

Promoting Consensual Non-Monogamy in Psychological Science, Clinical Practice, and Public Policy: Guidelines for Psychologists

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ABSTRACT

Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) encompasses a range of relationship structures in which individuals engage in multiple romantic or sexual relationships with the knowledge and consent of all involved parties. Despite growing visibility and acceptance of CNM relationships, psychological research, clinical practice, and public policy have historically centered on monogamous relationship models, often overlooking the experiences and needs of CNM individuals. This paper examines the importance of integrating consensual non-monogamy into psychological science and professional practice. It reviews current research on relationship satisfaction, mental health, stigma, and interpersonal functioning among CNM populations and highlights common misconceptions that may influence clinical assessment and treatment. The paper further explores ethical and culturally competent approaches for psychologists working with diverse relationship structures. Additionally, it discusses policy implications related to family recognition, healthcare access, and anti-discrimination protections. By promoting evidence-based understanding and inclusive practices, psychologists can contribute to reducing stigma and improving psychological well-being among individuals engaged in consensual non-monogamous relationships. The article concludes with practical guidelines for researchers, clinicians, educators, and policymakers aimed at fostering greater inclusivity, equity, and scientific rigor within the field of psychology.

Keywords: Consensual Non-Monogamy, Psychological Science, Clinical Psychology, Relationship Diversity

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I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of National Education Policy 2020 was a major turning point in the history of Indian education because it has brought about not just incremental changes, but also a complete restructuring of the entire education system in India. While previous policies focused primarily on expanding enrolment, improving literacy rates and ensuring equity of access to education, this policy has directed its attention to improving the quality of education and how relevant the learning experiences are for today's learners. Structural reform will not create meaningful education: More than just creating schools or changing textbooks will transform education; true transformation involves changing classroom processes, teacher practices and how students are engaged in their own learning environments. The idea of holistic development, interdisciplinary knowledge and 21st century competencies are the means through which the National Education Policy 2020 will provide a new definition of how to educate learners in modern day India.

Another defining characteristic of the National Education Policy 2020 is that it promotes a more integrated and flexible way of teaching within the curriculum than has been traditionally practiced. By removing the rigid boundaries between arts, science, commerce and vocational streams from the students' perspective and creating integrated cross-curricular pathways for students to be able to learn and explore across many different domains of knowledge, this policy encourages students to develop their creativity and critical thinking skills as well as their ability to solve problems instead of simply memorizing information. The curriculum framework created as an outcome of the National Education Policy 2020 will encourage competency based outcomes in learning for students; competency based outcomes means that students will demonstrate what they know by demonstrating their learning through application and performance instead of just through the replication of information.

Experiential learning, inquiry-based activities, collaborative teaching and project work are intended to be fundamentally integrated into every aspect of teaching. In this way, as teachers shift from being the primary source of information to becoming facilitators, mentors, and guides in assisting students in their efforts to build their own knowledge, the role of the teacher will change.

Teaching practice is the most significant link between the intent of policy and the actual outcomes of education; therefore, it is within the classroom setting that education reforms will either be enacted or diluted. Regardless of the quality of the curriculum documents, unless teachers put the documents into action as part of their teaching, they will remain merely theoretical. The implementation of the competency-based education model requires teachers to use a variety of pedagogical strategies, including differentiated instruction, ongoing assessment, reflective inquiry methods, and the incorporation of technology into their teaching methodologies. As a result of the above, teachers must design engaging and interactive learning experiences that are contextually appropriate for students rather than providing lecture-based instruction primarily. Consequently, curriculum reform, including that proposed by NEP 2020, has been directly related to changes in teachers' planning, management, assessment, and professionalization.

In addition, the policy also indicates a connection between effective teaching and the associated professional autonomy of the educator, as well as the necessary ongoing professional development of the both teacher and their profession. Therefore, teachers should embrace innovative practices and ensure that any content they present to their students is connected to the local context and continually expand their knowledge and competencies through continual professional development.

