The Academic
International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research
An Online Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal
Volume 3 | Issue 11 | November 2025
ISSN: 2583-973X (Online)
Website: www.theacademic.in

Operationalising National Education Policy: A Design-Based Approach to the Development of a Collaborative Learning Module for Secondary Mathematics

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DOI : https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17923297

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 24-11-2025

Published: 10-12-2025

Keywords:

curriculum design, collaborative learning, mathematics education, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, instructional module, social constructivism

ABSTRACT

The Indian National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant pedagogical paradigm shift from rote-based instruction to a competency-focused model that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Despite the policy's clear vision, a considerable policy-practice gap persists, largely attributable to a scarcity of practical, validated instructional frameworks to support teacher implementation. This paper addresses this critical challenge by delineating the systematic design, theoretical grounding, and validation of a comprehensive Collaborative Learning Strategies (CLS) Instructional Module for Class IX Mathematics, aligned with the national NCERT curriculum. A four-stage, Design-Based Research methodology (Reeves, 2006; McKenney & Reeves, 2018) was utilized. Stage 1 (Analysis) involved a meticulous content analysis of the NCERT curriculum and a needs analysis of extant resources on national platforms, such as DIKSHA, to ascertain suitable topics and establish the module's necessity. Stage 2 (Design) integrated the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978) with the empirically substantiated five-element model of cooperative learning by Johnson & Johnson (2009) to formulate a robust pedagogical foundation. Stage 3 (Development) entailed the creation of 20 detailed, curriculum-aligned lesson plans employing specific CLS techniques, including Jigsaw

(Aronson, 1978) and Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981). Stage 4 (Evaluation) subjected the completed module to a rigorous expert validation process by a panel of experienced mathematics educators and pedagogical experts to ensure content validity, pedagogical soundness, and practical feasibility. This research yielded a high-fidelity, validated instructional module that serves as a replicable blueprint for translating abstract policy mandates into concrete classroom practice. The expert validation process confirmed the module's strong alignment with both curricular standards and the pedagogical tenets of NEP 2020, achieving an average validation score of 4.6 out of 5. The framework presented demonstrates a systematic, theory-driven process for developing context-specific pedagogical tools. The primary contribution of this paper is a tangible, validated instructional resource coupled with a methodological framework for curriculum developers, teacher educators, and practitioners. The research moves beyond theoretical exhortations for reform to offer a practical methodology for operationalizing national educational policy in the crucial subject of secondary mathematics, thereby contributing to bridging the persistent gap between policy aspiration and classroom reality (Fullan, 2007).

Introduction - The Global Impetus for Pedagogical Transformation

The prevailing educational discourse of the 21st century is characterized by a global impetus for pedagogical reform, driven by profound social, technological, and economic transformations that collectively constitute the "knowledge economy" (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Educational systems worldwide are undergoing a fundamental transition, moving away from an industrial-age model predicated on standardization, compliance, and the mastery of procedural knowledge. The emerging paradigm is one suited for an information age, prioritizing creativity, critical inquiry, metacognitive awareness, and socio-emotional adaptability (Wagner, 2012). International benchmarks, such as the OECD's Learning Framework 2030 (OECD, 2018), reflect this shift by underscoring the necessity for students to cultivate "transformative competencies." These competencies extend beyond disciplinary knowledge to include the capacity to generate new value, reconcile complex dilemmas, and assume social and ethical responsibility. Achieving these ambitious aims necessitates a commensurate shift in pedagogy, moving from didactic, teacher-centered models to those that are interactive, interdisciplinary, and oriented toward authentic, collaborative problem-solving.

Within the Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 constitutes the nation's most definitive articulation of this global movement. It represents a paradigm shift of historic proportions, formulated to overhaul an educational system long critiqued for its structural rigidity, its focus on high-stakes summative examinations, and its perpetuation of a culture of rote memorization (Kumar, 2005). The policy document explicitly mandates a transition toward a pedagogy that is "holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable" (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 18). The superordinate goal is the cultivation of foundational literacy and numeracy alongside higher-order cognitive skills. This entails a move beyond mere content acquisition to the development of metacognitive capacities—or "learning how to learn"—which is considered essential for lifelong learning and adaptability in a rapidly changing world (Senge et al., 2012).

