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**Visualizing the Role of Teachers in Collaboration with  
Learning Communities in the Context of NEP-2020  
Implementation in Assam**

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**Abstract:**

The role of teachers is not confined within the teacher, student and the curriculum. The learner, now, is active and participating and is exposed to a world of fast changing information, ideas and innovations through various media. To make learning effective, the teacher has to organize various learning communities around the learner and facilitate them to bring out optimum learning. Learning communities connect people, organizations, and systems across boundaries towards a common goal of effective learning. The role of teacher is more significant when learning communities are characterized by multi-dimensional diversity—language, topographical features, religion, ethnicity, culture and others, as in the case of Assam. The NEP 2020 has stated the significance of the vibrant, caring and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals and support staff for effective learning. Keeping in view the significance of building learning communities of learners, parents, community, peers, educational leaders, government, web resources for effective learning, the present paper endeavors at modeling the role of teacher in it in the context of Assam.

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**Keywords:** Teachers, Learning Communities, NEP 2020

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**Introduction:**

There is a huge difference between the educational situations at present and in the 1980s, when the last educational policy was formulated in India. The present age is characterized by knowledge explosion and revolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The integration of ICT in the field of education has brought enormous changes in the very nature of the learning environment. This is so much so that some laymen do not hesitate to question the role and position of teachers in the educational scenario. Though it is for sure that technology can never replace the teacher, it is also true that many traditional methods or approaches of communicating, learning or doing things have changed. Another characteristic feature is that the learner is exposed to a much diverse learning environment than earlier. Particularly, in place like Assam, where multi-dimensional diversity exists—language, geographical features, religion, ethnicity, culture and lot more. At present, the promotion of effective learning does not delimit only to ensuring a satisfactory relationship between teachers and

learners. The learners are exposed to a much wider learning environment than earlier. So, accordingly adaptations are required in the pedagogical approach.

One of the pedagogical approaches which is adequately unexplored and which seems relevant in present context is the use of Learning Communities. Wilson and Lowe (2019) define Learning Community as "a group of peers who come together in a safe space to reflect and share their judgements and uncertainties about their practice and to share ideas or experiences to collectively improve". It can be understood that learning community is a group of like-minded people who would aim towards achieving some shared goals by sharing ideas, beliefs, experiences and analytically accepting the same for others without any biasness. Learning communities provide a space and a structure for people to align around a shared goal. They connect people, organizations, and systems across boundaries towards a common goal of effective learning. These communities enable participants to share results and learn from each other, thereby improving their ability to achieve rapid yet significant progress. It is based on the notion that there is expertise in everyone. Any learning community is characterized by—variety (newness) in the participants of learning communities; participants having a better understanding of the context of the learner; focus on active learning that is experimental and includes engaging participants in a process of self-reflection and self-discovery. The learning communities may be of the parents, peers, community resource persons, educational leaders, web resources, etc.

The NEP 2020 has very well documented the role of the teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has emphasized on overhauling the service environment and culture of schools to ensure that they are part of vibrant, caring and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals and support staff which in turn, will optimize learning.

### **Significance of the Study:**

At a time when knowledge and technology are blooming, the teacher is sometimes in doldrums as to what role is to be played by him/her to bring out effective learning outcome. The role of teachers in the process of learning has changed with time. It is not confined within the teacher, student and the curriculum. It is not limited to a class of one hour for few prescribed units sitting within a walled-classroom. The world of knowledge, ideas, exploration, discovery, intuition, self-learning is open for the students. Bottery (2006) writes that the ability to learn continuously is a necessity in an environment where human knowledge, imagination and creativity are the key ingredients of a global economy. This has brought changes in the characteristics of the learner. The learner, now, is active and participating and is exposed to a world of fast changing information, ideas and innovations through various media. Assam is a place where almost every classroom is characterized by multi-cultural features. So there is a lot for the students to learn from different learning communities—family, peers, web resources, government, among the students from themselves, apart from learning from the textbooks and the teachers. To make learning effective, learning communities can be incorporated in the teaching-learning process. The resources are to be utilized for the betterment of the learners. It is important to understand and specify the role of the teachers in organizing various learning communities around the learner and facilitate

them to bring out optimum learning. Also, it is evident from the review that there is a gap in the research on learning communities in Assam.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The present study is undertaken

1. To study the importance of learning communities for enhancing learning outcomes to implement NEP in the context of Assam.
2. To specify the role of teachers in creating and coordinating learning communities for effective teaching-learning process for the implementation of NEP.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

Researches have been conducted on use of learning communities mostly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It can be said that previous researches have indicated the benefits of learning community for both the teachers and the students. Dodge and Kendall (2004) described several types of learning communities and explained the benefits to both students and teachers. They found that fostering workforce skills, encouraging problem-solving skills, and increasing retention and success are some of the benefits for students and teachers. In addition, faculty members gain new teaching skills and energize their teaching and learning.

