

An Analytical Study of the Foundational Literacy And Numeracy Framework Under NEP 2020

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Abstract: *The Government of India's ambitious vision is to transform the India by 2047 into a developed country with the slogan 'Bold Vision, Brighter Future'. To achieve the Viksit Bharat initiatives, the primary focus should be on achieving a 100% literacy rate as early as possible. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) has become a critical priority in India's educational transformation, particularly in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat. This paper studies the role of FLN as a fundamental driver of quality education and sustainable national development. FLN, defined as the ability to read with comprehension and perform basic mathematical operations by the end of the foundational stage, is essential for ensuring continuous learning and preventing early educational disengagement. The study adopts a qualitative approach, primarily based on content analysis of policy documents, government reports, and existing literature. It highlights key initiatives such as the NIPUN Bharat Mission, which aim to universalise FLN through improved pedagogy, teacher training, and assessment strategies. The findings suggest that strengthening FLN can significantly reduce educational inequalities, enhance human capital, and promote inclusive growth. It concludes that achieving universal FLN is not only an educational necessity but also a strategic imperative for building a skilled, knowledgeable, and self-reliant nation, thereby accelerating India's journey towards becoming a developed country.*

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Introduction: The Government of India's ambitious vision is to transform the India by 2047 into a developed country with the slogan 'Bold Vision, Brighter Future'. To fulfil this broad vision Indian Government outlines several key objectives. Such as substantial GDP, zero poverty, ensuring quality education and healthcare for all citizens, etc. All those objectives are focused on the four core pillars, identified by the Government of India, which are: i. Youth, ii. Poor, iii. Women, and iv. farmers. These are the core four pillars for the development of a nation. Several national initiatives have been taken by the Government of India, such as 'Make in India', 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', etc. These are an integral part of the Viksit Bharat strategy. So, to achieve the Viksit Bharat initiatives, the fundamental priority should be

focused on 100% literacy rate as early as possible, as per the recommendation of the National Education Policy 2020.

Indeed, the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy initiative achieved the ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ by 2030. Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015.

Education systems are fundamentally responsible for developing diverse abilities, including reading, numeracy, reasoning, socio-political, professional, cultural and others. Providing universal access to quality education, early literacy and numeracy are two essential skill areas that develop during the Foundational stage. The future of India is being shaped in early childhood (birth to 8 years). In these stages, education has become a concern towards access to elementary education. The ability to read and write, and to perform basic arithmetic, is a necessary foundation and an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning. However, various governmental and non-governmental surveys indicate that we are currently in a learning crisis: a large proportion of students in elementary school have not attained foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Foundational literacy and numeracy are the ability to read and understand introductory text and the ability to carry out basic addition and subtraction with numerals. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 identifies FLN as an ‘urgent and necessary prerequisite’ for achieving quality education. Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children will thus become an urgent national mission, with immediate measures taken across many fronts and clear short-term goals: that every student attains foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3. (NEP 2020)

Objectives:

1. To find out the core focus areas of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
2. To find out the recommendations of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in NEP-2020.

Methodology: Considering the demand and the nature of the proposed study, a qualitative research design is used. Data have been collected from secondary sources such as NEP 2020, reports, journals, and official publications related to FLN. Content analysis has been used to interpret the key themes and recommendations.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) is a crucial component of early education that ensures children acquire basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. As emphasised in the National Education Policy 2020. FLN serves as the foundation for all future learning. The core focus areas of FLN include the development of language and literacy skills, basic numeracy abilities, and cognitive understanding through activity-based learning. It also prioritises inclusivity, early childhood care, and teacher preparedness to ensure that every child achieves essential learning outcomes by the end of Grade 3.

Objective 1: To find out the core focus areas of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

1. **Foundational Literacy Skills:** enable children to become independent and engaged readers and writers who are able to transition from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’ and from ‘learning to write’ to ‘writing for academic success and pleasure’. (NIPUN Bharat)
2. **Foundational Numeracy Skills:** enable children to demonstrate an understanding of numbers and knowledge of mathematical concepts, develop number sense, Spatial understanding of space, size, position, and apply basic operations on numbers for problem solving. (NIPUN Bharat)

Early literacy and numeracy skills are not only foundational for learning but are correlated with greater quality of life, personal well-being, national stability, prosperity and are critical for educational outcomes in later years. Strong literacy and numeracy help children to learn, experiment, reason and create, to be active and informed citizens, and to contribute socially, culturally and economically.

Objective 2: To find out the recommendations of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in NEP-2020.

The National Education Policy 2020 places strong emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as a national priority to be achieved by Grade 3. It recommends a comprehensive framework that includes pupil-teacher ratios, curriculum reform, activity-based pedagogy, peer tutoring, and continuous assessment to strengthen early learning. The policy also advocates the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction and integration of technology. These recommendations aim to ensure that every child attains essential literacy and numeracy skills, forming a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

In the National Education Policy 2020, page no. 8 and point 2 '**Foundational Literacy and Numeracy: An Urgent & Necessary Prerequisite to Learning**' give recommendation for FLN, which are given below:

'2.3. First, teacher vacancies will be filled at the earliest...Teachers will be trained, encouraged, and supported - with continuous professional development - to impart foundational literacy and numeracy.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on filling teacher vacancies as early as possible, those who are trained, encouraged, and supported, especially in disadvantaged areas and those with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy. Also, a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be maintained at each school. In disadvantaged areas and those with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy, the aim is for a PTR of under 25:1. Special attention will be given to employing local teachers or those fluent in local languages.