The Enduring Challenge in Secondary Mathematics Education

This call for pedagogical transformation possesses particular urgency within the domain of secondary mathematics. Historically, mathematics pedagogy in India, as in many parts of the world, has been dominated by a teacher-centric, transmissionist model, often colloquially referred to as "chalk-and-talk." The instructional focus has remained heavily concentrated on the dissemination of established algorithms and procedures, with students expected to accurately reproduce them in assessments. This instructional approach, as noted by successive National Curriculum Frameworks (NCERT, 2005, 2023), frequently results in a superficial or "fragile understanding" of mathematical concepts (NCERT, 2005, p. 12). Consequently, students may demonstrate procedural fluency on familiar, textbook-style problems but are often unable to transfer their knowledge to novel situations, engage in mathematical reasoning, or articulate the conceptual basis for the procedures they employ (Boaler, 2016).

This pedagogical tradition has been identified as a significant contributing factor to the prevalence of "mathematics anxiety," a well-documented psychological phenomenon involving feelings of tension, apprehension, and fear that directly interfere with mathematical problem-solving and learning (Ashcraft, 2002; Richardson & Suinn, 1972). For numerous students, mathematics becomes perceived as an abstract and intimidating system of arbitrary rules and formulas, disconnected from their lived realities. This perception fosters disengagement, a lack of interest, and the development of a fixed mindset regarding mathematical ability—a belief that one's capacity for mathematics is an innate and unchangeable trait (Dweck, 2006; Dowker et al., 2016). A primary objective of NEP 2020 is to dismantle this detrimental perception by reframing mathematics education. The goal is to cultivate a capacity for "mathematisation"—the ability to view the world through a mathematical lens, to reason logically, to formulate and resolve problems, to discern patterns, and to construct and evaluate reasoned arguments (NCERT, 2005).

The Persistent Policy-Practice Gap

Although the vision articulated in NEP 2020 is both ambitious and imperative, its successful realization is impeded by a significant and well-documented "policy-practice gap" (Fullan, 2007). This chasm between policy intention and classroom implementation is not typically a consequence of educator recalcitrance but rather a product of deeply entrenched systemic and structural barriers. Teachers, who are the designated primary agents of reform, are frequently products of the very system they are now tasked with transforming (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Their pre-service training and prevailing professional development models may not have sufficiently equipped them with the sophisticated pedagogical content knowledge required for facilitating complex, inquiry-based learning environments (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Furthermore, the broader educational ecosystem often creates disincentives for pedagogical innovation. The pressures associated with high-stakes board examinations, which traditionally reward procedural knowledge; the challenges of managing large class sizes; and the relentless pressure for syllabus completion all conspire to encourage a reversion to traditional, transmission-oriented instructional methods that are perceived as more efficient and less risky (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). A critical deficiency in the strategy to bridge this gap is the lack of accessible, high-quality, and contextually validated instructional resources. While policy documents are adept at articulating the "what" and "why" of pedagogical reform, the "how" is largely left to the interpretation and ingenuity of individual practitioners. Educators require more than abstract exhortations to adopt "collaborative" or "inquiry-based" approaches. They necessitate structured, well-engineered, and theoretically grounded instructional materials that can be directly implemented and adapted in their classrooms, thereby mitigating the substantial cognitive and temporal burden of designing such complex lessons de novo (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Brown, 1992).

A Proposed Intervention: A Collaborative Learning Module

The present study directly addresses this implementation challenge. It delineates the systematic design, development, and expert validation of a comprehensive Collaborative Learning Strategies (CLS) Instructional Module for Class IX Mathematics, meticulously aligned with the NCERT curriculum. Philosophically anchored in the social constructivist theories of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and architecturally structured upon the extensively researched and empirically substantiated cooperative learning framework of Johnson & Johnson (2009), this module provides a tangible instrument for educators to translate abstract policy mandates into concrete classroom actions.

