

Echoes of Change: 10 Bagless Days in a Technology-rich Educational Landscape

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Abstract

The education system is currently undergoing a series of reforms aimed at making education more meaningful, enjoyable, and experiential. The National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, a new policy concerning education, has provided numerous recommendations to enhance the quality of education, starting from the foundational level to higher education. One such recommendation is the introduction of 10 bagless days in schools for students in grades 6th to 8th. Students today are using technology to the optimum and have a great dependence on gadgets, too. During these days, students are encouraged to explore various vocational fields by interacting with local experts such as craftsmen, carpenters, gardeners, potters, and artists and explore various emerging avenues in the field of technology. Since the implementation of NEP-2020 is still in its early stages, it is important to gauge the knowledge and awareness of educational stakeholders regarding the concept of 10 bagless days. Therefore, the researchers aimed to gather opinions, thoughts, suggestions, and recommendations from these stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of this new initiative. In this process, the technology aided in reaching the stakeholders, including teachers and students, and getting their responses within the stipulated time. This paper focuses on discussing the concept of bagless days, the activities associated with them, the role of emerging technologies in 10-bagless days, the benefits of implementing bagless days in schools, and the potential limitations.

Keywords: 10 Bagless Days, Bagless schools, schools without bags, opinion of stakeholders.

Introduction

With the advancement of knowledge, the education system is also getting advanced and with time more focus is given to quality education rather than just teaching. National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 has given many recommendations to improve the quality of education at each educational level. It was already recommended in previous policies and various research to reduce the weight of the bag. Yashpal committee gave major emphasis on reducing the bag load from the students' shoulders. The NEP-2020

also recommended making suitable changes in curriculum and pedagogy to significantly reduce the weight of school bags and textbooks (NEP-2020, Para 4.33). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education and requires the integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education in all educational institutions in a phased manner (PSSCIVE, 2022). In this line, the NEP-2020 has recommended 10 bagless days. According to the NEP-2020, every student should take a fun course during class 6th-8th, the

purpose of which is to provide hands-on experiences in vocational crafts, like carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc. These vocational experiences are according to the locally available vocations, that will keep the heritage of different Indian states and transfer the knowledge of folk culture to the next generation. The NEP-2020 also recommend preparing a centralized practice-based curriculum, which can be modified and adopted by the schools according to the state and local community and their skilling requirements. These 10 bagless days should be continued periodically throughout the year from 6th to 8th classes, holidays periods can also be used for this purpose. In these 10 bagless days, visits to places/monuments of historical, cultural and tourist importance, meeting local artists and craftsmen and visits to higher educational institutions in their village/ Tehsil/District/State can be conducted (NEP-2020, Para 4.26).

As knowledge continues to advance, so does the evolution of the education system, which increasingly emphasizes quality education rather than mere instruction. The National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 has put forth numerous recommendations to enhance the quality of education across all levels of learning. Previous policies

and committees, such as the Yashpal committee, have already stressed the importance of reducing the burden of heavy school bags on students. NEP-2020 also highlights the need for curriculum and pedagogical changes to significantly reduce the weight of school bags and textbooks (NEP-2020, Para 4.33).

Another objective of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to address the social hierarchy associated with vocational education and promote its integration into mainstream education across all educational institutions in a phased manner (PSSCIVE, 2022). In line with this, NEP-2020 introduces the concept of 10 bagless days. According to NEP-2020, every student from 6th to 8th grade should engage in a fun course that offers hands-on experiences in vocational crafts such as carpentry, electrical work, metalwork, gardening, pottery making, and more. These vocational experiences are tailored to the local vocations available, preserving the heritage of different Indian states and passing on folk culture knowledge to the next generation. Technology has also come to the aid of teachers and enhanced the implementation of 10 bagless days of schools by providing digital resources, online textbooks & curriculum materials. Technology can also enable schools to share activities and resources during 10 bagless days.