The current expectations of teachers need not just a change in instructional methods but also in their mindsets. Teachers must develop skills in reflective practice, trial and error and be able to respond quickly to the ever changing demands of education. Unfortunately, however, this transition is often fraught with difficulty - large classes, lack of adequate materials and teacher training, high-stakes assessment systems that conflict with the principles of formative assessment, etc. can hinder a teacher's ability to benefit from a new curriculum.

It is therefore critically important to examine how an NEP 2020-compliant curriculum affects teachers and teaching to assess whether the reform has been successful. The experiences, attitudes and adaptations of teachers provide insight into how the new policies are interpreted by practitioners on the front lines of education, as they identify both supports and challenges to implementing these reforms successfully. They also shed light on the extent to which actual student learning and achievement reflects the principles of a learner-centered, inclusive and skills-based approach to assessment. Assessing education reform without an understanding of teachers' day-to-day experiences would provide an incomplete and conceptual examination of the implementation of reform. This study seeks to address the divide between policy and practice by studying the conditions experienced by teachers in implementing a new curriculum in order to inform the reform process.

By systematically investigating how teachers respond to curricular changes, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the processes through which educational transformation occurs. The findings can inform policymakers about areas where additional support, training, or infrastructural investment is required. They can also guide teacher educators in designing preparation programs that equip future teachers with the competencies needed for NEP-aligned pedagogy. Ultimately, this inquiry situates teaching practice at the heart of educational reform and recognizes that sustainable change depends on empowering teachers as active agents rather than passive recipients of policy directives.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Robinson (2020) explored how curriculum reform connects with real changes in classroom teaching. The study argued that simply revising the syllabus was not enough. Meaningful reform happened only when teachers were willing to rethink their own pedagogical beliefs alongside structural changes in the curriculum. The review showed that surface-level compliance—following a new textbook or framework without changing teaching style—rarely led to genuine learning gains. Instead, progress depended on teachers adopting more interactive and reflective approaches. Robinson also stressed the importance of ongoing professional support and collaborative learning communities to ensure that reform became part of everyday classroom practice rather than a temporary adjustment.

Patel (2020) examined multidisciplinary approaches in school curricula and found that blending arts, sciences, and vocational subjects increased both student engagement and conceptual clarity. When schools created flexible pathways, teachers felt encouraged to design cross-disciplinary projects that moved beyond rote memorization. Students were more likely to apply knowledge in meaningful, real-world contexts. This study laid important groundwork for later curriculum reforms aligned with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasized holistic and integrated learning.

Baruah (2021) focused on teachers' perceptions of the National Education Policy 2020 and found a generally positive response. Many educators appreciated the learner-centred vision of the policy. However,

optimism was accompanied by uncertainty. Teachers were unsure about how to implement competency-based assessment and how to manage classrooms within the new framework. While reform was welcomed, there was a clear demand for clearer operational guidelines and structured training.

Gupta (2021) studied learner-centred pedagogy and curriculum innovation, reporting that classrooms using participatory and experiential methods saw higher student motivation and deeper learning outcomes. The research highlighted that shifting away from teacher-dominated lectures toward collaborative learning required more than new lesson plans—it required a shift in mindset and institutional culture. Gupta concluded that meaningful pedagogical change depended largely on teachers' willingness to experiment, reflect, and adapt their practices.

Johnson, Singh, and Mehta (2021) turned their attention to professional development models that support curriculum reform. Their findings were clear: sustained, practice-oriented training significantly strengthened teachers' confidence and instructional skills. Short-term workshops, by contrast, produced limited results. Long-term mentoring, peer collaboration, and shared planning sessions were far more effective in creating lasting change in classroom practice.

Murthy and Sengupta (2021) examined competency-based curriculum frameworks in the Indian context and found that outcome-driven designs encouraged the development of higher-order thinking skills. Teachers began to move away from memorization-heavy instruction and toward application-based tasks. However, the study also pointed out a persistent issue—the misalignment between curriculum goals and traditional examination systems, which often continued to prioritize recall over reasoning.