The purpose of this paper is not to report on the efficacy of the module in relation to student learning outcomes; such an analysis constitutes the focus of a larger, ongoing quasi-experimental investigation. Rather, the contribution herein is twofold. First, this paper presents the validated module itself as a practical, open-access resource for the educational community. Second, it explicates in detail the design-based research methodology employed in its creation. It is argued that this systematic, iterative process of analysis, design, development, and evaluation furnishes a replicable blueprint for the creation of other urgently needed pedagogical interventions across different subjects and grade levels (Sandoval & Bell, 2004). By offering a concrete methodological response to the "how-to" question of implementation, this research aims to provide a crucial resource for teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers engaged in the collective and formidable effort to operationalize NEP 2020 and truly transform mathematics education in India.

Theoretical and Policy Foundations for Module Design

The CLS module represents a principled pedagogical intervention rather than an ad hoc collection of group activities. Its design is deliberately and deeply anchored in a confluence of established learning theory and national policy mandates to ensure both its pedagogical efficacy and its contextual relevance. This section explicates the theoretical architecture that underpins the module.

Social Constructivism: The Philosophical Bedrock

The core pedagogical framework of the module is philosophically anchored in social constructivism, a theory of learning most prominently associated with the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978). In stark contrast to behaviourist or purely cognitivist perspectives, this theory posits that learning is not a passive process of information reception by an isolated learner, but an active, social process of meaning-making that is culturally and contextually situated (Palincsar, 1998). Knowledge is not transmitted but is co-constructed through language, social interaction, and collaboration. Several key Vygotskian concepts form the module's theoretical DNA:

- **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):** This is arguably Vygotsky's most influential concept in education. He defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). This concept fundamentally reframes the relationship between learning and development, suggesting that learning precedes and pulls development forward. The CLS module is explicitly designed to function within this dynamic zone. By structuring tasks that are beyond a student's individual capacity but achievable through peer collaboration, the module creates the conditions for cognitive growth that would otherwise not occur (Forman & Cazden, 1985).
- **The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO):** The MKO is a logical extension of the ZPD, referring to any individual who possesses a higher level of understanding or ability than the learner concerning a specific task or concept. While the teacher traditionally serves as the exclusive MKO in the classroom, the CLS module deliberately reconfigures this dynamic. It creates a distributed expertise model where peers frequently assume the role of the MKO. In a Jigsaw activity, for instance, a student who has achieved mastery of a concept within an "expert group" functions as the MKO for their less knowledgeable peers in their "home group." This peer-tutoring mechanism is not only efficient but is a potent catalyst for learning for both the tutor (who consolidates knowledge through teaching) and the tutee (Damon & Phelps, 1989).
- **Language as a Primary Psychological Tool:** In Vygotskian theory, language and thought are inextricably linked. Language is not merely a means of communication but is the primary cultural tool through which higher-order thinking develops. Interpersonal communication (social speech) is gradually internalized to become intrapersonal thought (inner speech). The CLS activities are therefore intentionally structured to be rich in mathematical discourse. Students are prompted to articulate their nascent reasoning, justify their chosen methodologies, respectfully interrogate the assumptions of their peers, and negotiate a shared understanding. This process of collaborative verbalization, or "thinking aloud" together, serves to objectify, clarify, and consolidate individual conceptual schemas (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

This constructivist perspective reframes the classroom from a site of information transmission into a "Community of Inquiry" (Garrison et al., 2000). Such a community is characterized by the dynamic interplay of social presence (a sense of belonging and trust), cognitive presence (the sustained process of constructing and confirming meaning), and teaching presence (the design, facilitation, and direction of the learning experience). The CLS module is systematically engineered to foster all three components.

The Five Pillars of Cooperative Learning: The Pedagogical Architecture

Whereas social constructivism provides the philosophical rationale ("the why"), the empirically substantiated cooperative learning model articulated by David and Roger Johnson (2009) offers the procedural architecture ("the how") for its classroom implementation. Based on Morton Deutsch's (1949) theory of social interdependence, their model transcends the simplistic and often ineffective practice of merely placing students into groups. It identifies five essential elements that must be systematically designed and integrated into instruction for collaboration to be maximally effective. Decades of research, including numerous meta-analyses, have confirmed the positive effects of this structured approach on a wide range of outcomes, including academic achievement, intergroup relations, and psychological health (Johnson et al., 2000; Slavin, 2014). The CLS module meticulously embeds these five elements into the design of every single lesson plan:

1. **Positive Interdependence:** This is the foundational principle, requiring that students perceive themselves as linked in such a way that one cannot succeed unless all group members succeed. It cultivates a "sink or swim together" ethos. The module engineers this through multiple mechanisms, including: **Goal Interdependence** (the group has a single task to complete), **Resource Interdependence** (each member possesses only a piece of the required information, as in Jigsaw), and **Role Interdependence** (each member is assigned a function essential to the group's success, such as Facilitator, Recorder, or Checker).