Some images of the activities on the Bagless day at schools

A child trying hand on the potter's wheel (Source: PSSCIVE, Bhopal)



Clay modelling (Source: PSSCIVE, Bhopal)



Fireless cooking on a Bagless day (Source: RBS MPS, Rewari)



Creative activity on a Bagless day (Source: RBS MPS, Rewari)



NEP-2020 also suggests the development of a centralized practice-based curriculum that can be adapted and implemented by schools based on the specific needs of states and local communities in terms of skill development. These 10 bagless days should be scheduled periodically throughout the academic year for classes from 6th to 8th, and holiday periods can also be utilized for this purpose. Activities during these days may include visits to historical, cultural, and tourist sites, interactions with local artists and craftsmen, and visits to higher educational institutions in the students' village, tehsil, district, or state (NEP-2020, Para 4.26).

As the NEP 2020 is being implemented, all educational institutes and stakeholders are regularly trying to understand the recommendations and figuring out the possible ways to implement recommendations. In order to get optimal benefit by implementing the recommendations effectively, it is the need of the hour to understand the possible ways of effective implementation, possible challenges, along with the experiences of the schools or states who have already implemented the NEP-2020. In this paper, a recommendation, i.e. 10 bagless days, is taken to understand it exclusively. In India, it is said that every two miles, the water changes, and every four miles, the speech. Similarly, according to the condition, climate, culture, etc., every school in India faces different challenges, whether they might be lack of attendance, lack of infrastructure, lack of teachers, awareness towards education, and many more are there. Keeping in mind these challenges and a few advantages faced by different schools, the present paper suggests some possible activities for 10 bagless days, possible limitations and the role of teachers and community in implementing this recommendation,

based on a survey done by the researchers.

As the enchanting echoes of the NEP-2020 resound through the corridors of educational institutions, the diligent custodians of knowledge and learning find themselves immersed in a quest to unravel its profound recommendations. With a fervent desire to extract the utmost benefit from these directives, the pressing need of the hour lies in comprehending the nuances of effective implementation. It becomes imperative to explore the potential avenues of success, anticipate the obstacles that may lie in wait, and glean wisdom from the experiences of those schools and states that have already embarked upon the NEP-2020 journey.

Within the confines of this literary tapestry, we embark upon a focused exploration of a particular recommendation: the wondrous concept of 10 bagless days. In India, where every two miles bears witness to the metamorphosis of water, and every four miles heralds a transformation in speech, the idiosyncrasies of each school emerge like a symphony of diverse challenges. From the dearth of attendance to the lack of infrastructure, from the scarcity of teachers to the apathy towards education itself, these trials and tribulations vary with the cadence of climate, culture, and circumstance.

Mindful of these intricate webs of challenges, yet not oblivious to the few shining rays of advantage experienced by different schools, this opus sets forth a collection of possible activities for the 10 bagless days. It is an endeavour that seeks to illuminate the path forward, shedding light on the potential limitations that may lurk in the shadows. Moreover, the vital role played by teachers and the community in embracing and executing this recommendation finds solace in the pages that follow, their narratives

woven together with the threads of a survey meticulously conducted by scholarly researchers.

Methodology

The current research employed a survey methodology to gather opinions from various stakeholders within the educational domain. The survey method is also used by Parida & Das (2021) and Sethy (2021). Convenience sampling was utilized as the sampling technique for this study. A self-developed opinionnaire was distributed to a total of 410 diverse educational stakeholders. Technology aided in reaching out to diverse stakeholders and collecting responses from them in a short span of time. The response rate yielded 213 completed opinionnaires; however, only 172 questionnaires were deemed fully completed, thus comprising the final sample for this study. Within the final sample, a gender distribution of 80 males and 92 females was observed. Additionally, in terms of occupational designations, the sample consisted of 16 principals, 93 primary school teachers, 51 secondary school teachers, and 12 teacher trainers. This comprehensive composition of the selected sample ensures representation across various educational roles.

