Secondary School Students' Competency Development under NEP 2020: Exploring the Interrelationship between Teacher Education Reforms, Gender, and Family Position

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Abstract:

With a focus on inclusive, competency-based, and holistic learning, the National Education Policy 2020 proposes a revolutionary framework for the Indian educational system, this conceptual study investigates how teacher education reforms, gender, and family status relate to the growth of English language proficiency among secondary school pupils. The goal of the study is to critically examine how NEP 2020-driven teacher training programs and pedagogical innovations can help students develop their cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills as well as how family-related elements like birth order, parental involvement, and sociocultural context may influence these results. In order to figure out how NEP 2020 fosters 21st century skills like communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and character development, the study synthesises pertinent literature, policy documents, and theoretical frameworks using a conceptual and analytical methodology. In order to link teacher education changes with student-centered, competency-based learning as envisioned by NEP 2020, the study offers insights to policymakers, teacher educators, and families.

Keywords: *NEP 2020, Teacher Education Reforms, Secondary School Students, English Language Competency, Family Position, Gender Influence, 21st Century Skills, Competency-Based Learning, Conceptual Study.*

Introduction:

The National Education Policy 2020 designates competency-based, comprehensive, and student-centered education as the core principle of secondary education in India. The policy acknowledges that substantive pedagogical transformation necessitates comprehensive reforms in teacher training, cultural awareness, and an inclusive approach that considers differences in students' family circumstances and gendered experiences. Enhancing English language proficiency and 21st-century skills including communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, and character, relies on the dynamic interplay of school-based instructional strategies, family influences, and systemic reforms. This conceptual investigation explores this interaction by consolidating the three objectives into a unified analytical framework.

Teacher education reforms serve as a fundamental catalyst for transforming classrooms in accordance with NEP 2020. These reforms seek to advance teacher professionalism, elevate instructional quality, and promote reflective, research-based practices. Educators function as facilitators, integrating student-centered learning, multilingual flexibility, and competency-based evaluation into everyday classroom activities. The four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme, revised B.Ed programmes, and improved continuous professional development initiatives are intended to cultivate educators who are academically sound, pedagogically competent, technologically adept, and capable of fostering interactive and meaningful learning environments. In secondary English classrooms, these reforms are reflected through task-centered, application-based instructional approaches that emphasise genuine communication, critical thinking, and collaborative learning. Constructivist principles underpin these practices by prioritising active participation over inert absorption. Pre-service teacher training encompasses school residencies, micro-teaching, reflective journals, action research, and supervised practicum experiences, ensuring that pedagogical knowledge is both practical and firmly rooted in real classroom environments. Trainees acquire the skills to effectively address linguistic diversity, diverse learner profiles, differentiated instructional strategies, and a range of learning styles. They cultivate skills to facilitate learning, incorporate mother tongue support when necessary, and utilise communicative methodologies adapted to students across various proficiency levels. Innovative pedagogical strategies, including project-based learning, task-oriented language instruction, experiential education, and collaborative activities, promote the development of both language proficiency and broader skills. For instance, an educational activity focused on environmental awareness may include developing bilingual posters, facilitating peer interviews, designing digital presentations, and writing narratives for role-playing exercises. Such comprehensive activities facilitate the development of students' grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy.

Assessment reforms outlined in NEP 2020 prioritise formative, descriptive, and competency-based approaches over exclusive dependence on high-stakes examinations. Educators are instructed in the utilisation of rubrics, performance assessments, portfolios, reflective journals, peer evaluations, and observational checklists. These approaches foster students' ability to articulate ideas, embrace intellectual risks, collaborate efficiently, and respond innovatively to open-ended tasks, thereby facilitating a deeper and more lasting mastery of English communication skills. Family position, encompassing birth order, parental engagement, socio-cultural values, and the home learning environment, impacts students' readiness, attitudes, and receptiveness to these pedagogical modifications. Gender additionally functions as a moderating factor influencing access, participation, and results, frequently mirroring larger social hierarchies. Together, reforms in teacher education, family background, and gender dynamics form a complex ecosystem within which secondary school students acquire English language proficiency and related 21st-century skills. Digital pedagogy further enriches this ecosystem by facilitating educators in incorporating technology for multimodal instruction, ICT-enhanced language activities, and collaborative online learning. Digital tools, including brief videos, interactive language applications, and digital storytelling platforms, enable students from diverse backgrounds to access resources and enhance their English skills beyond the classroom, thereby promoting equity and inclusion.