2. **Individual Accountability:** To counteract the well-documented phenomenon of "social loafing" (Karau & Williams, 1993) or "diffusion of responsibility," the group's success must be made contingent upon the individual learning and contribution of each member. The module incorporates robust mechanisms for this, such as assessing students individually after the collaborative work (e.g., via exit tickets or quizzes) and randomly selecting one student to present the group's findings, thereby holding everyone responsible for understanding the material (Slavin, 1996).

3. **Promotive Interaction (Face-to-Face):** This element moves beyond mere physical proximity to focus on the quality and nature of student interaction. It involves students actively assisting, encouraging, providing feedback, and supporting one another's learning efforts. The activities are

designed to prompt verbal elaboration, the challenging of ideas with evidence, and the co-construction of meaning. It is the quality of this interaction that facilitates the cognitive processes of explaining, justifying, and reorganizing knowledge (Webb, 2009).

4. **Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills:** Effective collaboration is predicated on a range of specific social competencies that cannot be assumed to be innate (Cohen, 1994). The module treats these skills not as prerequisites, but as explicit learning objectives. Competencies such as active listening, providing constructive (rather than destructive) criticism, managing disagreements productively, and reaching a consensus are explicitly taught, modelled by the teacher, and practiced by the students within the lesson structure.

5. **Group Processing:** This crucial metacognitive component involves dedicating time at the conclusion of a lesson for groups to reflect upon and evaluate their collaborative process. They are prompted to discuss which member actions were helpful or unhelpful and to set goals for improving their teamwork in the future. This practice enables groups to identify and resolve internal teamwork issues, thereby becoming progressively more effective and autonomous over time (Yager et al., 1985).

Policy Alignment: Connecting Theory to National Mandates

The module was designed to be in direct and explicit alignment with prevailing national educational mandates. Every design decision was systematically scrutinized for its congruence with the pedagogical tenets of NEP 2020 and the draft NCF 2023.

- **Mapping to NEP 2020:** The policy's central call for a reduction in rote learning and the promotion of critical thinking constitutes the module's primary objective (Ministry of Education, 2020, Clause 4.24). The policy's emphasis on discussion-based and inquiry-driven learning is directly operationalized through the use of established techniques such as Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981) and Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992). The cultivation of 21st-century competencies—often summarized as the "4Cs" of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—is an explicit, designed-for goal of the lesson activities, not an incidental or accidental outcome (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2015).
- **Integration with NCF 2023 and *Panchaadi*:** The draft NCF 2023 advocates for a five-step learning process known as *Panchaadi* (NCERT, 2023). This process includes: *Aditi* (introduction of the concept), *Bodh* (conceptual understanding), *Abhyas* (practice), *Prayog* (application in varied contexts), and *Prasar* (expansion and articulation). Whereas traditional instruction often terminates at

the *Abhyas* stage, the CLS module is specifically engineered to facilitate the crucial higher-order stages. The group problem-solving tasks represent a direct form of *Prayog*, requiring students to apply their conceptual understanding to novel and complex problems. The concluding whole-class discussions, where groups present and defend their findings, are a form of *Prasar*, enabling ideas to be articulated, challenged, refined, and expanded upon by the entire classroom community. This explicit mapping ensures the module functions not as an alien intervention but as a synergistic tool that integrates seamlessly within the proposed national curricular framework.

The Four-Stage Module Development Framework

For the translation of these theoretical and policy foundations into a practical and robust classroom intervention, a systematic and rigorous methodology was paramount. A four-stage Design-Based Research (DBR) methodology was utilized. DBR is an appropriate and increasingly influential methodology for this type of undertaking as it is interventionist (focused on designing a solution), iterative (involving cycles of design, implementation, and refinement), and theory-driven. It possesses the dual aims of developing an effective solution to a real-world educational problem while concurrently generating contextually-grounded insights into learning processes and the conditions that support them (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Cobb et al., 2003). The process is outlined in four distinct stages.

