects the policy's holistic vision of empowering teachers not only through skill enhancement and autonomy but also by safeguarding their working conditions, thereby contributing to sustainable professional well-being and effectiveness.

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