

NEP 2020 and Teacher Education in India

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Abstract: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes substantial reforms in teacher preparation, professional development, multidisciplinary teacher education, the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), Continuing professional development (CPD) and mentoring, technology integration and stronger collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools. Despite these progressive provisions, the implementation of NEP 2020 faces several challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, shortages of qualified teacher educators, barriers to accessing digital resources, gaps between theory and practice, institutional resistance and the diverse learning needs of students. This paper examines the major provisions of NEP 2020 relating to teacher education, challenges and suggests ways and means to strengthen teacher education.*

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Teacher Education, ITEP, NPST, NMM, CPD, Challenges and Measures

1. Introduction

The quality of an education system depends significantly on the professional ability and obligation of its teachers. Teachers influence not only students' knowledge but also every aspect of students' lives. Hence, it is essential that teacher education must prepare those professionals who can respond to changing scenarios and help in understanding the diverse learning needs of learners.

In India, regarding teacher education, the Kothari Commission (1964–66) argued for the association of teacher preparation with universities and school practice. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2009) encouraged the idea of the reflective practitioner and strengthened the role of school internship.

The Justice Verma Commission (2012) pointed out serious weaknesses in programme quality and regulation, particularly in standalone institutions, and recommended longer programmes, including integrated models. The concerns about uneven institutional capacity, weak integration of theory and practice, inadequate professional development and disparities in resources have therefore been recognised for decades.

1) Teacher Education

The National Education Policy 2020 highlights, "Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of school teachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions, including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy" [Para 15.1, NEP 2020].

Teacher education here refers to the systematic preparation and continuing development of individuals for effective professional practice in educational settings. Contemporary teacher education extends beyond the transmission of teaching techniques. Teachers are expected to interpret curriculum requirements, understand learners' developmental characteristics, recognise educational barriers and create

environments that encourage active participation. They must also be able to evaluate their own practice and adapt instruction in response to evidence about student learning. International comparative work similarly stresses that strong systems combine tightly integrated coursework and clinical practice, high-quality mentoring and sustained opportunities to learn on the job (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Shulman (1987) remarked that effective teachers must hold pedagogical content knowledge such as an understanding of how particular concepts can be represented, explained and made accessible to learners with different backgrounds. This means that subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge should not be developed as separate components. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to combine them through lesson planning, classroom observation, practice teaching and reflection, which is the rationale for integrated programmes.

To understand the comprehensiveness of teacher education, it is necessary to understand the following interconnected dimensions:

- **Professional Preparation:** This dimension enables the establishment of a proper connection between the theoretical knowledge, disciplinary understanding and practical competencies which are required for teaching.
- **Continuing Professional Development:** It is required to upgrade professional skills and pedagogical knowledge to respond to emerging educational needs and technological changes, etc.
- **Institutional and Professional Support:** It is required to provide a healthy institutional environment and necessary support for teachers to apply their teaching-learning skills effectively.

The above-mentioned dimensions are interconnected and interdependent. These are required to make any educational system effective and successful in order to achieve desired objectives. Initial preparation cannot ensure sustained professional competence without continuing learning, while professional development programmes are unlikely to produce meaningful change when teachers lack appropriate resources, mentoring and institutional encouragement. Research on professional development suggests that its effect on practice depends on the design of the programme and not simply on its duration (Kennedy, 2016). NEP 2020 reflects a

broad understanding by linking teacher preparation with multidisciplinary education, professional standards, mentoring, technology integration and institutional reform (NEP, 2020).

NEP 2020 envisages a movement away from excessive dependence on memorisation towards conceptual understanding, inquiry, problem-solving and experiential learning. Therefore, to adopt such transitions, it is required of teachers to move beyond routine content delivery and design learning experiences that encourage participation, reasoning and independent thought.

Another important dimension is the relationship between education and learners' linguistic and cultural contexts. The policy encourages the use of home languages, mother tongues and regional languages as mediums of instruction, particularly during the early years, wherever practicable. Teachers consequently require appropriate linguistic resources and preparation for multilingual classrooms.