Analysis and Needs Assessment

The initial stage comprised a comprehensive analysis of the problem domain and the educational context. This was a critical two-pronged process designed to establish a clear rationale for the module's development and to inform its substantive content and focus.

- **Content Analysis of NCERT Curriculum:** A meticulous, chapter-by-chapter analysis of the revised Class IX NCERT Mathematics textbook was performed. This was not a superficial review. Each chapter and its constituent topics were evaluated against a specific set of criteria derived from research on the selection of high-cognitive-demand tasks (Stein et al., 2000). These criteria included: (a) Conceptual Richness: Does the topic involve deep, interconnected concepts that warrant extensive discussion? (b) Potential for Multiple Representations and Solution Pathways: Can problems be approached in diverse ways, fostering productive debate? (c) Divisibility for Interdependent Tasks: Can the topic be logically segmented for techniques like Jigsaw? and (d) Authentic Application

Potential: Does the topic lend itself to real-world problem-solving or investigation? This systematic analysis led to the selection of 20 high-potential lessons across the syllabus.

- **Needs Analysis of Existing Resources:** To ensure the originality and necessity of the contribution, a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted on the landscape of existing digital resources. This involved a systematic review of materials available via major national platforms, notably the government's DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) portal, as well as supplementary materials from various SCERTs. The analysis revealed that while these platforms hosted a voluminous quantity of content, the vast majority (estimated at over 90%) consisted of static resources: PDF versions of textbooks, didactic video lectures explaining concepts, and simple multiple-choice quizzes for summative assessment. A pronounced scarcity of structured, ready-to-implement lesson plans capable of guiding educators through the complex facilitation of an inquiry-based, collaborative lesson was identified. This empirical finding confirmed the existence of a significant "resource gap" that the proposed module was intended to address.

Design and Technique Integration

Following the identification of topics and the confirmation of need, the second stage focused on the architectural design of the module and its constituent lessons. This creative yet systematic process involved integrating the theoretical principles of social constructivism and cooperative learning into a coherent and usable instructional structure.

- **Mapping CLS Techniques to Learning Objectives:** A specific Collaborative Learning Strategy was deliberately selected for each of the 20 lessons, ensuring that the chosen technique was optimally aligned with the cognitive demands and learning objectives of the topic. This was a process of pedagogical matching. For example, the **Jigsaw** technique (Aronson, 1978) was selected for content-heavy topics with clearly divisible sub-parts (e.g., Triangle Congruence Rules; Properties of Quadrilaterals) to maximize content coverage and engineer high levels of positive resource interdependence. The **Think-Pair-Share** strategy (Lyman, 1981) was chosen for shorter, more focused conceptual explorations or to initiate a lesson, ensuring universal participation and individual reflection before public discussion. For complex, multi-step application tasks, such as those in the "Surface Areas and Volumes" chapter, a structured **Group Problem-Solving** approach (Heller & Hollabaugh, 1992), complete with assigned roles, was designed to scaffold the problem-solving process and ensure equitable participation.

- **Developing a Standardized Lesson Plan Template:** To ensure consistency, clarity, and usability for the practicing teacher, a standardized lesson plan template was developed. This template was informed by established principles of instructional design, such as Gagné's Nine Events of Instruction (Gagné et al., 2005), and structured to provide comprehensive support. Each of the 20 plans included sections for: Learning Outcomes (stated in observable terms); Prior Knowledge Required; Materials Checklist; Detailed Step-by-Step Procedure (with suggested timings); Strategies for both Individual and Group Assessment; and specific Prompts for Group Processing. This template was designed to be robust enough to provide clear guidance, yet flexible enough to allow for teacher adaptation.

Development of Module Components

This stage represented the material production phase of the project, where the architectural blueprints from Stage 2 were operationalized into a full suite of tangible artifacts for both educators and students. The objective was to create a comprehensive, self-contained, and professional-quality package for each of the 20 lessons.