This study thus conceptualises the interplay between teacher education reforms, family background, and gender in shaping the competency development of secondary school students, providing insights into the effective implementation of NEP 2020 in English language education.

Rationale of the Study:

Although the National Education Policy 2020 seeks to change Indian education through competency-based and holistic learning, nothing is known about how these changes affect the English language proficiency of secondary school pupils. Although it is anticipated that teacher education reforms will improve classroom procedures and foster 21st century abilities, little is known about how they will affect students' real competencies. In addition, family status, including birth order, parental participation, and sociocultural

background - has a significant impact on how students learn, but its relationship to NEP-driven reforms has not been thoroughly studied. Thus, this study is required to conceptually examine how gender, family position, and teacher education changes collectively influence secondary school students' competency development, providing insights that can improve the learning environment envisioned in NEP 2020.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyze how teacher education reforms introduced under the National Education Policy 2020 influence the development of English language competencies and related 21st century skills among secondary school students.

2. To examine the role of family position, including birth order, parental involvement, and socio-cultural background, in shaping secondary school students' competency development within the framework of NEP 2020.

3. To conceptually evaluate the interrelationship between teacher education reforms, gender, and family position in promoting student centered, competency-based learning at the secondary school level.

Methodology:

This study employs a conceptual and analytical technique to investigate the impact of teacher education reforms under the National Education Policy 2020 on the competency development of secondary school students. The study is founded on a comprehensive analysis of legislative documents, theoretical frameworks, and academic literature pertaining to language acquisition, familial status, gender, and competency-based education. Related ideas are examined, evaluated, and combined to find patterns, connections, and holes in what we already know. The study does not utilize field data; instead, it employs critical analysis to construct a cohesive picture of how NEP-driven reforms influence English language development and student competencies.

Delimitation of the Study:

In accordance with the National Education Policy 2020, this survey is restricted to students who are enrolled in secondary schools and focuses solely on English language proficiency. Reforms in teacher education, gender, and the situation of the family are all important factors that are taken into consideration. Neither actual data collecting nor classroom observations are included in this study; rather, it is conceptual in nature and depends primarily on various pieces of literature.

Conceptual Analysis:

This study's conceptual analysis is predicated on the three delineated objectives, which seek to investigate the factors that affect competency development among secondary school pupils within the framework of the National Education Policy 2020. This analysis comprehensively investigates the influence of teacher education reforms, familial status, and the interconnectedness of teacher education, gender, and family status. These elements are synthesised into a unified framework that embodies the holistic perspective of NEP 2020.

I. Teacher Education Reforms and Competency Development

Significance of Teacher Education Reforms

Teacher education is a fundamental component of NEP 2020's vision for transforming secondary education in India. The policy recognises that high-quality instruction is the paramount factor affecting student learning outcomes, particularly in subjects such as English, which require not only linguistic proficiency but also critical thinking, creative expression, and effective communication skills. Historically, teacher education in

India has faced challenges such as dependence on rote memorisation, inadequate opportunities for professional growth, and limited exposure to learner-centred pedagogical approaches. NEP 2020 seeks to address these disparities through extensive reforms intended to develop reflective, competent, and technologically adept educators.

The introduction of the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) marks a significant shift from conventional B.Ed. programs. Unlike traditional programs that primarily focus on content knowledge, ITEP integrates disciplinary expertise with pedagogical skills, ethical training, and practical experience. This comprehensive approach aligns with Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework, which posits that effective teaching necessitates the integration of content mastery, pedagogical methods, and an understanding of learners' requirements. For example, an educator with PCK in English can not only clarify complex grammatical structures but also design engaging classroom activities such as debates, role-plays, and narrative exercises that facilitate students' internalisation of concepts through experiential learning. In-service educators also benefit from Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives that focus on improving pedagogical skills, integrating technology into teaching methodologies, and implementing innovative instructional strategies. CPD ensures that educators remain aligned with the changing needs of students and the evolving standards of education. Complementing Continuing Professional Development, practice-based teacher education, including school residencies, micro-teaching, and action research, provides educators with direct classroom experience. These experiences enable educators to design interventions tailored to student diversity, effectively facilitate scaffolding of learning, and systematically evaluate outcomes. Consequently, the teacher education reforms introduced by NEP 2020 lay a solid groundwork for competency-based education by enhancing teachers' capacities to foster linguistic proficiency, critical thinking, and creativity among secondary school students. From a policy standpoint, these reforms correspond with NEP 2020's emphasis on holistic development, inclusivity, and competency-based assessment. By emphasising both the professional development of educators and the effective application of pedagogical strategies, NEP 2020 aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice. From the standpoint of this investigation, reforms in teacher education are essential to the central research aim: analysing the impact of these reforms on students' English language proficiency and associated 21st-century skills.

