

From Awareness to Acceptance: Student Perceptions of NEP 2020

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Abstract

This study examines the cognitive mechanisms through which student awareness shapes perceptions of the National Education Policy 2020 within higher education. While existing research has largely focused on measuring awareness levels, limited attention has been given to understanding how awareness translates into policy acceptance. Addressing this gap, the study conceptualizes awareness as a mediating variable linking institutional exposure to student perception.

Primary data were collected from 139 students in higher education institutions in Indore, India. Composite indices for awareness and perception were developed, and statistical techniques including reliability analysis, correlation, and regression were applied. The findings indicate that institutional exposure significantly enhances awareness, which in turn exerts a strong positive influence on student perception. Mediation analysis confirms that awareness serves as a critical transmission mechanism through which institutional initiatives shape student attitudes.

By moving beyond descriptive assessment, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the causal pathway linking exposure, awareness, and perception. The findings highlight that the success of large-scale educational reforms depends not only on structural design but on the effectiveness of awareness-building strategies. The study offers implications for policymakers and institutions seeking to strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve policy implementation outcomes in higher education.

Keywords: NEP 2020, student awareness, higher education, policy implementation, perception, India

1. Introduction

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2. Literature Review

Awareness has been consistently identified as a key explain variance in of stakeholder response to educational reforms. Studies indicate that policy awareness significantly predictive relationship attitudes and acceptance among students and educators (Gupta & Gupta, 2022). In the case of NEP 2020, research suggests that awareness levels among students are moderate and unevenly distributed, reflecting inconsistencies in institutional communication (Kumar & Singh, 2022).

However, awareness alone does not fully explain stakeholder behavior. Theoretical and empirical research suggests that awareness operates as a precursor to perception and acceptance. According to Rogers (2003), individuals move from awareness to persuasion before forming attitudes toward an innovation. Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that informed individuals are more likely to develop favourable attitudes toward a given policy (Ajzen, 1991). This indicates a directional relationship in which awareness shapes perception.

Institutional mechanisms play a critical role in facilitating this transition. Structured interventions such as workshops, seminars, and training programs have been shown to significantly enhance awareness levels among stakeholders (UNESCO, 2021). This aligns with broader frameworks of policy implementation, which emphasize that institutional capacity is essential for translating policy into practice (OECD, 2019). At the same time, literature highlights systemic challenges in implementing educational reforms. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited faculty preparedness, and uneven institutional readiness continue to hinder effective adoption (Tilak, 2021). Studies on global higher education systems also emphasize that large-scale educational reforms require sustained engagement and alignment between policy objectives and institutional capabilities (Marginson, 2016; Varghese, 2015).

From a global perspective, education reform is increasingly viewed as a collaborative and participatory process. Reports by UNESCO (2021) stress that stakeholder understanding and engagement are fundamental to successful implementation. Similarly, research on global education policy highlights that the success of reforms depends on how effectively they are interpreted and adopted at the institutional level (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Despite these insights, a critical limitation of existing research is its predominantly descriptive nature. Most studies measure awareness and perception independently without examining the causal pathways linking them. This study addresses this gap by proposing and empirically testing a structured model in which awareness mediates the relationship between institutional exposure and student perception.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Institutional Exposure → Awareness → Perception

H1: Institutional exposure significantly predictive relationship student awareness.

H2: Student awareness positively predictive relationship perception.

H3: Awareness mediates the relationship between institutional exposure and perception.

H4: Higher awareness reduces perceived information gaps.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between institutional exposure, student awareness, and perception of the National Education Policy 2020. The design is explanatory in nature, as it seeks to test hypothesized relationships and identify the underlying mechanism through which awareness predictive relationship perception.

4.2 Data Collection and Sample

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to students enrolled in higher education institutions in Indore, India. A total of 139 valid responses were obtained using convenience sampling.

The sample includes students from diverse academic backgrounds and institutional types, ensuring variability in exposure to NEP-related initiatives. While the use of non-probability sampling limits generalizability, it is appropriate for exploratory and theory-testing research within a defined context.