- **Creation of Teacher-Facing and Student-Facing Materials:** A comprehensive suite of student-ready resources was meticulously developed. This included professionally formatted **Expert Sheets** for Jigsaw lessons, challenging **Problem Sets** for group investigations, clearly defined **Role Cards** for structured problem-solving, and custom **Worksheets and Data Collection Sheets**. The design of these materials was explicitly informed by principles of cognitive load theory (Sweller et al., 2019) to ensure they functioned as cognitive supports that reduced extraneous load, rather than as additional sources of confusion. Scaffolding was built into the worksheets, and visual design principles were used to enhance clarity. The teacher-facing materials, particularly the "Teacher's Guide Notes" within each plan, were written to anticipate common student misconceptions and provide teachers with specific probing questions to deepen classroom discourse.

Expert Validation and Refinement

The final stage of the DBR cycle consisted of subjecting the complete draft module to a rigorous expert validation process to ascertain its content validity, pedagogical quality, relevance, and practical feasibility in a real-world school setting. This is a critical step for establishing the credibility of any newly designed educational intervention (Lawshe, 1975).

- **Selection of the Expert Panel:** A panel of three experts was purposefully selected to provide a triangulated set of perspectives: two highly experienced secondary mathematics teachers (PGTs) with over 15 years of experience each in high-performing CBSE schools, and one university-level Associate Professor of Mathematics Education whose research focuses on pedagogy and teacher development. This blend ensured feedback from both practitioner and academic viewpoints.

- **The Validation Process:** The experts were provided with the complete, unabridged module package. They were also supplied with a structured validation rubric developed for this study. The rubric required them to evaluate the module on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Poor, 5=Excellent) across four distinct dimensions: (1) **Content Accuracy and Curricular Alignment**; (2) **Pedagogical Soundness** (the effectiveness of CLS integration and potential for promoting higher-order thinking); (3) **Clarity and Usability** (for the intended teacher audience); and (4) **Feasibility of Implementation** (within typical classroom constraints). The rubric also included open-ended prompts for qualitative feedback on each dimension.
- **Feedback and Iterative Refinement:** The module received a high average validation score of 4.6 out of 5 across all dimensions, providing strong quantitative evidence of its quality. However, the qualitative feedback proved invaluable for refinement. For example, one teacher suggested adding more explicit time cues within the lesson procedures to aid in classroom management. The professor recommended strengthening the "Common Misconceptions" section in each plan. Another teacher noted that the language on one worksheet could be simplified for greater accessibility. All feedback was systematically documented, analysed, and used to conduct a final, meticulous revision of the module. This iterative cycle of design, external review, and data-driven refinement is a core tenet of DBR and significantly enhanced the ecological validity and practical utility of the final product (Barab & Squire, 2004).

The Validated CLS Module: A Practical Tool for Change

The final product yielded by this intensive design-based research process is a comprehensive instructional module comprising 20 lessons, complete with all necessary teacher guides and student-facing materials. It functions as a practical, evidence-informed toolkit for Class IX Mathematics teachers who aim to implement the collaborative and inquiry-based pedagogy advocated by NEP 2020.

Overview of Module Content and Structure

The module spans the breadth of the Class IX NCERT curriculum, covering key conceptual areas. The module's principal value, however, resides not merely in its content coverage but in its pedagogical architecture. It is designed not as a rigid, "teacher-proof" script that promotes de-skilling, but as a flexible and supportive framework that enhances teacher professionalism. Its capacity to empower educators is derived from its provision of a solid, theory-based structure and high-quality, ready-to-use materials. This support significantly reduces the teacher's planning load, allowing them to redirect their finite cognitive and temporal resources from the labour-intensive work of materials design to the more complex and nuanced art of facilitation: strategically observing student interactions, posing effective and probing questions, and skillfully guiding whole-class mathematical discourse (Chapin et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2000).

Breadth of Pedagogical Strategies within the Module

While the Jigsaw lesson on Congruence serves as a powerful example, the module intentionally incorporates a variety of CLS techniques to model pedagogical flexibility and to best suit the content. This variety prevents monotony and equips teachers with a broader repertoire of strategies. For instance:

- **Lesson 3: Exploring Number Systems (Think-Pair-Share):** To tackle the conceptually difficult distinction between rational and irrational numbers, this lesson begins with a focused prompt: "Is Pi (π) exactly 22/7? Justify your answer." Students are given silent individual time to **think**, then discuss their reasoning with a partner (**pair**), and finally, selected pairs **share** their arguments with the class. This structure ensures universal engagement and surfaces common misconceptions for the teacher to address.