Theoretical Foundations of Teacher Education:

Teacher education reforms are grounded in several fundamental theories that direct instructional design, foster learner engagement, and support the development of competencies:

a. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development:

Jean Piaget's theory asserts that learners actively construct knowledge as they advance through developmental stages. Secondary school pupils, generally within the formal operational stage (approximately 12–18 years), possess the ability to think abstractly, reason logically, and participate in hypothesis testing. In the realm of English language acquisition, Piagetian principles advocate for the development of activities that stimulate students' intellectual growth while fostering active participation. For example, analysing literary works, examining diverse perspectives, or engaging in debates on social issues in English allows students to develop skills in abstract reasoning, critical analysis, and intricate problem-solving. Teacher education programs mandated by NEP 2020 focus on comprehending these developmental stages to enable prospective educators to customise instruction effectively.

b. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory:

Lev Vygotsky underscored that learning is fundamentally social in nature and transpires within a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students are able to attain elevated levels of comprehension through guidance. Educators proficient in scaffolding strategies are able to assist students with tasks that are marginally beyond their independent proficiency. For instance, in English reading comprehension, an instructor may initially demonstrate the analysis of a complex text, progressively fostering students' ability to interpret and evaluate independently. Sociocultural theory emphasises the significance of collaboration, dialogue, and mentorship, which are integral to NEP 2020's student-centered methodologies.

c. Bruner's Constructivist Theory:

Jerome Bruner endorses discovery learning, a pedagogical approach in which learners develop understanding through exploration and problem-solving. Bruner underscores the importance of spiral learning, in which concepts are revisited with progressively greater complexity. In English classrooms, Bruner's theory is implemented through project-based learning (PBL), experiential assignments, and inquiry-oriented activities. For example, students may investigate a social issue, compose persuasive essays, deliver presentations of their findings, and contemplate feedback, thereby gradually enhancing their linguistic and cognitive abilities. Teacher education programs now include instruction on constructivist methodologies, ensuring that educators are equipped to facilitate discovery-based learning.

d. Bandura's Social Learning Theory:

Albert Bandura emphasises the processes of learning via observation, modelling, and reinforcement. Within teacher education, this involves mentoring, co-teaching, and demonstration lessons, during which prospective teachers observe experienced educators employing interactive strategies. For instance, observing a mentor lead a peer discussion in English allows trainee instructors to assimilate strategies for fostering engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving.

e. Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning:

David Kolb underscores the importance of learning through a cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Practice-integrated teacher education under NEP 2020 encompasses this cycle through school residencies, micro-teaching, and action research initiatives, enabling teachers to convert theoretical knowledge into practical strategies that improve student competency.
By incorporating these theories into teacher education, NEP 2020 guarantees that educators are not only skilled in subject matter but also equipped to promote comprehensive development in students, encompassing English language proficiency and 21st-century skills.

Pedagogical Shifts and Instructional Strategies:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises a transition from teacher-centric instruction towards a competency-based, learner-centric pedagogical approach, facilitated by interactive and practical methodologies. Teacher education programs prepare educators to implement:

a. Project-Based Learning (PBL):

PBL promotes students' engagement in extended, meaningful activities that encompass a range of skills. In English classrooms, this may involve developing bilingual newsletters, designing digital storytelling projects, or conducting research on environmental or social issues. Such activities enhance linguistic proficiency, foster creativity, encourage collaboration, and develop problem-solving skills.

b. Task-Oriented Language Instruction (TOLI):

TBLT emphasises authentic language use over rote memorisation. Students participate in activities such as conducting interviews, preparing presentations, or engaging in debates. For instance, a classroom activity could involve students conducting a survey within their community, analysing the collected data, and presenting their findings in English, thereby simultaneously improving communication skills, critical thinking, and collaboration abilities.

c. Experiential Learning:

Kolb's experiential learning cycle is realised through activities that engage participants actively and are followed by reflective processes. For example, students may participate in role-play exercises to simulate real-world scenarios, analyse their language proficiency, identify areas for development, and subsequently apply these skills in future assignments.

d. Collaborative Learning:

Vygotsky and Bandura's viewpoints support collaborative learning, in which students collaboratively construct comprehension through discussion, peer feedback, and shared problem-solving. In English courses, collaborative writing and group presentations foster interpersonal skills, linguistic competence, and creative expression.

