



Future Ready Education and Teacher Happiness: A Study of Private Schools in Guwahati under NEP 2020

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the influence of "Future-Ready" educational reforms, mandated by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, on the psychological well-being, health, and time balance of private school teachers in Guwahati, Assam. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** Adopting a mixed-methods design, quantitative data was collected via a structured questionnaire based on the Happiness Index from 100 teachers across 8 private schools. This was triangulated with qualitative insights gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 educators. **Findings:** Results indicate a paradox: while teachers derive profound fulfillment from their core pedagogical roles, they simultaneously experience severe work-related stress and a critical lack of time balance. Furthermore, there is minimal institutional support for mental health, which jeopardizes the sustainable implementation of NEP 2020. **Practical Implications:** The study provides evidence-based recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers, emphasizing the necessity of formal mental health initiatives, dedicated non-instructional planning time, and structured digital pedagogy training to align policy agendas with teacher welfare. **Originality/Value:** By applying the Happiness Index to the context of NEP 2020 implementation, this research pioneers the measurement of policy success through the lens of educator well-being rather than traditional student-centric metrics.

Keywords: *Future-Ready Education, Teacher Well-Being, Private Schools, Happiness Index, NEP 2020, Education Policy, Guwahati, Assam*

1. Introduction

The Indian education system is undergoing a profound structural transformation, driven by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the rapid integration of digital technologies. This shift signals the dawn of a "Future-Ready" educational paradigm, designed to equip learners with 21st-century skills and reimagine traditional teaching and assessment models. However, while the advantages for students are extensively debated, the implications for educators—the primary architects of this reform—remain underexplored.



Teachers form the critical human link between policy intent and classroom reality. Their psychological well-being, professional satisfaction, and overall happiness directly dictate the classroom environment and student learning outcomes. In the context of Indian private schools, the sudden pivot toward skill-based curricula and technology-enhanced pedagogy has placed unprecedented demands on teacher adaptability and workload management.

Guwahati, the largest urban center in Assam, offers a unique geographical and competitive context for this inquiry. Private schools in this region operate within a highly competitive market, forcing them to balance stringent academic performance expectations with new policy compliance mandates. The NEP 2020's focus on flexible curricula and competency-based assessments introduces professional growth opportunities, yet simultaneously triggers challenges affecting work-life balance and emotional resilience.

This study seeks to evaluate the impact of NEP 2020 on teacher well-being using the Happiness Index—a framework derived from Bhutan's Gross National Happiness concept, which measures life satisfaction beyond material wealth. By treating teacher happiness as a strategic institutional imperative, this research provides actionable insights to foster a sustainable, future-ready learning ecosystem.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 The Evolution and Mandates of NEP 2020

Replacing the National Policy on Education of 1986, the NEP 2020 represents India's first major education policy of the 21st century, approved on July 29, 2020. Drafted under the leadership of K. Kasturirangan, it aims to align Indian education with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The policy introduces several "Future-Ready" mandates:

- **New Structural Design:** Transitioning to a 5+3+3+4 framework that integrates Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).
- **Multidisciplinary Flexibility:** Eliminating rigid silos between arts, commerce, and sciences to encourage personalized learning.
- **Vocational Integration:** Mandating skill-based training from Grade 6, including "bagless days" and coding instruction.
- **Digital Pedagogy:** Utilizing platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM, and fostering AI/VR integration guided by the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF).
- **Capacity Building:** Requiring an integrated four-year B.Ed. by 2030 and continuous professional development (CPD) guided by the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).



