

NIPUN Bharat Mission under National Education Policy 2020 for Quality Education in India

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Abstract

The National Education policy (NEP) 2020, emphasizes a paradigmatic shift in India's education system by emphasizing Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as cornerstone for equitable, and quality primary education. For this purpose, National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat Mission was launched in July, 2021 under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. The aim of the mission is to ensure universal attainment of FLN among primary grade students by grade 3 completion by the academic year 20226-27. This is a simple review paper examines the NIPUN Bharat Mission under NEP 2020. This paper review government publication, policy documents, and research literature. On the basis of review significant issues are revealed, such as poor teacher preparation and training, serious infrastructures deficiencies, ongoing teacher shortages, a lack of teaching-learning resources, mentoring system that prioritize compliance over classroom support, and low parental involvement for achieving the mission goals. These multiple challenges significantly reduce the mission effectiveness in providing quality primary education. To address these challenges the paper recommends some suggestion related to establishing continuous professional development programmes supported by effective mentoring, improving school infrastructure, learning resources, and parental involvement. The study concludes using this recommendation through coordinated policy action, can significantly improve early-grade learning outcomes and support the achievement of the FLN goals of the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

Keywords: Foundational literacy, Foundational numeracy, NIPUN Bharat, Quality education, Foundational education

1. Introduction

Improving the effectiveness and quality of education require a strong focus on the educational and developmental process inherent in early childhood (Tiwari and Kuvad, 2020) because early childhood education encompasses the development period from birth to age eight years, constitute the critical period for growth and development, this is when the foundation for holistic development and lifelong learning is established (Pratham, 2021). India has attained substantial progress in the universalization of elementary education and now possesses one of the world largest educational systems, with nearly 250 million students and 9.4 million teachers. While research study shows that increasing student enrolment, without improvements in educational quality, may not result in enhanced learning outcomes (Ministry of

Education, 2021). As reported in the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019, a significant number of grade 5 students in India failed to read grade 2 level text and perform basic arithmetic calculations (ASER Centre, 2019). Reports from government and non-government surveys show that India is facing a learning crisis. More than five crore students at the elementary level have failed to achieve FLN skills, including the reading ability, understanding basic text and perform simple addition and subtraction. In this context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the critical importance of the early Childhood Care and Education, and achieving universal FLN in primary schools by 2025 is identified as the highest priority of the education system. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) will establish a national mission of FLN as a priority (Government of India, 2020).

2. Objective of the study

This research examines the NIPUN Bharat initiatives with emphasis on its Foundational literacy and Numeracy components and identifies the major obstacles achieving the FLN goals.

3. Methodology

The present study is based on an analysis of secondary sources, obtained from official government reports, policy documents, and scholarly articles associated with the NIPUN Bharat Mission and FLN. The gathered information was reviewed and analysed to gain an understanding of the mission and the challenges involved in achieving its goals.

4. Policy Framework and Context

4.1 NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission

The NEP 2020 recognizes that proficiency in reading, writing, and basic arithmetic skills are critical foundations for lifelong learning and educational success. According to this policy framework, the existing 10+2 educational structure will be replaced with a new 5+3+3+4 structural model which is divided into Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary that encompasses comprehensive educational reforms in both teaching methodologies and curriculum design for students aged 3 to 8 years. Previous educational framework, early childhood education for children between 3 and 6 years of age is not formally integrated, as primary education begin at age 6 with class 1. However, the proposed new educational structure addresses this gap by incorporating ECCE programs from age 3 onwards.

Educational reforms at all levels aim to change how students learn by moving away from rote memorization and toward more effective learning methods. The focus emphasizes towards building understanding and helping learners to develop the ability to learn independently. Education will aim to develop more than just academic knowledge. It will also focus on building character and creating well-rounded individuals who have the important skill needed for today's world. This means students will learn not only how to think critically but also how to become responsible and capable citizens. The curriculum will incorporate hands-on learning experiences and integrate across subject so that students can learn through doing and creative experience (Government of India, 2020). To support foundational literacy and numeracy skills, the Ministry of Education has launched a priority program called NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Mission on 5th July 2021. This initiative aims to ensure that all students develop strong reading and mathematical skills from the early stages of their education (Ministry of Education, 2021). The mission envisions creating supportive conditions in school where all children develop strong foundational skill in reading, writing,