Rao (2021) highlighted the practical challenges of implementing the National Education Policy 2020. Structural barriers such as overcrowded classrooms, limited infrastructure, and inadequate teaching resources frequently hindered the adoption of innovative teaching methods. The study concluded that while policy frameworks were ambitious and progressive, ground realities sometimes restricted their full implementation, especially in under-resourced settings.

Similarly, Singh (2021) documented noticeable pedagogical shifts under the National Education Policy 2020, including greater use of activity-based and collaborative approaches. At the same time, teachers expressed the need for clearer guidance on assessing competencies and planning interdisciplinary lessons. The findings suggested that curricular flexibility required stronger coordination and communication among subject teachers.

Verma (2021) examined the role of teacher beliefs in shaping instructional change. The study found that teachers' attitudes toward reform strongly influenced how they responded in practice. Educators who embraced constructivist perspectives were more inclined to implement learner-centred strategies, while those holding traditional views tended to resist change. This research brought attention to the psychological dimension of curriculum reform, showing that implementation is not only structural but also deeply personal.

Taken together, these studies show that curriculum reform under the National Education Policy 2020 has begun to shift teaching toward more learner-centred and competency-based approaches. At the same time, they consistently point to the critical roles of teacher agency, sustained professional development, technological readiness, assessment reform, and institutional support. While the overall direction of change appears promising, contextual challenges continue to affect how uniformly reforms are implemented. Collectively, this body of research highlights both the potential and the complexity of NEP-aligned curriculum transformation, providing a strong conceptual and empirical base for examining its impact on classroom practice.

Objectives of the Study

The core objective of this research is to examine the impact of NEP 2020-aligned curriculum on teaching practice. To achieve this, the study pursued the following interrelated objectives:

- The first objective was to identify changes in instructional strategies following adoption of NEP 2020 curricular frameworks.
- The second objective was to analyze the perceptions of teachers about pedagogical efficacy, autonomy, and challenges.
- The third objective was to examine how classroom interactions reflect learner-centred pedagogies encouraged by NEP 2020.
- Lastly, the study aimed to evaluate professional development experiences that shaped teacher adaptation to the new curriculum.

Through these objectives, the study foregrounds teacher experience as a key lens for understanding the outcomes of curriculum transformation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative surveys with qualitative classroom observations and teacher interviews. The approach was chosen to capture both measurable shifts in practice and nuanced experiential insights.

The study population comprised secondary school teachers from public and private schools across three states: Delhi, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. A stratified random sampling method ensured representation across urban and semi-urban school contexts. A total of 150 teachers participated in the survey, 45 were observed in classroom instructional settings, and 30 participated in in-depth interviews.

The survey instrument included Likert-scale items measuring changes in instructional strategies, assessment practices, use of technology, and teacher perceptions of curriculum alignment. Classroom observations were guided by an observation protocol focusing on learner engagement, questioning techniques, and alignment with NEP 2020 pedagogical guidelines. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing teachers to describe lived experiences of curriculum transition.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative measures and thematic coding for qualitative data. Triangulation ensured validity of findings across sources.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The implementation of the National Education Policy 2020–aligned curriculum produced measurable and observable changes in classroom practices, teacher behavior, and assessment processes. The analysis integrated quantitative survey findings with qualitative classroom observations and interview data to provide a comprehensive interpretation of how pedagogical transformation unfolded across secondary schools. The purpose of this section is to present these findings systematically and interpret their educational significance in relation to curriculum reform goals.

The quantitative results demonstrated a clear movement toward learner-centered teaching strategies. Teachers reported that after the adoption of the revised curriculum framework, they increasingly replaced lecture-dominated instruction with interactive and participatory approaches. Practices such as group discussions, project-based assignments, experiential learning tasks, and continuous feedback mechanisms became more prominent. When compared with pre-reform instructional patterns, mean scores on a five-point scale showed statistically significant growth, suggesting that teachers were consciously attempting to align their pedagogy with policy expectations. These numerical trends indicate that the reform influenced not only teacher attitudes but also day-to-day classroom behavior.

The following table presents a comparison of average scores for key instructional practices before and after curriculum alignment.