2.2 Educator Roles, Awareness, and Happiness

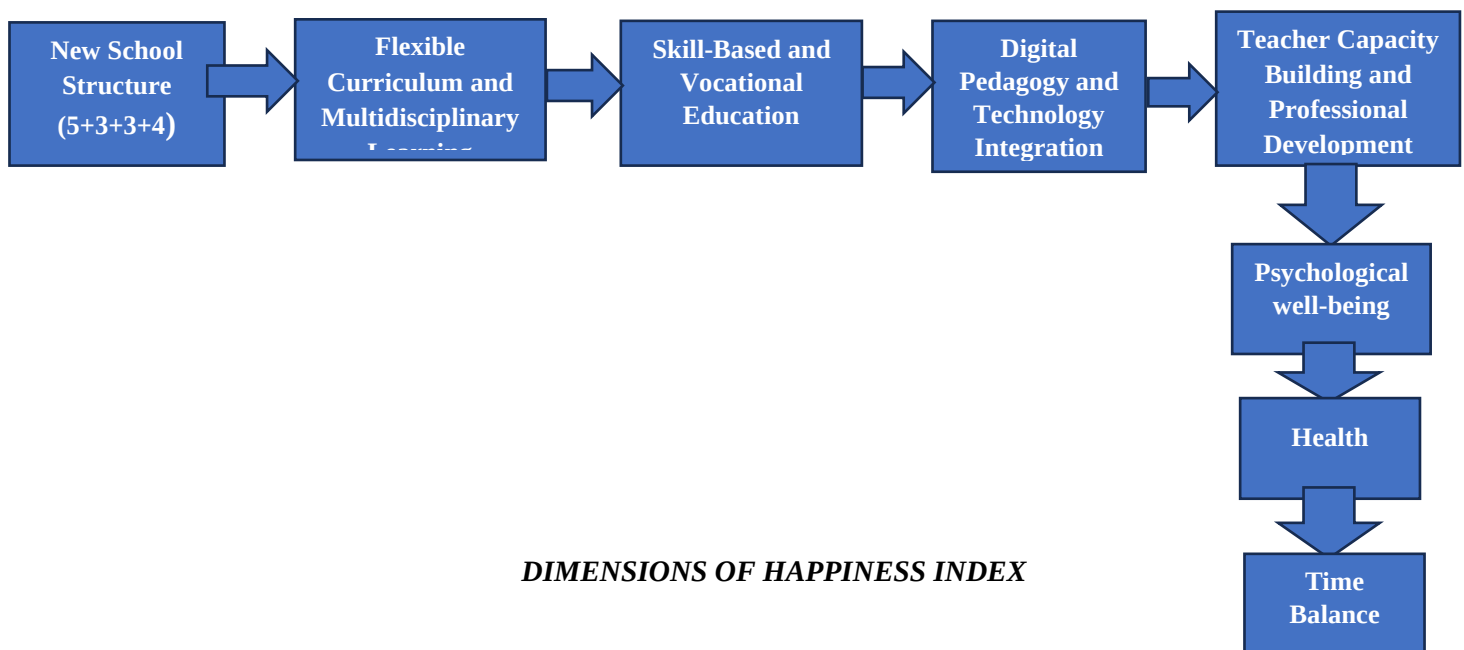
Recent literature highlights the duality of NEP 2020's impact on educators. Jameela (2023) notes that the policy shifts teaching from knowledge transmission to the facilitation of inclusive environments, fundamentally altering professional identities. Hiremath (2024) argues that genuine educational transformation demands systemic intellectual and technological empowerment of teachers.

Awareness of these mandates varies. Shobha (2020) found that 90% of secondary teachers in Mysore possessed average awareness, with private school educators showing significantly higher comprehension than government peers. Similarly, Abraham et al. (2022) revealed that while educators support professional development standards (NPST), they harbor deep concerns regarding privatization and dropout risks associated with flexible entry-exit models.

Crucially, the success of these reforms relies on educator morale. Aziz et al. (2018) identified a positive correlation between job satisfaction and happiness among educators, noting that prolonged tenure without adequate support can lead to diminished satisfaction. Boruah and Buragohain (2022), utilizing Seligman's PERMA model, confirmed that structural support systems are vital for sustaining teacher happiness in Assam.

The following framework demonstrates how the implementation of new educational policies (NEP 2020 Components) affects teachers' professional lives as policy demands, with the Happiness Index Dimensions measuring the resulting psychological and physical states.

ELEMENTS OF NEP 2020



DIMENSIONS OF HAPPINESS INDEX

Source: Conceptual Framework designed by researchers



Based on the synthesis of the literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework mapping the core elements of NEP 2020 against the dimensions of the Happiness Index.

Independent Variables: Elements of NEP 2020	Dependent Variables: Happiness Index Dimensions
New School Structure (5+3+3+4)	Psychological Well-being: Stress, optimism, satisfaction
Flexible Curriculum & Multidisciplinary Learning	Health: Energy, physical health, mental health
Skill-Based & Vocational Education	Time Balance: Time management, workload balance
Digital Pedagogy & Technology Integration	
Teacher Capacity Building & Professional Development	

Source: Researchers own constructs

Research Questions:

1. How do the "Future-Ready" reforms under NEP 2020 affect the psychological well-being, health, and time balance of private school teachers in Guwahati?
2. What are the primary structural and pedagogical challenges faced by these teachers during policy adaptation?
3. How do these challenges intersect with the dimensions of the Happiness Index?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sampling

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to capture both the breadth and depth of teacher experiences. The population comprised private schools in Guwahati city catering to primary (Classes 1-5) and middle school (Classes 6-8) cohorts.