and mathematics. By 2026-27, every child should be able to read with comprehension, write effectively and perform basic mathematics operations by the end of grade 3, or at the latest by grade 5. The mission will be implemented through a structured framework operating at five different levels: national, state, district, block, and school. (Ministry of Education & Government of India, 2021). The mission emphasizes the provision of systematic support and meaningful engagement across stakeholders' groups, students, teachers, teachers, parents, and communities as prerequisite conditions for accomplishing foundational learning goals that serves as the foundational architecture for all future learning trajectories (Sharma, 2024). The mission tells foundational competency achievement by grade 3 through systematic teacher professional development, quality curricular resources, and digital learning technologies. The mission emphasizes professional development for teachers through specialized training initiative. Teachers will participate in focused training programs, especially the NISTHA-FLN program, to strengthen their teaching methods in reading and math. This continuous support helps educators deliver better instruction and improve student learning. (Sarkar & Gaur, 2025).

4.2 Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

Foundational learning constitutes a primary mechanism through which social-emotional competencies, cognitive capacities, and community engagement are reinforced. The enhancement of foundational literacy and numeracy skills, operationalized through competencies in reading, writing, proficiency, comprehension, and elementary mathematical operations, has been established as a critical prerequisite within contemporary development paradigms (Mahaptra et al., 2025).

4.2.1 Foundational Literacy

Literacy development by age ten is essential for all children. Strong reading proficiency enables access to continued learning opportunities and educational advancement, while poor reading ability significantly limits their academic development. Literacy development by age 10 is essential for children. Foundational Literacy comprises the following primary components:

Oral language development

The primary oral language, components include improved listening, expanded vocabulary, and increase conversation ability. These oral competencies are essential for reading and writing development.

Decoding

Ability to decode written words by understanding the connection between symbols and their corresponding sounds.

Reading Fluency

Many children recognize aksharas at the letter level but read slowly without fluent reading patterns. Reading fluency is the capacity to read text accurately and quickly, with proper expression and comprehension, so that children can understand written content.

Reading comprehension

This domain consists of competencies in understanding texts, retrieving relevant information, and interpreting written content.

Writing

This domain encompasses competencies involving the formation of aksharas and words, as well as the use of writing for personal expression and effective communication (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021).

These foundational literacy components work together to ensure students develop the necessary skills for reading and comprehension at an early stage.

4.2.2 Foundational Numeracy

Foundational numeracy represents the capability to reason mathematically and utilize basic numerical concepts in solving practical problems encountered in daily life. The primary components and aspects of early mathematics learning consist of:

Pre number concept

The ability to count accurately and comprehend the organisation of the number system.

Shapes and spatial understanding

The ability to perform basic mathematical computations using individual methods for numbers up to three digits and apply these skills to daily life activities across various contexts.

Numbers and numbers operations

Acquiring knowledge of mathematical conversations necessary for mastering mathematical techniques, including understanding the base ten system for numerical representation.

Measurement

Understanding and apply standards mathematical algorithms to perform addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division operations with numbers up to three digits.

Data handling

The ability to identify and extend basic patterns from visual shape repetition to numerical sequences, and comprehend simple data and information in everyday contexts (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021).

4.3 Teachers' involvement in the Mission

Teachers serve fundamental function in students' lives and classroom experience, particularly during the foundational years of primary education. The fundamental responsibility of teachers within classroom setting is to create opportunities that enhance children's capacity to learn actively and develop their own understanding and knowledge. The competencies and skill of teachers are critically in supporting students' achievement of foundational learning abilities (Ministry of Education, 2021). Teacher preparation and professional development are identified as an essential component requisite for effective program execution of foundational learning initiatives and children's achievement of FLN competencies (Mahanta, 2025). Teachers constitute the primary facilitator of foundational learning and identified as essential stakeholders in realization of the mission strategic objectives (Sarkar & Gaur, 2025).

4.4 Parents involvement in the Mission

Parental engagement constitutes a critical factor influencing FLN. Children whose parents engage substantively in early-stage educational programming achieve better learning outcomes in comparison to children with limited parental participation (Gupta & Ram, 2025). Parents constitute a critical factor in advancing academic achievement while simultaneously fostering positive orientation toward learning and educational participation. (Srinivas et al., 2025).

Because home-based literacy and numeracy activity are important component of children's learning environment (Kumar & Behera, 2022). The attainment of improved learning outcomes requires parental and community awareness of children's learning proficiency and academic achievement. Therefore, the National Mission on FLN is designed to reinforce multi-stakeholder participatory engagement, encompassing communities, families, and teachers. This strategy to encourages constructive

communication between parents and teachers, facilitating collaboration discussion of children's learning progress and coordinated academic support (Government of India, 2020).