Table 1: Comparison of Teaching Practices Before and After NEP-Aligned Curriculum (Mean Scores on 5-Point Scale)

Teaching Practice	Pre-Implementation Mean	Post-Implementation Mean	Mean Difference
Lecture-based instruction	4.3	2.6	-1.7
Group work and collaboration	2.4	4.1	+1.7
Project-based learning	2.1	4.0	+1.9
Experiential activities	2.3	4.2	+1.9
Formative assessment	2.5	4.3	+1.8

The data illustrate a substantial decline in dependence on lecture-based methods and a parallel rise in active learning approaches. This shift reflects a structural transformation in instructional design, consistent with the objectives of competency-based education.

Qualitative classroom observations reinforced these findings. Observers noted that classrooms increasingly fostered dialogue and shared inquiry rather than one-way communication. Students engaged more frequently in peer interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and reflective questioning. Teachers assumed the role of facilitators who guided exploration instead of transmitting fixed knowledge. The nature of classroom interaction therefore changed significantly, becoming more democratic and participatory. Evidence from observation records is summarized below.

Table 2: Observed Classroom Behaviors Across Sampled Lessons (Percentage of Lessons Displaying Practice)

Observed Behavior	Percentage of Lessons
Group or pair activities	84%
Student-led discussion	78%
Inquiry or problem-solving tasks	72%
Use of teaching aids or digital tools	67%
Teacher lecture dominating entire period	29%

These figures confirm that collaborative and inquiry-based learning environments became common features of daily instruction. The relatively lower proportion of lecture-dominated sessions suggests that traditional pedagogies are gradually being replaced.

Further interpretation emerged from teachers' reflective accounts. Many participants described conscious efforts to redesign lesson plans, incorporate interdisciplinary connections, and adopt continuous assessment techniques. Teachers who engaged in structured reflection and planning appeared more confident and adaptable. To understand this relationship, the study examined the association between reflective practice and adoption of new methods.

Table 3: Relationship Between Reflective Practice and Pedagogical Innovation

Level of Reflective Practice	Mean Innovation Score (1–5)	Interpretation
Low	2.9	Limited instructional change
Moderate	3.7	Partial adoption of strategies
High	4.5	Strong adoption of learner-centered methods

The trend suggests that reflective professional habits positively influenced curriculum implementation. Teachers who regularly evaluated their teaching were more capable of integrating innovative practices effectively.

Despite these encouraging developments, the analysis revealed substantial disparities across institutional contexts. Public schools often faced infrastructural and logistical challenges that limited the full realization of new pedagogies. Large class sizes reduced opportunities for individualized attention, and insufficient resources constrained project-based learning. In contrast, private schools with better facilities demonstrated smoother adoption of NEP-aligned practices. Comparative findings are presented below.

Table 4: Variation in Implementation by School Type

Indicator	Public Schools	Private Schools
Average class size	48 students	32 students
Availability of teaching aids	Moderate to low	High
Access to digital tools	Limited	Extensive
Teacher training participation	54%	83%
Pedagogical innovation score	3.3	4.4

This comparison indicates that systemic support structures strongly influence reform outcomes. Where resources and training were sufficient, teachers implemented changes more confidently and effectively.

Assessment practices emerged as another critical dimension of analysis. While teachers supported formative and competency-based assessment in principle, many struggled with implementation due to overlapping requirements of traditional examinations. The coexistence of old and new systems created workload pressures, leading to what participants described as “assessment overload.” The following table summarizes teacher perceptions.

Table 5: Teacher Perceptions of Assessment Transition

Assessment Issue	Percentage Reporting Challenge
Positive view of formative assessment benefits	88%
Increased workload	76%
Difficulty balancing exams and portfolios	73%
Confusion over new formats	61%
Lack of training in formative assessment	58%

Although most teachers recognized the pedagogical value of formative assessment, practical constraints hindered its smooth adoption. This tension between policy ideals and institutional realities remains a key obstacle. Taken together, the data suggest that the NEP-aligned curriculum has stimulated genuine pedagogical innovation and encouraged teachers to adopt more interactive, student-focused practices. Nevertheless, implementation remains uneven and dependent on contextual factors such as training, infrastructure, and assessment alignment. The interpretation of these findings underscores that curriculum reform is not merely a matter of introducing new guidelines but requires sustained systemic support to ensure consistent transformation across diverse educational settings.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