- **Lesson 12: Investigating Quadrilaterals (Group Investigation):** This lesson employs the Group Investigation model (Sharan & Sharan, 1992). Student groups are formed and choose a specific type of quadrilateral (e.g., parallelogram, rhombus, kite) to investigate. They are tasked with discovering and proving its essential properties using dynamic geometry software or physical models. Each group then prepares a presentation to teach their findings to the rest of the class, effectively creating a student-led exploration of the entire chapter's content.

A Sample Lesson in Detail: Cracking the Code of Congruence

To illustrate the module's structure and depth, a detailed outline of a sample lesson plan on Triangle Congruence Rules, which employs the Jigsaw technique (Aronson, 1978), is presented below.

- **Topic:** Triangles (Chapter 7, NCERT)

- **Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of congruence in triangles in terms of corresponding parts.
2. State, describe, and differentiate the four main congruence rules: SSS, SAS, ASA, and RHS.
3. Analyse a given pair of triangles to determine which congruence rule, if any, can be used to prove congruence.

- **Collaborative Learning Strategy:** Jigsaw
- **Materials:** Four sets of "Expert Sheets," one for each congruence rule (SSS, SAS, ASA, RHS); "Home Group Worksheet" with 10 problems; Chart paper and markers for each group; Individual "Exit Tickets."
- **Time Allocation:** 45 minutes (Phase 1: 5 min; Phase 2: 10 min; Phase 3: 15 min; Phase 4: 10 min; Phase 5: 5 min)
- **Detailed Step-by-Step Procedure:**
- **Phase 1: Introduction & Forming Groups (5 min):** The teacher introduces the core concept of congruence ("same shape, same size," leading to "corresponding parts of congruent triangles are congruent"). Students are pre-assigned to heterogeneous "Home Groups" of four. The teacher explains the Jigsaw process, emphasizing that each member has a unique and critical role in the group's success.
- **Phase 2: Expert Groups (10 min):** Students from different home groups who have the same rule to learn (e.g., all the "SAS" students) convene in "Expert Groups." Within these groups, they read their shared expert sheet, discuss the nuances of the rule (e.g., the meaning of an "included" angle for SAS), solve the example problems together, and plan how they will teach it to their home group members. The teacher circulates among the expert groups, acting as a facilitator to clarify any deep-seated doubts.
- **Phase 3: Home Group Teaching (15 min):** Students return to their original Home Groups. Taking turns, each "expert" teaches their assigned congruence rule to the other three members. They are encouraged to draw diagrams and answer questions. This phase places the student in the active role of teacher, which is a powerful aid to mastery.
- **Phase 4: Group Application Task (10 min):** Once all four rules have been taught and discussed, the group collaboratively works on the "Home Group Worksheet." This worksheet contains a variety of

problems, including some where no rule applies or where information is ambiguous. The group must discuss each problem and reach a consensus, justifying their reasoning for each.

- **Phase 5: Individual Assessment & Group Processing (5 min):** To ensure individual accountability, the teacher distributes a brief, individual "Exit Ticket" with a single, novel problem. Concurrently, the teacher prompts the groups with the **Group Processing Question:** "On a scale of 1-5, how well did our group ensure everyone's voice was heard? What is one specific action we can take to improve our listening skills next time?"

This sample lesson exemplifies the systematic embedding of all five pillars of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Positive interdependence is engineered through the Jigsaw structure; individual accountability is ensured via the exit ticket; the entire lesson architecture promotes substantive interaction; interpersonal skills (teaching, listening) are practiced; and the group processing prompt fosters collective metacognition.

Conclusion and Implications

This paper has delineated the systematic, theory-informed, and policy-aligned process of designing and validating a Collaborative Learning Strategies Instructional Module for Class IX Mathematics. Within the contemporary Indian educational landscape, which is being actively reshaped by the ambitious reform agenda of NEP 2020, the development of such practical, high-quality, and evidence-based instructional tools is not a supplementary activity. Rather, it is a core requirement for ameliorating the persistent and well-documented disjuncture between policy aspiration and routine classroom reality (Cuban, 1993).