The present study employed an opinionnaire comprising a variety of questions to explore different aspects related to the implementation of 10 bagless days in schools. The questionnaire was divided into two distinct parts. The first part aimed to assess the awareness levels of stakeholders regarding the 10 bagless recommendations across different contexts. The second part focused on capturing stakeholders' opinions concerning the recommendation of 10 bagless days. A total of 172

stakeholders provided their opinions on a comprehensive set of 35 questions.

Results and Discussions

The findings of the study indicate that 56.40 per cent of the stakeholders strongly agreed with the statement that the implementation of 10 bagless days in school education is a commendable step as recommended in NEP-2020. The subsequent sections of this article present the detailed results and discussions derived from the survey conducted to explore the feasibility and implications of implementing 10 bagless days in schools.

1. Spread awareness among stakeholders about the recommendation of 10 bagless days:

After analysing the data it was found that 14.53 per cent of stakeholders reported that they were not aware of this recommendation whereas 85.47 per cent said that they were aware of the recommendation. This shows that there is a need to make all stakeholders aware of this recommendation. Which will directly help in the effective implementation of the recommendation.

2. Clarity about the duration and mode should be provided:

Through the survey, it was found that there is no clarity about the duration and mode of the activities. Stakeholders are not clear about whether these 10 days were in the continuation or spread throughout the year. It was also reported by stakeholders that it is also not clear whether they conduct these days in hybrid mode or not. Many of them reported that in those areas where vocational courses are hard to reach or in distance they can conduct these activities through online interaction or not. Hence there is a need to

give some clarity regarding these activities.

3. Give clarity about the activities to be conducted in 10 bagless days:

As the answer of activities that will be conducted in 10 bagless days, 64 per cent of stakeholders said that hands-on learning/vocational experiences will be provided; Sethy (2021) also found the similar kind of responses. 10 per cent of stakeholders said that opportunities are given to intern with local vocational experts, whereas 22 per cent of stakeholders said that students will come to school without bags. 4 per cent of stakeholders gave some different opinions, which is the mix of all these activities. This analysis again shows that there is a need to provide clear guidelines about what needs to be done in these bagless days.

4. Finding out activities to be held during 10 bagless days in schools:

Possible activities to be conducted in 10 bagless days were also asked by the stakeholders. As the underlying idea behind 10 bagless days is to make them an integral part of the teaching-learning process rather than as an add-on to the existing scheme of studies of education from Class VI to VIII (PSSCIVE, 2022). It was found through the survey that varied stakeholders have varied kinds of thoughts about the implementation activities. These are clubbed as follows:

a. Exposure to Performing Arts:

Exposure of different kinds of performing arts like dance, music theatre, magic, puppetry etc can be given by going to local artists or performing arts events. Some visits to related museums can also be organized. By which students

get the real-life idea of different kinds of performing arts and can show their interest in future to learn them.

b. Vocational Craft: Immerse the budding minds in the realm of vocational crafts, where carpentry becomes a dance of dexterous hands, dairy unveils its milky mysteries, and textile designing weaves tales of creativity. Let the students embark on an enchanting journey, exploring the realms of jewellery designing, embroidery, sewing, and the intricate art of weaving. Delight awaits them as they partake in the ethereal craft of kite making.

Unleash their talents through immersive training programs, where each day unfolds as a vibrant canvas of learning. Planning visits to dairy plants, the students will witness the production of milk, while encounters with local craftsmen will unlock the treasures of indigenous artistry, reflecting the tapestry of local culture.

c. Knowhow of different Sports:

Knowhow of different sports can be provided by visiting different sports stadiums during sports events at local, state, national or international levels.

d. Entrepreneurial Activities:

Knowledge of entrepreneurial activities can be provided by visiting small-scale businesses like disposable cups and plates factories, paper bag-making factories or emerging new small-scale entrepreneurial ventures at the local level. They can get a first-hand experience of planning and management during the visit.

e. Visit to a museum or other educational sites:

Local museum visits can be arranged to acquaint students in different areas like, sports, museums, art galleries, historical museums, etc. Visit the local newspaper printing unit, visit a few big factories like glass-making factories, biogas plants, steel plants, automobile manufacturing units, construction sites, etc., whichever are feasible and are in the vicinity may be planned. These visits can help the students to get a real feel of the working environment environment.

