

Transforming Teacher Education in India: Perspectives from NEP 2020

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Abstract

Education is the catalyst that drives national revolution, making citizens self-reliant and skilled across social, economic, and political dimensions. While teachers are the primary architects of this transformation, the teacher education sector in India has long suffered from systemic inertia. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) serves as a visionary document aiming to align India's education system with the global goal of sustainable development (SDG4). This paper critically examines the current state of teacher education, highlighting issues such as substandard institutions, the "para-teacher" culture, and outdated pedagogies. It analyzes the NEP 2020's recommendations—including the 4-year Integrated B.Ed., the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)—as vital steps toward revitalization. The paper concludes that successful implementation requires not just policy documentation but a paradigm shift in investment and institutional integrity.

Keywords

Education, Teacher Education, NEP 2020, ITEP, NPST, Digital Pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the role of a teacher was limited to the confines of a physical classroom. However, in the volatility of the 21st century, a teacher must evolve into a mentor, counselor, digital facilitator, and nation-builder. As stated by NCTE (1998) in *Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education*, "The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for the implementation of the educational process at any stage."

The significance of this role is underscored by the current learning crisis in India. Reports like the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2023) highlight that a significant percentage of students in rural India lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills, pointing directly to the need for improved pedagogical training. The Kothari Commission (1966) rightfully noted, 'Of all the different factors which influence the quality of education... the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant.' Echoing this, the NEP 2020 exhorts, 'Teachers truly shape the future of our children – and, therefore, the future of our nation.'

(Chari, 2020) suggests that the educational needs of the 21st century require learners to "learn how to learn." Education is moving away from rote memorization toward critical thinking, problem-solving, and multidisciplinary innovation. However, the current teacher education ecosystem often fails to model these competencies. Pedagogy and curriculum must be experiential and inquiry-driven, as NEP 2020 states: "Pedagogy must be more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven... discussion-based, flexible, and of course, enjoyable." To achieve this, India requires teachers who are professionally sound, ethically grounded, and technologically adaptive.

2. Teacher Education in Educational Policies: A Historical Perspective

India has formulated three major national education policies, all of which stress the centrality of the teacher. The National Policy on Education (1968) focused on the status and emoluments of teachers, stating they should be accorded an honored place in society with academic freedom to research and publish.

The NPE 1986 emphasized that "no people can rise above the level of its teachers." It recognized that the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of society and called for revamping recruitment methods to ensure merit and objectivity. It also highlighted the need for uniform service conditions and a data-based evaluation system.

Despite these historical recommendations, the sector faced deterioration. The Justice Verma Commission (2012), constituted by the Supreme Court, famously noted that a vast majority of teacher education institutions stood as "commercial shops" rather than centers of learning.

The NEP 2020 addresses these legacy issues by focusing on recruitment, deployment, service conditions, and empowerment. It acknowledges that the quality and motivation of teachers remain suboptimal due to exploitative employment practices and poor infrastructure. NEP 2020 promises to "recruit the very best and brightest to enter the teaching profession at all levels, by ensuring livelihood, respect, dignity, and autonomy."

3. Challenges of Teacher Education

The gap between policy intent and ground reality has resulted in severe challenges. Prominent among them are:

3.1 Crisis of Dignity and "Last Resort" Syndrome: Making a career in teaching is often a last option for students compared to engineering, medicine, or civil services. This attitude decreases the dignity of the profession and impacts performance (Kalaivanan, 2019).

3.2 Contractualization of Workforce: A major Indian challenge is the prevalence of "Para-teachers" or "Shiksha Mitras"—contractual teachers hired on low wages with little job security. This lack of security leads to dissatisfaction. Anand (1972) opined that factors like job security and compensation are critical for satisfaction. A dissatisfied teacher is unlikely to

inspire students (Halder et.al. 2024).

3.3 Institutional Corruption: As highlighted by the Justice Verma Commission, thousands of stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) operate solely for profit. NEP 2020 notes that over 10,000 TEIs don't even attempt to provide serious teacher education but rather "sell degrees" (NEP 2020, para 15.2). This creates a pool of incompetent teachers (Sahoo, 2024).