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select 8 well-established private schools with student enrollments exceeding 500, ensuring the institutions had actively initiated NEP 2020 reforms. The final sample consisted of 100 teachers, evenly distributed between primary (n=50) and middle school (n=50) to account for varying pedagogical challenges across different educational tiers. Additionally, a sub-sample of 10 teachers was purposively selected for in-depth qualitative interviews.



3.2 Collection of Data

- **Quantitative Phase**

The data for the current research were collected by means of a structured questionnaire borrowed from the framework of the Happiness Index. This questionnaire focused on three aspects of teachers' happiness, including Psychological Well-being, Health, and Time Balance. Additionally, questions about administrative load, difficulties with adaptation to the changes in education policies, and well-being were included. In order to evaluate the level of the teachers' agreement with the provided statements, the five-point Likert Scale was used.

- **Qualitative Phase**

To learn more about the experiences of teachers, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several participants. Such an interview format was chosen in order to give participants an opportunity to freely express their opinions about the effects of future ready education policies on happiness and well-being. The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participant and field notes were made as well during the process.

3.3 Analytical Strategy

The quantitative data gathered from the survey were analyzed using SPSS software. Statistical analysis methods were used in analyzing the data to establish patterns with regard to teacher happiness. The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The transcripts were examined line by line, and any code that emerged from the examination was noted. The codes identified from the interviews were categorized and themes were developed from those categories to reflect the experience of the participants on future ready education policies and their impact on teacher happiness.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 The Paradox of Pedagogical Fulfillment and Systemic Stress

The highest-rated metric in the quantitative survey revealed that teachers derive immense fulfillment and purpose from their core instructional roles. It implies that the teachers had intrinsic motivation to support the growth of their students. The problem seemed to be the increasing demands at the workplace tend to affect this motivation. The teachers felt that they were overburdened with the curriculum, did not have enough time, and could not use technological tools effectively.



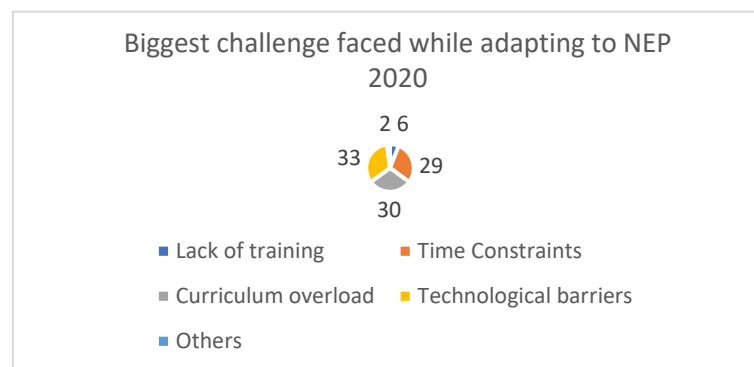
4.2 Deficits in Institutional Support and Health Management

Amongst the most crucial findings of the study was the lack of institutional support for the well-being of teachers. The results indicated that there was very little support from institutions for the mental health of teachers, implying that well-being had not become a priority of the institution yet. Additionally, many teachers gave neutral or negative responses when asked about their capacity to think about themselves and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

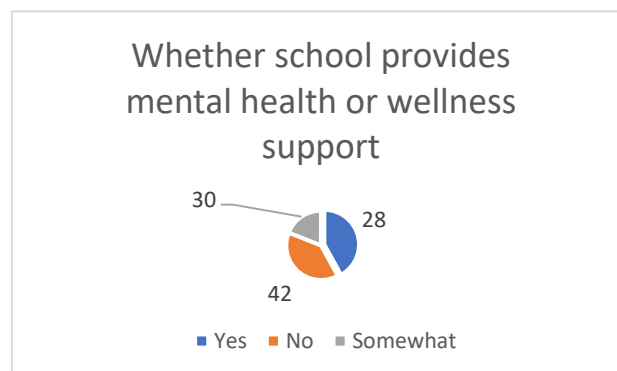
4.3 Policy Awareness vs. Implementation Infrastructure

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data highlighted curriculum overload and digital adaptation barriers as the most prominent challenges. The continuous stress of managing new assessment models directly degrades teachers' personal well-being, consuming disproportionate amounts of time and energy.