Contemporary teacher education curricula now incorporate modules dedicated to these pedagogical strategies, thereby equipping educators to design stimulating, interactive, and competency-based learning environments.

II. Family Position and Competency Development

Conceptualizing Family Position:

Family position includes various aspects of a child's social and psychological environment, such as birth order, parental engagement, socio-cultural standards, and the household setting. It plays a crucial role in the development of students' cognitive, social, and emotional abilities, which subsequently influence their ability to acquire English language skills and 21st-century competencies. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, child development takes place within a hierarchically organised system of interconnected environments:

1. Microsystem: Direct engagements with parents, siblings, and other family members. Supportive communication, reading practices, and home literacy activities within the microsystem promote students' language development and problem-solving skills.

2. Mesosystem: Interactions between family and school, including parental involvement in school activities, communication between teachers and parents, and aligned academic expectations. Active engagement within the mesosystem promotes student motivation and academic success.

3. Exosystem: Broader social environments, including community literacy resources, local libraries, and cultural practices, which indirectly impact learning experiences.

4. Macrosystem: The overarching cultural values, gender norms, and societal attitudes towards education that influence students' opportunities and self-perception.

This multi-layered ecological perspective offers a theoretical basis for comprehending how family role and environment influence the development of competencies, highlighting that effective learning is not solely governed by classroom instruction but results from an interplay of familial, cultural, and societal influences.

Birth Order and Learning Behavior:

Alfred Adler's Birth Order Theory asserts that a child's position within the family influences their personality development, attitudes towards learning, and social conduct. These characteristics bear practical significance for the acquisition of the English language and comprehensive skill development:

1. First-born children are frequently distinguished by qualities such as responsibility, diligence, and a strong focus on achievement. In secondary English classrooms, students often demonstrate proficiency in structured activities such as essay composition, grammatical exercises, and autonomous research. Their propensity for leadership can be effectively utilised in group discussions, peer instruction, and classroom organisation.

2. Middle children generally demonstrate strong social skills, adaptability, and proficiency in negotiation. They are likely to excel in collaborative initiatives, discussions, and team-oriented problem-solving exercises. Teachers can utilise middle children's mediating abilities to promote group cohesion and peer mentoring.

3. Youngest children generally exhibit creativity, a willingness to take risks, and strong social engagement. In language classrooms, students frequently demonstrate exceptional skill in creative writing, storytelling, drama, and multimedia endeavours. Their inherent tendency towards experimentation can foster innovation within the classroom and facilitate peer learning.

Understanding birth order enables educators to apply tailored instructional approaches, ensuring that each child's strengths are cultivated while potential learning deficits are effectively addressed. For example, first-born children may be tasked with more advanced analytical assignments, middle children may be given collaborative projects, and earliest children may be encouraged to engage in imaginative activities that combine language and creativity. This refined approach directly supports Objective 2 of the study, which emphasises the influence of family position on the development of competencies.

Parental Involvement and Support:

Parental engagement serves as a vital factor influencing student success, particularly within competency-based educational models. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement offers a comprehensive model:

1. Parenting: Establishing a nurturing home environment that provides sufficient resources, space, and encouragement to facilitate learning. To assess English proficiency, this may entail supplying reading materials, promoting oral reading practices, or engaging in discussions on various topics in English.

2. Communicating: Maintaining consistent communication between parents and instructors, offering feedback on student progress, and supporting classroom learning through reinforcement at home.

3. Volunteering: The involvement of parents in school activities, seminars, and literacy initiatives, which enhances the collaboration between school and home.

4. Learning at Home: Guidance on completing homework, assignments, and language practice. Encouraging children to maintain journals, prepare presentations, or engage in extensive reading promotes the development of linguistic skills.