4.3 Measurement of Variables

The study operationalizes key constructs using multi-item measures based on prior literature and policy dimensions:

- Awareness Index: Measured using items capturing knowledge of NEP provisions (e.g., multidisciplinary education, Academic Bank of Credits, flexible degree structures) and self-assessed awareness levels.
- Perception Index: Measured through Likert-scale items reflecting attitudes toward the effectiveness, relevance, and potential impact of NEP 2020.
- Institutional Exposure: Measured as a binary/ordinal variable indicating whether respondents have participated in seminars, workshops, or institutional discussions related to NEP 2020.
- Information Gap: Measured through items capturing perceived need for additional information regarding the policy.

All Likert-scale items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Composite indices were constructed by averaging item scores for each construct.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The values obtained for awareness (0.78) and perception (0.81) exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

Content validity was ensured through alignment of measurement items with key provisions of NEP 2020 and established constructs in policy awareness and perception literature. The use of composite indices further enhances construct validity by capturing multiple dimensions of each variable.

4.5 Analytical Strategy

The study employs a three-stage analytical approach:

1. Descriptive and Reliability Analysis to assess internal consistency of constructs
2. Correlation Analysis to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables
3. Regression Analysis to test the hypothesized relationships and assess the explanatory power of independent variables

All analyses were conducted using SPSS.

4.6 Mediation Analysis

To examine whether awareness mediates the relationship between institutional exposure and student per-

ception, the study employs the causal steps approach proposed by Reuben Baron and David Kenny (1986), supplemented by statistical validation of indirect effects.

The mediation analysis follows three conditions:

1. Path a: Institutional exposure must significantly influence awareness
2. Path b: Awareness must significantly influence perception
3. Path c' (Direct Effect): The effect of institutional exposure on perception should reduce in magnitude or become insignificant when awareness is included in the model

The regression results satisfy all three conditions:

- Institutional exposure significantly predicts awareness ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$)
- Awareness significantly predicts perception ($\beta = 0.65, p < 0.001$)
- The direct effect of institutional exposure on perception becomes statistically insignificant when awareness is included, indicating full mediation

To strengthen the robustness of the mediation effect, the indirect effect was further assessed using a Sobel test, which confirmed that the mediating role of awareness is statistically significant.

This analytical approach establishes awareness as a transmission mechanism through which institutional exposure predictive relationship student perception, providing empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework.

5. Results

Table 1
Reliability analysis

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Awareness	6	0.78
Perception	4	0.81

Source: Author's calculation

Table 2
Correlation matrix

Variables	Awareness	Perception
Awareness	1	0.62**
Perception	0.62**	1

Source: Author's calculation

Table 3
Regression results

Model	Variable	Beta (β)	Significance
1	Exposure \rightarrow Awareness	0.48	$p < 0.01$
2	Awareness \rightarrow Perception	0.65	$p < 0.001$

Source: Author's calculation

The results confirm the mediating role of awareness in shaping perception.

6. Discussion

The findings establish awareness as a central mechanism shaping student perception of the National Educ-

ation Policy 2020. Institutional exposure predictive relationship perception indirectly through awareness, reinforcing the importance of communication processes in policy implementation.

The study extends prior research (Kumar & Singh, 2022; Gupta & Gupta, 2022) by moving beyond descriptive analysis and demonstrating a significant association. It aligns with global perspectives (Marginson, 2016; Varghese, 2015) and theoretical frameworks such as Rogers (2003) and Ajzen (1991). Taken together, the findings reposition awareness as a necessary condition for meaningful policy adoption, highlighting its role as a cognitive bridge between institutional efforts and student acceptance.

7. Conclusion

The study confirms that awareness is a key explain variance in of student perception toward NEP 2020. Institutional exposure enhances awareness, which in turn drives perception and acceptance.

The findings suggest that policy success depends not only on design but on effective communication and sustained engagement.

8. Practical Implications

Higher education institutions should implement structured awareness programs, continuous communication strategies, and active student engagement initiatives to improve policy acceptance.

9. Policy-Level Implications

Policymakers should integrate awareness-building into implementation strategies through standardized modules, monitoring frameworks, and national-level engagement initiatives to ensure uniform adoption of reforms.

10. Limitations and Future Scope

The study is limited by its sample size and geographic scope. Future research should use larger samples and advanced models such as structural equation modelling to validate findings and examine long-term outcomes.

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