f. Organization of school fete:

School fetes can be organized to provide a real-life learning and experimentation environment to students. From planning to execution is a practical lesson in collaboration, cooperation, teamwork, accountability, and interdependence. In which they can plan any activity to earn money. They can make some easy-to-sell small materials like key rings, embroidered handkerchiefs etc. They can plan theatre shows with token ticket amounts in which they can perform dance, music, theatre or magic activities. Students can voluntarily come up for their role in organizing or managing as per their interests.

g. Environment-awareness or social activities:

Activities like plantation, cleaning of parks and rivers, care of ailing pets, etc., can be organized under the full security and supervision of experts, teachers, or elder volunteers. Medical camps

can also be organized in which students perform different duties along with medical staff and teachers. These activities not only help society but students also develop a connect with the community which in turn may even be helpful in choosing a career in community health or social work.

h. Exposure to new emerging domains of work:

Exposing the students to new emerging fields like Information and communication technology, social media influencers, content development, graphics designing, programming, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber security, robotics, space science, etc. can be done by showcasing related movies/documentaries/lectures of experts of the field. This may be followed by discussions highlighting the pros and cons of the field.

Besides these activities, many more activities can be planned according to the feasibility of the school and teachers and the local needs of the community.

5. Role of Emerging Technologies in 10-bagless days

At once where our government emphasizes traditional culture, values and art forms, it also gives focus towards the use of emerging technologies in different fields. Emerging technologies also can be used efficiently to make these 10 days more fruitful and futuristic. Following are a few suggestions regarding that:

- Today, from a very early age, children get exposure to the

online world. They get phones with full internet access, and they use them in the presence or absence of their elders; because of having less knowledge regarding dos and don'ts, they get stuck in miserable things. A few days out of 10 bagless days can be used to make them aware of how to safely use the internet and what precautions should be taken while surfing internet or using social media. For this purpose, a few related movies, dramas, etc., can be played in front of students, small talks with their parents can be organized, play way activities, worksheets completion, etc. can be organized to test the knowledge regarding safe surfing.

- These days, new occupations like Youtuber, Influencer, Gamer, Programmer, etc, are in the limelight. Today's children are looking at these options for their future very interestingly. Few of them even started to do work in this field at a very early age. But the biggest lack in this area is no standard course or coaching is available for this. Only the renowned names of the field are giving information on a free or paid basis. On one side of the coin, this is good that students are getting direct information from the experts, but the other side of the coin is that there are no criteria for being an "expert". So school administrations should identify experts in particular fields and call them either online or offline to interact with their students, to give a clear picture of these fields. These lectures can be organized as a part of a 10-bagless day, in which how to start working in these fields, what are the things to be focused on,

how to be more successful and what precautions to be taken while working in these emerging fields to be discussed.

- As these days Artificial Intelligence has emerged like a boom, one or two lectures can be organized to give knowledge to use AI apps or platforms efficiently. Dos and don'ts should be discussed with logical justifications, to make everything clear to the young minds.
- Areas like data mining, natural language processing, augmented reality, virtual reality, and Artificial Intelligence are the present and future too. Knowledge of working in these areas is essential for the future as the knowledge of using the internet/computer basic demand these days. A few lectures as the introduction to these areas and what are the future possibilities, and what measures they can take if they want to choose these areas can be discussed.

These all are a few techno-oriented activities that can be planned for 10 bagless days. Besides this, technology can be used in the following ways to make 10-bagless days more reachable and economical.

- Diversity in India comes up with many drawbacks too. There are many schools available which are not easily accessible. For these, the recorded videos of some other schools during 10-bagless days can be used. Lectures can be organized in an online form with the experts.
- Travelling expenses of students, even at local places, cost a lot and can damage the financial planning of a school, especially

when no special funds are raised for these activities. To make these activities economically sound recordings or live interactions can be used to save expenses/funds at the place of calling experts or taking students out of the school.