3.4 Infrastructure and Faculty Shortage: Many government institutions, such as DIETs (District Institutes of Education and Training), suffer from high vacancy rates. There is a lack of skilled teacher educators, which impacts the quality of instruction (Jena, 2024).

3.5 The Theory-Practice Gap: Practice teaching is the crux of training, yet it is often conducted superficially. Most TEIs remain isolated from actual schools, leading to a disconnection between theory and practice. Pupil-teachers often do not receive proper feedback on lesson plans or classroom management.

3.6 Digital Illiteracy: The post-COVID-19 era demands "Phygital" (Physical + Digital) skills. However, many teacher educators lack digital competence, making it difficult to train student-teachers in modern tools like DIKSHA or hybrid learning models.

3.7 Flawed Recruitment of Educators: There is a lack of transparency in recruiting teacher educators, with nepotism often overshadowing merit. This keeps competent candidates out of the system.

4. Recommendations of NEP 2020 regarding Teacher Education

NEP 2020 proposes a radical overhaul to address these challenges. Key recommendations include:

4.1 Multidisciplinary Approach: The policy recommends moving teacher education out of stand-alone colleges and into multidisciplinary universities. This ensures teachers are grounded in Indian values, sociology, psychology, and liberal arts, preparing well-rounded educators.

4.2 Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP): The 4-year integrated B.Ed. will become the minimum degree qualification for school teachers by 2030. This dual-major bachelor's degree aims to catch students after Grade 12, ensuring that only those passionate about teaching enter the field. Merit-based scholarships will be provided to attract talent, particularly from rural India. (Ministry of Education, 2020).

4.3 Improved Service Conditions: The policy ensures safe and pleasant working environments, including functional toilets, clean drinking water, and computing devices (NEP 2020, para 5.9). Crucially, it recommends halting the deployment of teachers for non-teaching administrative work (like election duties during school hours) so they can focus on

the classroom.

4.4 Continuous Professional Development (CPD): The policy mandates at least 50 hours of CPD every year for teachers and principals. This is currently being operationalized through platforms like *NISHTHA* (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement), which is the world's largest teachers' training program designed to build competencies. (NEP 2020, para 5.15).

4.5 Strengthening Eligibility Tests: The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) will be strengthened to include testing for foundational literacy and numeracy. TET scores, along with classroom demonstrations and interviews, will be standard for recruitment to assess local language proficiency and teaching passion.

4.6 National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST): A common guiding set of NPST will be developed by 2022 (coordinated by NCTE and NCERT). This will determine career management, including tenure, promotions, and salary increases, moving away from seniority-based promotions to merit-based progression (NEP 2020, para 5.20).

4.7 Mentoring and School Complexes: The policy promotes the creation of "School Complexes" to allow the sharing of teachers (e.g., for art, music, or sports) across schools. It also encourages a "National Mission for Mentoring," where retired senior teachers or experts volunteer to mentor younger teachers, ensuring knowledge transfer.

5. Suggestions and Way Forward

To modernize the Indian teacher education system effectively, the following steps are suggested:

1. **Revitalize DIETs:** The District Institutes of Education and Training must be strengthened as the hub of local teacher development, filling all faculty vacancies immediately.
2. **Strict Regulation:** The government must continue the crackdown on "degree-selling" private colleges as suggested by the Justice Verma Committee and NEP 2020.
3. **Investment in Digital Infrastructure:** Allocating budget specifically for digital training labs in B.Ed colleges to ensure teachers can utilize platforms like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) effectively.
4. **GDP Allocation:** Both Central and State Governments must collaborate to increase the education budget to 6% of GDP, with a specific sub-allocation for teacher training research.
5. **Performance-Based Incentives:** Moving beyond biometric attendance, the system should reward innovation in teaching through recognized national platforms.

6. Conclusion

NEP 2020 presents a robust roadmap for transforming teacher education from a stagnant sector into a vibrant, multidisciplinary ecosystem. However, policy documents alone cannot change the classroom. The need of the hour is the rigorous implementation of the 4-year ITEP, the operationalization of NPST, and a cultural shift that restores the dignity of the *Guru*. As the Kothari Commission noted, the destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms; therefore, the investment in the shaper of that destiny—the teacher—must be our highest national priority.

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