It has also been studied for particular subjects like mathematics and political science as well as for the early childhood education and teacher education. Cynthia (2019) also found that teachers' participation in a mathematics networked learning community made a difference in their classroom teaching in terms of their students' perceptions of their classroom learning environment and attitudes to mathematics. Huerta (2004) found that Learning communities are an additional tool political science professors can employ in dealing with the challenge of teaching disinterested students in introductory political science classes. Summer and summer (2014) have talked about creating a family learning community for education of the young children. According to them, when working together as equal partners, families and teachers come to know and support children more deeply, allowing families, teachers, and children to create meaningful learning opportunities at school and at home. Ansari, Khan, Ahmad and Suhail (2012) reflected on the possibilities of the qualitative improvement of teacher's with the help of establishing virtual professional learning communities (VPLC.) The present article will also explore the role of tools that makes Virtual community possible, and whether these (tools) can be useful for betterment of teacher education. Bullough and Baugh (2008) described work being done within the Brigham Young University (BYU)-Public School Partnership to create learning communities. The partnership-wide aim is to provide educators increased opportunities to study and engage in reflection on issues and questions of genuine personal and professional importance and to support their collective efforts at renewal.

Positive impact on learning has been found on studies on online learning communities, collaboration through blogging. Edmondson (2012) presented the outcome of the Digital Learning Communities project. It led the students to realize that the group could accomplish more than an individual in terms of team work, reaching the goal and developing appreciative attitude towards each other's contributions. Ke and Hoadley

(2009) recommended a comprehensive, on-going, diagnostic approach to measuring clusters of indicators, or syndromes, of a particular Online Learning Communities (OLC) and examining the causal relation assumed by the evaluators between what is measured and the success of OLC as an imputed outcome. Kuo, Belland and Kuo (2017) found that the sense of community and perceived collaborative learning significantly contributed to perceived learning through blogging; most students displayed positive attitudes toward group learning experiences that involved collaborative process as well as the development of knowledge and skills; and individual dispositions had a potential influence on collaboration.

But due to various reasons, this much needed approach has not been studied adequately in the Indian educational field. It is apparent from the studies that there is a research gap in terms of using learning communities in the educational field in India, particularly in Assam. Therefore, the present study is designed to study its importance and the role played by the teacher in implementing learning communities approach in the teaching-learning process.

### **Methodology:**

The study is based on descriptive analysis of data collected from secondary sources.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Importance of Learning Communities in the Context of Assam:**

Field (2003) emphasizes the need to create social networks where people working together to achieve aims each could not achieve on their own. It is proved that effective learning is the result of the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders including the government. The centrality of relationship of the learner with others, such as the teachers, parents, community, web resources and the government and building learning communities are of great significance. The present digital environment and technologies bring a new opportunity in this regard and provides enough scope for working collaboratively where the learners, teachers, parents, community, and government come together as co-constructors of knowledge with the vision to build a learning community.

Education is now a 24x7 activity with the advancements in ICT. Education no longer remains only in the classroom now it is now being spread all around in accessible points to all through digital platforms. So, the participation of teachers, students, parents and government in this regard is very important and decisive. Multi-level collaboration in the pedagogical field for knowledge acquisition and knowledge creation is now the order of the day. Further, education and development go side by side, it influences each other, say, pedagogy does not mean only the transaction of knowledge inside the classroom but it also needs to take care of children's health, and their mental well-being. Further, for the consideration of local, national and global issues in the teaching learning, there need to be a strong learning community who, by collaborative approach, not only facilitate the knowledge acquisition of children but also generates the culture of knowledge creation. So, establishing a learning environment by building a learning community is the need of hour in the field of education. It not only ensures multi-level collaboration but also helps

in the development of intellectual and social capital—the two essential ingredients of the knowledge economy.

Assam is a hugely heterogeneous state not only in terms of topography, biodiversity, language, ethnicity and religion but also in terms of socio-economic and political aspects. This diversity is both a boon as well as a challenge in terms of educational environment. It poses challenge for the educational administrators, teachers, and the learners themselves as inclusivity is to be taken care of in such multi-dimensional diverse environment. But it is an opportunity to learn from diverse resources as well. So, while modeling a teaching-learning system for implementation in Assam, its characteristic feature of heterogeneity has to be accounted for and better, utilize it for enhancing learning. To meet the needs that come out of this heterogeneity in the field of education may be successfully addressed through contextually developed community ecology.