- In unfavorable conditions like pandemics, unfavorable weather, etc. too recordings or synchronized sessions can be used. Also at times, it is not possible to determine whether taking students to a particular place is safe or not. Sometimes the large number of students also becomes a challenge to take them to a small craftsman shop. In these cases technology can be useful by recordings of live sessions .
- With the help of AI, language translation can be possible and becomes too easy. For those experts who only know a particular language that is not matched with the language of your students, a video can be recorded and translated according to the needs of your students or closed captions (CC) in the required language can be added.
- Besides these helpful measures and technology integration with 10-bagless days, many more activities can be planned according to the need of the school and creativity of teachers and the local needs of the community.

6. Benefits of implementing 10-bagless days

During the survey, participants were queried about the perceived advantages of implementing 10 bagless days in schools. An overwhelming majority of 87.80

per cent of stakeholders concurred with the notion that incorporating 10 bagless days is a commendable measure as recommended in NEP-2020. Furthermore, various stakeholders expressed and acknowledged the following benefits:

- 86.63 per cent of stakeholders agreed that the implementation of bagless days will reduce the burden of courses and academic stress on students.
- 88.95 per cent agreed with the statement that bagless days will help to connect knowledge to life outside school.
- 91.28 per cent said that it will enhance awareness and develop creativity and vocational skills among the students.
- 91.86 per cent of stakeholders agreed that it will help in connecting students with their local surroundings and local culture.
- 93.02 per cent said that it will boost the confidence of the students.
- 90.12 per cent agreed that it will help in value inculcation.
- 88.38 per cent of stakeholders considered it the best way of art-integrated learning.
- 90.12 per cent said that it will help in the holistic development of children.
- 92.44 per cent said that it will facilitate hands-on experiences in different fields.
- 90.12 per cent of stakeholders agreed that it is the best means to provide experiences in vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc. In the study

conducted by Sethy (2021), 60 per cent of stakeholders agreed with this idea.

- 91.86 per cent agreed that 10 bagless days will provide an idea to the students about their local skilling needs.

Besides these, by the review of the open-ended answers following possible benefits were identified:

- It will provide students with hands-on experiences of different kinds of vocational activities.
- As students try different work in a real situation then their social aspect will also improve. They learn cooperation, and collaboration and get an empathetic mindset towards the local craftsman or workers from different fields, who are somewhere considered below standard these days.
- These going out of-class activities make students burdenless and free from classroom pressure, which gives them a chance while learning and energises them to think beyond and to learn more.
- These bagless days will be helpful in providing concrete and practical knowledge rather than providing abstract information.
- With the help of exposure to different work areas, students may be able to find their real interest area, which helps them in making the right career choices and finding their passion.
- These activities might get the interest of those students who think learning is a boring task and a waste of time, as it will not give them bread. So both a needy student who aims to learn

to earn and who aims to learn for enjoyment both kind of students will get benefit out of this.

- Students will feel connected and motivated through these activities and hence boredom will reduce automatically.
- They will start respecting the dignity of labour and develop a positive and respectful perception towards the craftsman and different skilled workers.
- These activities will be helpful in the development of observation-based learning capacity and provide scope for practice and learning by doing.
- The connectedness with the community and the local culture will be enhanced by these activities, which also develop interdependence among the community and students.

7. Possible drawbacks and limitations of implementing 10 bagless days

As we know every coin has two sides. Besides having many advantages and benefits of implementing the recommendation of 10 bagless days, there are lots of possible drawbacks. These are as follows-

- 46 per cent of stakeholders agreed that 10 days are not enough for these activities.
- It required rigorous planning for implementation according to the diverse needs of the diverse schools, cultures and locations. In January 2022, guidelines have been launched by PSSCIVE, but still, this recommendation requires rigorous planning.
- Difficulty to implement where no vocational activities are conducted in nearby areas.