5. Decision-Making: Parental participation in school governance and policy formulation plays an indirect role by shaping the school's culture and emphasising student-centered initiatives.

6. Collaborating with the Community: Utilising community resources, libraries, and extracurricular activities to enrich learning experiences.

Research consistently demonstrates that students who receive active parental support display increased motivation, improved attendance, and enhanced academic performance. In the development of the English

language, parental engagement may be demonstrated through activities such as jointly reading storybooks, conversing about current events in English, or providing support with project work. Teacher education programs aligned with NEP 2020 focus on preparing educators to effectively collaborate with parents, establishing a partnership that promotes ongoing learning and comprehensive skill development.

Socio-Cultural Context and Learning:

An individual's socio-cultural context exerts a substantial influence on language acquisition, cognitive growth, and the cultivation of competencies essential for the 21st century. Students from multilingual households frequently exhibit heightened metalinguistic awareness, thereby promoting English language acquisition. Likewise, cultural practices including storytelling, debate, or musical performance can furnish supplementary avenues for linguistic and cognitive growth. For example, in areas where oral storytelling traditions are common, educators can incorporate this cultural practice into English language instruction, thereby motivating students to recount narratives in English or develop multimedia adaptations. This methodology not only strengthens linguistic proficiency but also acknowledges students' cultural backgrounds, thereby fostering inclusivity and participation. Educators are also required to consider socioeconomic disparities, access to learning resources, and culturally-based expectations pertaining to education. Differentiated instruction, adaptable assessment strategies, and culturally responsive pedagogy are implemented to facilitate competency development for all students, irrespective of their socio-cultural backgrounds. These strategies are consistent with the National Education Policy 2020's emphasis on equity and inclusivity, demonstrating the policy's acknowledgement of contextual and familial factors that affect learning.

Family Position as a Moderator of Learning Outcomes:

Familial socioeconomic status not only affects learning independently but also modulates the efficacy of pedagogical interventions. For instance:

1. Supportive families augment classroom instruction by offering practice opportunities and emotional support. A student whose parents are actively involved may exhibit diligent completion of English assignments, confident participation in discussions, and improved writing and presentation skills.

2. Conversely, families with limited engagement may curtail opportunities for guided practice, collaborative projects, or exploration, potentially impeding the acquisition of competency. In these situations, educators should implement compensatory strategies, including peer mentoring, differentiated instruction, or structured in-class support.

3. Birth order, parental attitudes, and sociocultural context synergistically influence motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience, thereby affecting students' receptiveness to competency-based learning.

By incorporating these understandings, educators can individualise instruction to align with the distinct familial circumstances of each student, thereby ensuring that classroom methodologies are supported within the home environment and that all pupils possess equivalent prospects for acquiring English language fluency and cultivating competencies relevant to the 21st century.

Practical Classroom Applications:

In practice, the influence of familial standing can be utilised through:

1. Individualised Instruction: Acknowledging variations in birth order characteristics, parental involvement, and socio-cultural backgrounds to develop tailored learning activities.

2. Parental Engagement Initiatives: Workshops and communication platforms designed to enable parents to foster language development and comprehensive skill acquisition.

3. Home School Projects: Assignments designed to promote parent–child collaboration, including activities such as bilingual narrative and digital media production.

4. Mentoring and Peer Support: For students with limited familial support, peer mentoring can offer essential guidance that addresses deficiencies within the home environment.

These practices guarantee that the enhancement of students' English language skills is supported through a collaborative interaction between family and school, aligning with Objective 2 of the study.

Policy Implications:

Family-centered strategies carry substantial implications for both policy and practice:

1. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 encourages schools to proactively involve families in curriculum development, assessment procedures, and co-curricular endeavours.

2. Teacher education programs should equip educators with the skills to comprehend family dynamics and strategically utilise parental involvement.

3. The socio-cultural context should serve as the foundation for curriculum development, instructional methodologies, and resource distribution to foster equitable and inclusive practices.

Acknowledging the influence of familial context allows for the development of educational interventions that optimise learning outcomes, particularly in language acquisition and the cultivation of 21st-century competencies.