Development of learning communities shows the way to implementation of the principles and practices recommended in the National Education Policy, 2020. It will help in providing experiential learning (NEP 2020, 4.6) to the learners at all stages of education which may include hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, skill-based education.

The NEP 2020 (4.11) stresses the importance of multilingualism in education. It has highlighted that the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Learning communities may be helpful in this regard in the sense that the teachers, who are not well-versed in the local/home/regional language of any of the learners, may take help from parent or family learning community.

The emphasis given on incorporating Indian knowledge system in the curriculum by the NEP 2020 can be may be well implemented through the learning community pedagogical approach. The indigenous knowledge system of varied Indian cultures may be well-imparted through the learning community built with the parents and other adults of the locality.

The NEP (5.10) states that creation of school complexes could go a long way towards building vibrant learning communities of teachers. The teachers would get opportunity for sharing best practices with each other, creating a more vibrant teacher knowledge base and working collaboratively to ensure that all children are learning. School complexes could also share counsellors, trained social workers, technical and maintenance staff, etc. to further support teachers and help create an effective learning environment. Building learning communities will also help in building larger communities of schools, school leaders, teachers, students, supporting staff, parents, and local citizens would energize and empower the schooling system. This would surely ensure adequacy of resources—both material and human, ensure consolidated development.

### **Role of Teachers in Creating and Coordinating Learning Communities:**

A teacher no longer remains the only source of knowledge for students. Now, knowledge can be obtained by learners from numerous sources at a click. As such, the

primary focus of teaching-learning has been shifted presently from transmitting knowledge to constructing knowledge. The role of the teacher has changed from instructor to facilitator. Learning is now not confined in four walls of a classroom where knowledge was traditionally transmitted by teachers to students. Classroom has not remained as the sole place of learning for students. They may now learn from anywhere, anytime and through any means. The role of teacher is all the more significant when learning communities are characterized by multi-dimensional diversity—language, topographical features, religion, ethnicity, culture and others, as in the case of Assam.

- **Bringing the Players Together:** The teacher is the common thread between various stakeholders of education. The teacher is in touch of the parents, the community resources, the governmental agencies. So, to build learning communities of—learners, teachers, parents, community resources, web resources, teachers can play the role of being pro-active to bring diverse members of the learning community together and to lead them towards the goal of achieving effective learning. The teacher has to identify people who have different interests and are contributors in different ways and then, organize them as learning communities. For instance, Summer and Summer (2014) says that teachers can invite families to contribute their expertise and incorporate this expertise into the curriculum.
- **Making them aware of the Common Goal:** It is important for the members of the learning communities that they are aware of the shared common goal, i.e. bringing out effective learning. It is apparent that all the stakeholders of education are in some or the other way concerned about effective learning of their ward. But to make them aware that it is a common goal and that it is easier and more effective when the card is played collaboratively, is significant. The teacher plays a vital role in ensuring that the members are aware of their common goal and that they work together as a community towards its achievement.
- **Building the Trust in Relationship:** Trust is an important element when any task involves collaboration. The teacher has to do the task of building the trust in the relationship among the members of the learning communities. A trusted space is to be created where members can frankly put forward their opinions and doubts in order to improve collectively. This can be done by maintaining frequent and transparent communication among the members of the communities.
- **Ensuring that the Community Work is on Right Track:** The teacher also plays the role of an evaluator who has to ensure that the learning communities are working towards the shared common goal and are on the right track. For this, regular feedback is to be collected from different stakeholders.
- **Teacher Leadership:** Angelle (2011) quoted Harris (2002) that if schools are to operate as learning communities, then they cannot do so with the leadership of a single person or with a singular leadership strategy. Implementing learning communities would be a kind of reform in the education system which requires leadership quality of the teachers. They should be able to initiate and encourage reforms and take responsibility of effective learning of the learners.

## Conclusion:

The NEP 2020 has stated the significance of the vibrant, caring and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, principals and support staff for effective learning. Considering the availability of variety of exposure for learning, advanced ICT and the multicultural context of Assam, it is for sure that shift in the pedagogical approach would bring effective learning outcomes. Based on the discussions above, it can be said that the use of learning communities is an apt way to bring effective learning in the educational scenario of Assam.

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