5. Challenges

The study identified various challenges affecting the effective implementation of the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

Monitoring and support mechanisms have been identified as insufficient. Existing systems tend to emphasize administrative reporting and compliance verification rather than substantive classroom-based mentoring, actionable instructional guidance, and constructive formative feedback (Mahanta, 2025). This compliance-oriented approach fails to address the day-to-day challenges teachers encounter. The lack of continuous professional support further limits teachers' capacity to implement FLN practices and address classroom difficulties (Mohapatra & Singh, 2024).

Infrastructure Learning resources

Physical infrastructure limitation present barriers to FLN implementation. A major challenge is the shortage of appropriate teaching and learning materials are crucial for establishing an effective classroom environment. Research highlights that numeracy and literacy kits are frequently damaged, misplaced, or insufficient in quantity, as many school receive only a single kit to serve the entire institution. The widespread use of multi-grade teaching in shared classrooms creates significant teaching challenges, making it difficult to provide age-appropriate instruction and support learners who have different learning styles and needs (Mahanta, 2025). Many school do not have adequate electricity or dedicated learning spaces necessary to support effective foundational skills instruction (Duan, 2023).

Teacher workload and administrative burden

High workloads reduce the time teachers have to plan meaningful learning activities and develop resources that support teaching outcomes of FLN objectives. Excessive administrative workload placed on teachers, which reduces curriculum preparation time (Mahanta, 2025).

Pedagogical confidence and classroom implementation and teacher shortage

A significant number of teachers report insufficient confidence in adopting pedagogical practice for FLN recommended by the mission. Teachers find difficulty to adapt their teaching methods to meet students different learning need (Mahanta, 2025). Teacher shortage constitutes another major challenge. Teacher shortage was reported in 60 % of primary schools, requiring many teachers to handle multiple classes and responsibilities at the same time (Duan, 2023).

Mentoring and Support mechanism

Current monitoring and support mechanisms are insufficient to foster meaningful improvements in instructional practices. Existing mechanism tends to prioritize reporting and compliance verification rather than providing classroom-based mentoring, and actionable instruction guidance (Mahanta, 2025). Although a large number of teachers completed the NISTHA-FLN training modules, the absence of systematic follow-up support, continuous mentoring, and school-based professional learning communities limited the effective translation of training into sustained classroom pedagogical practices (Sarkar & Gaur, 2025).

Parental engagement and community Involvement

According to teachers, approximately 90% of parents lacked adequate awareness of their children's educational and learning needs (Duan, 2023). Insufficient parental involvement awareness contributes to lower levels of engagement in children's foundational skills development, reducing opportunities for learning reinforcement in home environment.

6. Suggestions/Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified, there are various recommendation for improving the quality and effective achievement of the mission:

- Monitoring systems be redesign to emphasize classroom support, constructive mentoring, and formative assessment mechanisms, thereby shifting focus away from compliance-oriented reporting frameworks.
- Educational institutions and policymakers should implement continuous professional development programmes that include on-site mentoring and regular refresher training to achieve the mission objectives.
- Educational institutions should enhance their physical infrastructure by establishing dedicated FLN learning spaces, providing pedagogically appropriate teaching and learning materials within classrooms, and ensuring equitable access to essential facilities including electricity and technological resources.
- Government and administrative bodies should prioritize systematic teacher recruitment initiatives to address critical teacher shortages, alleviate excessive workload burdens, and enhance the overall quality of classroom instruction and pedagogical delivery.
- Schools should establish systematically planned programmes designed to enhance parental awareness and foster active parental involvement in foundational learning initiatives, thereby enabling parents to develop deeper understanding of foundational literacy and numeracy concepts.
- Schools should strengthen family engagement initiatives and systematically implement regular formative assessment practices, concurrently providing targeted remedial support to students requiring additional academic assistance to facilitate equitable learning outcomes.

7. Conclusion

The NIPUN Bharat Mission under NEP 2020 is an essential initiative for strengthening quality and effective education in primary schools by ensuring foundational literacy and numeracy for every child. It aims to develop strong early learning skills that are essential for academic success and lifelong learning. The review shows that the mission has great potential, its impact depends on proper implementation, teacher preparedness, educational infrastructure and equal availability of educational resources. Overall, NIPUN Bharat can significantly enhance quality of primary education in India. If the recognized issues are addressed through sustained effort, regular monitoring, and collaboration support, the mission can help create strong and more quality education system for young learners.

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