An analysis of the surveys, classroom observations, and interviews makes one thing clear: the National Education Policy 2020-aligned curriculum is beginning to reshape teaching practices at the secondary school level in meaningful ways. The most noticeable shift is the move away from teacher-dominated instruction toward more learner-centred classrooms. Teachers are increasingly using collaborative activities, project-based work, experiential tasks, and inquiry-driven lessons. The data shows a steady rise in how often and how consistently these approaches are used. Instead of simply delivering information, teachers are creating opportunities for students to actively build their own understanding.

Classroom dynamics have also changed. Lessons are becoming more discussion-based and participatory. Students are engaging more frequently in problem-solving, group work, and open dialogue. Teachers are stepping into the role of facilitators—guiding conversations, encouraging questions, and prompting reflection rather than controlling every aspect of instruction. This shift supports the development of critical thinking, communication skills, and deeper conceptual understanding, all of which are central to competency-based education. In many cases, it reflects a genuine effort to put the policy’s vision of holistic and experiential learning into practice.

At the same time, the study highlights how strongly implementation depends on teacher mindset and professional growth. Educators who regularly engaged in reflective practice or participated in professional development programs were far more confident experimenting with new strategies. They redesigned lesson plans, integrated interdisciplinary themes, and made better use of formative assessment. On the other hand, teachers who lacked sufficient training often felt unsure about how to translate policy guidelines into daily practice. This pattern underscores an important point: building teacher capacity is critical if reform is to be meaningful and sustained.

The research also uncovered clear differences across school contexts. Schools with stronger infrastructure, manageable class sizes, and access to digital tools adapted more smoothly to NEP-aligned practices. In contrast, many resource-constrained schools—particularly in the public sector—faced serious challenges. Overcrowded classrooms made individualized attention difficult. Limited teaching materials

restricted hands-on and experiential activities. Inadequate technological access hindered digital integration. Even when teachers were motivated to innovate, these structural limitations often slowed progress.

Assessment practices emerged as both a step forward and a stumbling block. Many teachers supported the idea of formative and competency-based evaluation in principle. However, putting these ideas into action proved complicated. Traditional examination systems still operate alongside newer methods such as portfolios and continuous assessment, creating additional workload and confusion. Teachers often described feeling overwhelmed as they tried to balance these parallel expectations. This tension points to a broader issue: without alignment between policy goals and existing evaluation systems, reform efforts can lose momentum.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the NEP-aligned curriculum has sparked real pedagogical change, but the impact is uneven. Where professional development, institutional support, and systemic coherence are in place, classrooms are beginning to reflect the spirit of the reform. Where these conditions are weak or absent, change is slower and less consistent. The policy has set transformation in motion, but its long-term success will depend on how effectively these enabling factors are strengthened and sustained.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how curriculum reforms aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 have influenced teaching practice in secondary schools. The evidence demonstrates that the policy has served as a catalyst for pedagogical change by encouraging learner-centred, experiential, and competency-based approaches to instruction. Teachers are gradually moving away from rote and lecture-driven methods toward interactive and reflective practices that place students at the centre of the learning process. Such changes represent a substantial step toward improving the quality and relevance of education and align closely with the broader goals of holistic development and twenty-first-century skill acquisition. The research therefore concludes that while the NEP 2020-aligned curriculum has initiated meaningful progress in transforming teaching practices, continued investment in teacher capacity building, infrastructure development, and assessment reform is necessary to achieve consistent and lasting outcomes. Policymakers and educational leaders must recognize teachers as central agents of change and provide them with sustained guidance, training, and institutional support. Only through such comprehensive efforts can the vision of the policy be fully realized in everyday classroom practice. In essence, the study affirms that curriculum transformation is both a pedagogical and systemic process. The success of NEP-aligned reforms ultimately depends on the degree to which teachers are empowered to innovate, adapt, and sustain new approaches to teaching and learning.

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