Familial context, encompassing birth order, parental engagement, and sociocultural influences, significantly moderates students' competency development. Through the integration of pedagogical approaches with familial and cultural contexts, educators can effectively foster the development of English language proficiency, critical thinking abilities, creative expression, and collaborative skills. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's focus on inclusive, competency-based education highlights the significance of incorporating familial perspectives into educational planning. This analysis directly addresses Objective 2 and establishes the foundation for examining the interaction with gender within the context of Objective 3.

III. Gender and Competency Development:

Comprehending Gender Dynamics in Education

Gender is a fundamental social determinant that affects learning experiences, engagement, and academic outcomes within educational settings. It influences the manner in which students engage with instructors, peers, and educational resources. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, gendered behaviours and attitudes are acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Children internalise societal expectations regarding "appropriate" behaviours for boys and girls, which subsequently influence their engagement in classroom activities, communication patterns, and academic self-efficacy.

Within the scope of English language acquisition, gender may impact fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and confidence in oral communication. For example, research suggests that females frequently outperform boys in reading and writing activities, whereas boys may demonstrate greater proficiency in collaborative problem-solving or task-oriented presentations. Recognising these distinctions is

essential for developing gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches that promote equitable access to educational opportunities, in accordance with the emphasis on inclusion and equity outlined in NEP 2020.

Gender Variations in English Language Proficiency

Empirical and theoretical investigations offer valuable insights into the influence of gender on English language acquisition:

1. Verbal and Writing Skills: Girls frequently demonstrate superior verbal fluency and writing competence, ascribed to early exposure to literacy activities and socialisation practices that prioritise communication and self-expression. Educators can utilise this strength in activities such as essay composition, debates, and reflective journals.

2. Oral Communication and Presentations: Boys may exhibit confidence in oral presentations or interactive activities, often responding effectively to competitive or collaborative learning approaches. Organised group activities and project-oriented learning can improve their level of engagement and language development.

3. Critical Thinking and Collaboration: Cooperative learning benefits individuals of all genders; however, middle-born children and girls often demonstrate more advanced interpersonal negotiation and collaborative problem-solving abilities, whereas boys are more likely to assume leadership positions in action-oriented tasks.

By recognising these tendencies, educators can develop differentiated instructional strategies that enable all students to enhance their English proficiency while simultaneously promoting creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, thereby directly fulfilling Objective 3.

Engagement with Teacher Education Reforms:

Gender sensitivity in education is strengthened when educators receive comprehensive training to identify and rectify disparities in participation and learning outcomes. NEP 2020 underscores the importance of inclusive teacher education, equipping educators to:

1. Recognise gender-related obstacles to learning

2. Foster equitable engagement in classroom activities

3. Implement differentiated approaches to address diverse learning styles

For instance, an educator trained through the ITEP program might observe that male students exhibit lower engagement in reflective writing yet demonstrate greater proficiency in oral presentations. Through the implementation of paired activities in which boys collaboratively compose scripts and perform them, educators concurrently strengthen written and oral skills while promoting collaboration. Similarly, females who may exhibit reluctance in public speaking can be supported through constructive peer feedback and structured presentation opportunities.

Shulman's PCK framework underpins this approach, as teacher efficacy relies on the integration of content knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and learner characteristics including gender. The reforms introduced by NEP 2020 ensure that educators are prepared to facilitate classroom engagement, address implicit biases, and employ strategies that optimise learning outcomes for all genders.

Gender and Family Position:

The familial environment, in conjunction with gender, influences students' learning experiences. Societal norms frequently delineate distinct roles, responsibilities, and behavioural expectations for males and females, thereby impacting their involvement in English language acquisition and the advancement of their proficiency. For example:

1. Within certain familial structures, girls may receive greater encouragement for literacy-based pursuits, thereby cultivating verbal proficiency.

2. Boys may be directed towards practical or competitive endeavours, complementing their aptitude for oral and interactive learning.

3. Birth order also influences gender roles; firstborn girls may exhibit heightened achievement motivation and diligence, whereas youngest boys may demonstrate creativity and risk-taking in activities such as dramatic performance, digital storytelling, or project-based learning.

Contemporary teacher education curricula now integrate training designed to equip educators with the skills to identify and address such interactions, thereby mitigating the potential for gendered expectations to constrain learning opportunities. For instance, assigning students to collaborative endeavours predicated on their respective strengths can foster equitable skill development.