'2.4. On the curricular side, there will be an increased focus ... early grade curriculum will be redesigned to have a renewed emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on the curricular side, increased foundational literacy and numeracy, and, generally, reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking throughout the school curriculum, with Specific hours daily and regular events over the year, activities involving continuous formative or adaptive assessment to track, individualise, and ensure each student's learning.

'2.5. Currently, with the lack of universal access to ECCE, ... collaborations with peers and parents, will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on the lack of universal access to ECCE, a large group of students already fall behind within the first few weeks of Grade 1. In this case, NEP-2020 recommended an interim 3-month play-based 'school preparation module' for all Grade 1 students. In this period, consisting of activities and workbooks around the learning of alphabets, sounds, words, colours, shapes, and numbers, and involving collaborations with peers and parents, will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs.

'2.6. A national repository of high-quality resources on ... o teachers and to help bridge any language barriers that may exist between teachers and students, will be piloted and implemented.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on a national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy, to be made available on the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA). These high-quality resources serve as aids for teachers and help bridge any language barriers between teachers and students.

'2.7. Due to the scale of the current learning crisis, all viable methods will be explored to support teachers ...this nationwide mission to promote foundational literacy and numeracy.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on the current learning crisis. To overcome this crisis, all viable methods will be explored to support teachers in their mission to attain universal foundational literacy and numeracy, including one-on-one peer tutoring and peer tutoring. It also helps both the local community and beyond to participate in this large-scale mission.

'2.8. Enjoyable and inspirational books for students at all levels will be ...undertaken to ensure the availability, accessibility, quality, and readership of books across geographies, languages, levels, and genres.' (NEP 2020)

In this sub-point, NEP-2020 focused on providing enjoyable and inspirational books for students at all levels, including through high-quality translation into all local and Indian languages, and will be made available extensively in schools, local public libraries, and Digital libraries. Particularly in village school libraries are to serve the community during non-school hours to ensure the availability, accessibility, quality, and readership of books across geographies, languages, levels, and genres.

Findings: In this study, the analysis of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) framework under the National Education Policy 2020 reveals that,

Objective 1: To find out the core focus areas of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

1. Foundational Literacy Skills that include 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' and 'learning to write' to 'writing for academic success and pleasure'.
2. Foundational Numeracy Skills that include understanding of numbers and knowledge of mathematical concepts, developing number sense, Spatial understanding of space, size, and position, and applying basic operations on numbers for problem solving.

Objective 2: To find out the recommendations of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in NEP-2020.

1. **Pupil-to-teacher ratios:** A pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR) of under 30:1 will be maintained at each school. In disadvantaged areas and those with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of illiteracy, the aim is to keep the PTR below 25:1.
2. **Local teachers and local languages:** Special attention will be given to employing local teachers or those fluent in local languages.
3. **Curriculum:** Increased foundational literacy and numeracy, and, generally, reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking throughout the school curriculum. Consisting of activities and workbooks around the learning of alphabets, sounds, words, colours, shapes, and numbers, and involving collaborations with peers and parents, will be developed by NCERT and SCERTs.
4. **Continuous evaluation:** Specific hours daily and regular events over the year, activities involving continuous formative or adaptive assessment to track, individualise, and ensure each student's learning.
5. **3-month play-based 'school preparation module':** Lack of universal access to ECCE, a large group of students already fall behind within the first few weeks of Grade 1, NEP-2020 recommended an interim 3-month play-based 'school preparation module' for all Grade 1 students.
6. **National repository of high-quality resources:** high-quality resources to be made available on the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA). These high-quality resources serve as aids for teachers and help bridge any language barriers between teachers and students.

7. **Support system of teachers:** to support teachers in their mission to attain universal foundational literacy and numeracy, including one-on-one peer tutoring and peer tutoring. It also helps both the local community and beyond to participate in this large-scale mission.
8. **Accessibility of Library:** High-quality translation into all local and Indian languages will be made available extensively in schools, local public libraries, and Digital libraries.

Conclusion: The overall discussion concludes that FLN is one of the keys to Viksit Bharat. The National Education Policy 2020 clearly establishes that strong foundational skills are essential for the overall development of learners and the effectiveness of the education system. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy form the essential foundation of early education, focusing on gradual progression from basic reading and writing skills to meaningful comprehension and simple calculations, to developing number sense, spatial understanding, and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for cognitive growth and lifelong learning.

The recommendations outlined in the National Education Policy 2020 present a comprehensive and well-structured approach to achieving these foundational goals. By ensuring appropriate pupil-to-teacher ratios, promoting the use of local languages through local teachers, and strengthening curriculum design with activity-based learning, the policy aims to promote continuous assessment, early intervention through play-based school preparation modules, and access to high-quality digital and library resources, further supporting individualised learning and reducing early learning gaps.

Also, the establishment of strong teacher support systems and community participation ensures that FLN is not limited to classrooms but becomes a collective responsibility.

Overall, the successful implementation of these recommendations can significantly enhance early learning outcomes, reduce educational disparities, and build a strong academic foundation, thereby contributing to the holistic development of learners and the progress of the nation.

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