Summary and Contributions

The primary contributions of this research are twofold, addressing the distinct yet interconnected domains of educational practice and scholarly research.

First, the research offers a **tangible contribution to educational practice**. The validated, 20-lesson module furnishes a direct, concrete, and actionable response to the practitioner's fundamental implementation query: "How can the collaborative, inquiry-based vision of NEP 2020 be operationalized in my mathematics classroom?" By providing detailed lesson plans, curated student materials, and explicit pedagogical guidance, the module significantly lowers the threshold for adopting innovative teaching methodologies. The strategic dissemination of such open-source resources through national digital infrastructures like DIKSHA could function as a significant catalyst for pedagogical change at scale, empowering a critical mass of teachers to move beyond the traditional transmissionist paradigm. It can also serve as an invaluable resource in pre-service (e.g., B.Ed.) and in-service teacher education programs, providing a concrete model of how to translate abstract educational theory into viable classroom practice.

Second, this paper presents a **methodological contribution to educational research**. The detailed explication of the four-stage design-based research framework serves as a replicable blueprint for educational researchers, curriculum designers, and practitioner-researchers. It demonstrates a rigorous, systematic process for creating context-specific pedagogical interventions that are simultaneously grounded in robust learning theory (e.g., Social Constructivism, Cooperative Learning) and responsive to local policy mandates (e.g., NEP 2020, NCF 2023). This work provides a detailed case study in the application of educational design research, illustrating how to engineer learning tools and environments that are not only theoretically sound but also ecologically valid and practitioner-endorsed (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012).

Limitations and Future Directions

A candid acknowledgment of the study's limitations is essential to inform and guide future inquiry. The scope of this paper is explicitly confined to the design and expert validation process of the module. While rigorous expert validation provides strong initial evidence of the module's potential utility and quality, the definitive test of its efficacy resides in its measured impact on students. A comprehensive analysis of student learning outcomes (both conceptual and procedural), shifts in engagement levels, and changes in student dispositions and attitudes towards mathematics is the object of a larger, ongoing quasi-experimental investigation.

Furthermore, this work indicates several promising avenues for future research:

- **Longitudinal Efficacy Studies:** To investigate the long-term, cumulative effects of sustained CLS-based instruction on the development of students' mathematical reasoning, argumentation skills, and problem-solving capacities, which are central goals of mathematics education reform (Schoenfeld, 1992).
- **Teacher Professional Development Research:** To investigate the most effective models of professional development for supporting teachers in this pedagogical shift. It is widely recognized that single-session workshops are insufficient for fostering deep and lasting changes in practice.

Future research should explore sustained, job-embedded models, such as those involving a multi-phase approach of initial training, peer coaching, and the establishment of professional learning communities for reflective practice (Guskey, 2002; Borko, 2004).

- **Scalability and Adaptability Studies:** To adapt and test the module across a wider range of diverse educational contexts in India, such as state board schools, rural schools, and schools with varying levels of resources and student demographics. Such studies are crucial for understanding the module's scalability and for identifying the critical contextual factors that mediate its successful implementation.
- **Cross-Curricular Development:** To apply the DBR framework presented herein to the systematic development of analogous modules for other subjects (e.g., Science, Social Studies) and other grade levels, thereby contributing to the creation of a rich, open-source repository of high-quality, inquiry-based instructional resources aligned with NEP 2020.

Conclusion

The transformation of India's education system, as envisioned by NEP 2020, is a complex, multi-faceted, long-term endeavour. It cannot be accomplished through top-down policy mandates alone. It necessitates a concerted, collaborative effort from all stakeholders—policymakers, administrators, researchers, and parents—with a strategic and sustained focus on empowering the teacher as the primary agent of change and the ultimate arbiter of classroom culture (Fullan, 2001). The CLS module detailed in this paper represents a substantive and concrete contribution to this national effort. It is an endeavour to move beyond the rhetoric of reform and to provide a tangible, evidence-informed, and practical resource that can assist in transforming India's mathematics classrooms from sites of passive reception into the vibrant, collaborative, and cognitively active communities of inquiry that our students deserve and our nation's future requires.

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