Classroom Strategies for Gender-Sensitive Competency Development:

Gender-sensitive pedagogy encompasses various strategies intended to optimise learning outcomes:

1. Differentiated Instruction: Tailoring instructional activities to align with students' individual strengths, and engagement behaviours.

2. Collaborative Group Formation: Establishing mixed-gender teams to capitalise on the synergistic application of diverse skill sets in problem-solving, communication, and creative endeavours.

3. Role Assignments: Promoting student rotation through project roles (e.g., writer, presenter, researcher) within group projects to facilitate equitable participation.

4. Scaffolded Instruction: Offering supplementary support to students who may exhibit diminished confidence in particular competencies, potentially stemming from gendered socialisation or previous experiences.

5. Formative Assessment: Employing continuous, descriptive assessments to monitor skill acquisition and modify instructional strategies in response to individual requirements.

These pedagogical approaches facilitate English language proficiency and the acquisition of 21st-century skills for all students, thereby supporting the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 pertaining to comprehensive and inclusive education.

Integrated Interaction: Teacher Education, Family Position, and Gender

The cultivation of English language proficiency and related abilities is most effectively conceptualised as an interaction among instructor training, familial background, and gender. The factors exert mutual influence and moderation:

1. Teacher Education Reforms: Provide educators with pedagogical expertise, scaffolding methodologies, and digital resources to effectively accommodate diverse learning requirements.

2. Familial Context: Influences motivation, language exposure, and learning support, with birth order and parental involvement affecting receptiveness to pedagogical approaches.

3. Gender: Influences engagement, self-assurance, and preferred learning methodologies, necessitating nuanced and inclusive instructional strategies.

For example, a firstborn female from a supportive family context may demonstrate proficiency in analytical writing while exhibiting reticence in oral presentations. An effectively trained educator can provide scaffolding for oral assignments, facilitate collaborative group work, and offer formative feedback to promote comprehensive competency development. Conversely, a younger male child from a family with less parental involvement may excel in creative project-based assignments while experiencing difficulty with structured grammatical exercises. Instructional interventions and peer assistance can mitigate these disparities, thereby promoting equitable results.

This integrated perspective is congruent with Objective 3, assessing the collective impact of teacher education reforms, gender dynamics, and familial contexts on the advancement of competency-based, student-centered learning methodologies.

Practical Classroom Applications:

Educators may employ the subsequent gender-sensitive strategies to promote the advancement of competencies:

1. Project-Oriented and Task-Oriented Pedagogy: Develop activities enabling students to apply their unique capabilities while participating in collaborative endeavours.

2. Inclusive Assessment Practices: Employ rubrics, portfolios, peer assessments, and reflective journals to ensure that evaluation encompasses comprehensive competencies extending beyond conventional indicators.

3. Parental Collaboration: Foster parental involvement in facilitating language practice within the home environment, offering tailored guidance that addresses gender-specific strengths or requirements.

4. Technology Integration: Implement digital platforms to offer adaptable and individualised opportunities for engagement, guaranteeing equitable access to learning resources for students of all genders.

These approaches guarantee the development of English proficiency, creativity, critical reasoning, teamwork, and communication abilities across all genders while promoting inclusion, fairness, and ongoing participation.

Policy and Research Implications:

The incorporation of gender-sensitive methodologies in the enhancement of competencies bears multiple significant implications:

1. Teacher Education Policy: Curricular frameworks shall encompass components addressing gender equity, differentiated instructional methods, and inclusive pedagogical practices.

2. School Curriculum Development: Curriculum frameworks ought to facilitate adaptable, collaborative, and project-oriented learning experiences that address the varied profiles of learners.

3. Parental Engagement Policies: Educational institutions ought to promote gender-neutral practices within the household, advising parents to equally support the literacy and skill acquisition of both male and female children.

4. Research Directions: Future investigations may empirically analyse the interplay between gender, familial hierarchy, and educator qualifications in shaping the development of 21st-century skills.

The policy framework of NEP 2020 endorses these methodologies, highlighting an inclusive, competency-oriented, and comprehensive approach to learning that considers gender considerations, familial backgrounds, and the readiness of educators.