- Maintaining discipline outside the school building is also a challenging task for teachers.
- All these activities require extra human and physical resources which will directly enhance the financial load on the school budget.
- It might be possible that to overcome the loss of teaching days due to these 10 bagless days, the extra burden will be added on normal days. Which will again add the load of extra books and make bags heavier.
- It can overburden the students who are already overwhelmed with the many major courses, extracurricular activities, project tasks and tuition work.
- Less significant to implement in village areas as most of the students have exposure to many vocational activities, and some of them play a significant role in those vocations too.
- It may also enhance the extra burden on school teachers. In those schools where every task has been done very sincerely and all staff members are hard-working, they also took these activities in their real sense which again enhance their workload. Because planning, implementing and testing its effectiveness required much effort and interest.
- There might be the possibility that teachers don't take much interest in such activities then it also remains just a piece of recommendation and the decided 10 days also become the only fun and free days for teachers.
- Some parents may show their lack of interest in these activities, they may not provide consent to take their ward to the local craftsman shop due to personal reasons. So making parents agree is also a challenge for the teachers and administration.
- Already due to many public holidays, winter vacations and summer vacations, teaching days are fewer as compared to the course; hence, decreasing 10 days has also become a challenge.
- This may also increase the dropout rate. Students may be started feeling more connected with the vocational course or activities and may feel that when after taking education they also have to do these courses which is nothing to do with classroom learning then they may directly opt to start a vocational career rather than taking education.
- There are many schools which are run by a single teacher. This will be another challenge for those schools.
- Catering varied interests of diverse students may also be a big challenge for teachers.
- These activities are also not so helpful for less active and introverted students.
- In the absence of proper guidance or planning for teachers, there is a risk of potential wastage of time, money, and resources. An inadequately planned implementation may yield unsatisfactory outcomes.
- Ensuring the seamless integration of children with special needs into these activities presents a formidable challenge. Planning and executing activities

that effectively cater to their unique requirements prove to be arduous, and the feasibility of accommodating them in all situations remains uncertain.

- The successful inclusion of children with special needs in these activities poses a challenge, as it is difficult to plan and implement activities that can adequately meet their specific needs and may not be feasible for all situations.
- There may be instances where these activities could disrupt the regular routine of craftsmen, resulting in potential financial setbacks for them.
- Craftsmen and vocational experts undoubtedly possess remarkable proficiency in their respective crafts, yet their understanding of child psychology may be limited, potentially leading to the emergence of behavioural challenges.
- Insufficient funding poses a significant obstacle to the execution of activities during the 10 bagless days.
- As of now, there has been no implementation strategy initiated by any pertinent organization, leading to a state of ambiguity and confusion among the stakeholders.

Conclusion

All recommendations given by NEP-2020 are related to providing quality education, developing employability, and transforming our country into a knowledge-driven society. This would be possible by using the student-centric approach in education making learning more experiential, and connecting it

with the culture and daily life of the learners. The recommendation of 10 bagless days will prove a game changer in this direction if it will be implemented effectively and with proper planning. Related agencies and authorities should get active now and work on the implementation process. A set of guidelines has been launched by PSSCIVE in the first quarter of 2023. Still, there is a need for a clearer implementation procedure. Only then will effective implementation be possible. Besides the government organisation, teachers and school administration also take a few steps in its implementation; they have to think about the no or less budget activities, interesting activities with the local touch in them and plan the activities which don't take much time and resource but give a very fruitful experience to the students. They also have to think about how to cater for a large number of students in an optimum way. Parents and the community should also become more active now. As in the NEP-2020 much emphasis is given to community involvement and localised experience, which could not be possible without the active and voluntary involvement of the community members. Only the willing participation of the community members can make the implementation and outcome of this recommendation fruitful. So again, the task of government agencies, and teacher education institutes, become important in raising awareness about the recommendation of 10 bagless days for which they can organise workshops, faculty development programmes, conferences, discussion forums, etc, by which those who have great ideas and share their ideas with others and those who are facing issues can learn with others. All these measures can lead to the fruitful implementation of this recommendation and provide the desired outcome in an optimum way.

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