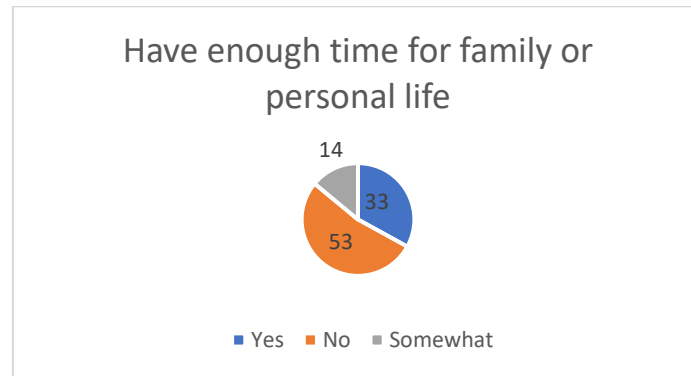
Interestingly, teachers exhibited high levels of awareness regarding NEP 2020 principles. Correspondingly, most institutions actively encourage continuous professional development and profess a commitment to becoming "Future-Ready". However, the data reveals a stark disconnect: while the intent and commitment to reform exist, the necessary infrastructural and emotional support systems required to sustain this transition are entirely absent.



Source: Field Survey

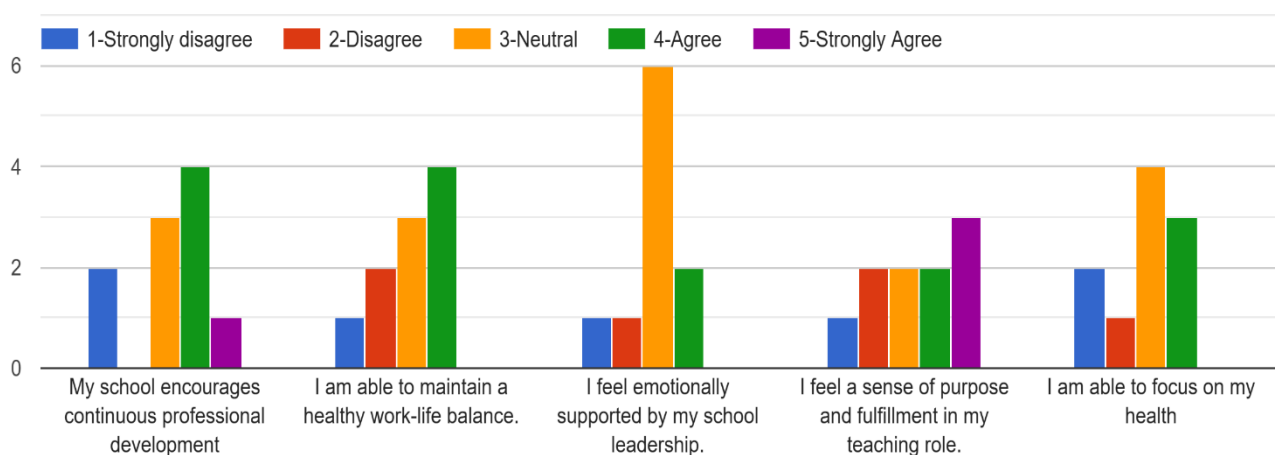


Source: Field Survey



Source: Field Survey

Rank the following statements



Source: Field Survey

5. Discussion and Managerial Implications

The findings suggest that the successful execution of NEP 2020 in Guwahati's private schools is currently in jeopardy due to the systemic neglect of teacher welfare. While educators are willing participants in the reform process, the lack of time balance and emotional backing renders the current model unsustainable.

To align policy implementation with sustainable institutional growth, the following actionable interventions are recommended for school leadership and policymakers:

- **Formalization of Mental Health Infrastructure:** Schools must prioritize psychological well-being by instituting official, confidential wellness support programs and counseling services, explicitly decoupled from administrative performance evaluations.



- **Peer Mentoring Programs:** There should be a system in schools where experienced/senior teachers mentor other teachers who may find difficulty in adopting technological skills and multidisciplinary techniques.
- **Dedicated Time For Planning Lessons:** Schools should ensure that teachers get enough protected time from teaching duties to prepare lesson plans and integrate technological knowledge into their lessons.
- **Continuous Digital Pedagogical Training:** Rather than providing just one-time workshops on digital literacy, schools need to provide continuous digital pedagogical training throughout the year to assist teachers in effectively using technology in their classroom teaching. This training must offer practical instruction on specific AI/VR tools and the new competency-based evaluation techniques mandated by NEP 2020.

6. Conclusion

The transformation toward a Future-Ready educational ecosystem under NEP 2020 presents a critical paradox for private schools in Guwahati. While the foundational awareness and commitment to reform are present, the human architects of this policy—the teachers—are operating under unsustainable levels of stress. The coexistence of high pedagogical fulfillment with severe deficits in time balance, technological support, and mental health resources places the ultimate success of the NEP 2020 in jeopardy.

For these policies to achieve their transformative potential, teacher welfare can no longer be viewed as a secondary byproduct of educational reform; it must be treated as a strategic institutional imperative. By implementing targeted policies that alleviate administrative burdens and provide robust psychological support, educational institutions can ensure that their educators thrive alongside their students in the new digital era.

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