Gender significantly influences the acquisition of English language proficiency and the development of 21st-century skills. Its influence is influenced by reforms in teacher education and familial status, underscoring the importance of comprehensive, inclusive, and tailored pedagogical approaches. Educators who possess comprehensive theoretical knowledge, employ effective practical methodologies, and demonstrate an acute sensitivity to gender-specific and familial circumstances are capable of guaranteeing equitable opportunities for every student. This analysis pertains to Objective 3, finalising the conceptual framework by illustrating the interrelationships among teacher education, familial interactions, and gender in promoting the development of student-centered competencies.

Integrated Conceptual Framework:

The antecedent sections establish a comprehensive framework that elucidates the dynamic interaction of teacher education reforms, familial status, and gender in the formation of competency development. Key highlights:

1. Teacher Education Reforms: Offer instruction in pedagogical techniques, digital technology integration, formative assessment methodologies, and the cultivation of learner diversity awareness.

2. Familial Context: Moderates motivational drive, active participation, and receptiveness to learning through factors such as birth order, parental engagement, and sociocultural influences.

3. Gender: Affects participation, engagement, and learning styles, necessitating differentiated instruction and inclusive classroom methodologies.

Practical Considerations:

1. Teacher preparation programs should incorporate constructivist pedagogy, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), and gender-responsive teaching practices.

2. Educational institutions should foster collaborative learning partnerships with families and furnish culturally relevant resources.

3. Classroom activities should be designed to foster collaboration, be project-based in nature, and emphasise the development of specific competencies. These activities should also integrate the balanced development of linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills.

Policy Implications:

1. The National Education Policy 2020 underscores the importance of inclusive, competency-based learning; these elements should inform the development of curricula, assessment methodologies, and teacher training initiatives.

2. Further investigation, grounded in empirical evidence, is warranted to examine the interplay of teacher training, familial influences, and gender, with the objective of informing policy and improving pedagogical practices.

**Prospective Avenues for Future Research:**

Future research ought to empirically examine the relationships outlined in this conceptual framework, emphasising the impact of teacher education reforms, familial background, and gender on secondary

students' English language proficiency and 21st-century skills. Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research can evaluate the influence of teacher training initiatives on classroom practices, investigate the effects of birth order and parental involvement on learning outcomes, and analyse gender-related disparities in engagement, participation, and skill development. Such studies would furnish evidence-based validation of the framework and deliver practical guidance for educators and policymakers implementing NEP 2020 reforms. Moreover, research grounded in intervention and the creation of pragmatic assessment instruments can improve the practical utility of this framework. For instance, experimental studies can assess student-centered, task-oriented, and digital pedagogical methods, gender-sensitive instructional strategies, and parental involvement initiatives to enhance competency development. Developing dependable assessment tools for English proficiency, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity will enable educators to monitor student advancement and customise instruction effectively. Together, these research directions will integrate theory and practice, ensuring that the vision of NEP 2020 for holistic, competency-based, and inclusive education is effectively implemented in secondary schools.

Conclusion:

This conceptual analysis illustrates that the development of competencies among secondary school students in English and 21st-century skills constitutes a complex process shaped by reforms in teacher education, familial status, and gender. The amalgamation of educational theories (Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Bandura, Shulman, Adler, Epstein, Bloom, Kolb, TPACK), pedagogical implementations within the classroom, and the policy directives of NEP 2020 establishes a comprehensive framework for comprehending and improving student achievement. This framework provides pragmatic, policy-oriented insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers endeavouring to promote student-centered, inclusive, and competency-based pedagogical practices.

Figure 1: Diagram, demonstrating the link between teacher education, family position, gender, and student competencies
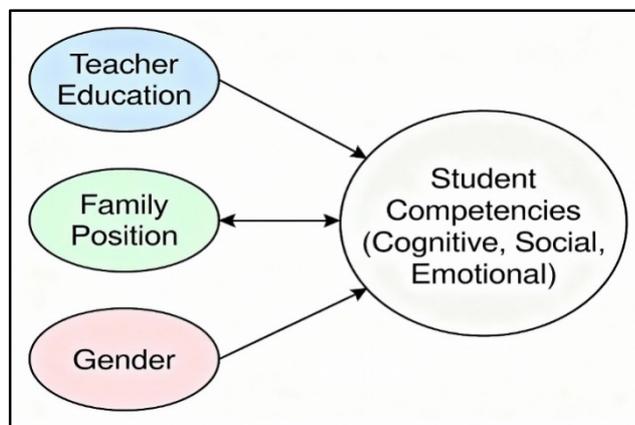
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