2. Major Provisions of NEP 2020 Relating to Teacher Education

2.1 Multidisciplinary Teacher Education

NEP 2020 advocates for the development of teacher education within multidisciplinary higher education institutions. This approach seeks to connect educational theory and practice with knowledge from other disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, languages, sciences, mathematics, history and the arts etc.

Multidisciplinary education helps to broaden teachers' understanding of learning and human development. Including different disciplines such as educational psychology will be helpful for teachers to understand individual differences, while sociological perspectives also improve their understanding of social inequality, cultural diversity and educational exclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to mention here that multidisciplinary education should not be interpreted as the simple addition of unrelated subjects to a programme. It requires meaningful integration among disciplinary knowledge, educational theory, school experience and reflective practice.

Standalone teacher education institutions are expected to transform into multidisciplinary institutions by 2030.

2.2 Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme

"The 4-year integrated B.Ed. will be a dual-major holistic bachelor's degree, in Education as well as a specialised subject such as a language, history, music, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, economics, art, physical education, etc. Beyond the teaching of cutting-edge pedagogy, the teacher education will include grounding in sociology, history, science, psychology, early childhood care and education, foundational literacy and numeracy, knowledge of India and its values/ethos/art/traditions, and more". (Para 15.5, NEP 2020)

Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP): "Recognizing that the teachers will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, teacher education will gradually be moved by 2030 into multidisciplinary colleges and universities" [Para 5.22, NEP 2020].

Stage Specific Specialisation: The reconfiguration of the curricular and pedagogical structure of school education involving a 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 design as recommended by NEP 2020 makes it imperative that the ITEP is required to develop and improve the practice of teaching at a particular Stage of school education, i.e. Foundational Stage / Preparatory Stage / Middle Stage / Secondary Stage. Each student-teacher shall specialise in one of the following Stages of school education which will qualify them to become a teacher for that stage:-

- 1) **ITEP with Foundational Stage Specialisation:** This stage will qualify student-teachers for teaching children of age 3-8 years, three years in Anganwadi centres or Balvatikas or other preschools, and in Grades 1 & 2 in schools.
- 2) **ITEP with Preparatory Stage Specialisation:** This stage will qualify student-teachers for teaching children in Grades 3 to 5. The Preparatory Stage builds on the play-based, discovery and activity-based pedagogical approaches followed at the Foundational Stage along with more interactive classroom learning that would lay a solid groundwork in learning relating to the curricular areas.
- 3) **ITEP with Middle Stage Specialisation:** - In this stage student-teachers will qualify for teaching children in Grades 6, 7 and 8. At the Middle Stage, "Experiential learning within each subject, and explorations of relations among different subjects, will be encouraged and emphasised despite the introduction of more specialised subjects and subject teachers" [Para 4.2, NEP 2020].
- 4) **ITEP with Secondary Stage Specialisation:** This stage includes Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. It comprises of "four years of multidisciplinary study, building on the pedagogical and curricular style of the Middle Stage, but with greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and greater flexibility and student choice of subjects" NEP 2020, 4.2). "Holistic development and a wide choice of subjects and courses year to year will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education" [Para 4.9, NEP 2020].

The effectiveness of ITEP will depend on the quality of its curriculum, the competence of its faculty, the availability of practice-teaching schools and the integration of theoretical and practical learning. Programme duration alone cannot guarantee professional competence.

2.3 National Professional Standards for Teachers

"A common guiding set of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) will be developed by 2020, by the National Council for Teacher Education in its restructured new form as a Professional Standard Setting Body (PSSB) under the General Education Council (GEC), in consultation with NCERT, SCERTs, teachers from across level and regions, expert organizations in teacher preparation and development, expert bodies in vocational education, and higher education institutions. The standards would cover expectations of the role of the teacher at different levels of

expertise/rank, and the competencies required for that stage. It will also comprise standards for performance appraisal, for each stage, that would be carried out on a periodic basis. The NPST will also inform the design of pre-service teacher education programmes. This could be then adopted by states and determine all aspects of teacher career management, including tenure, professional development efforts, salary increases, promotions, and other recognitions. Promotions and salary increases will not occur based on the length of tenure or seniority, but only on the basis of such appraisal. The professional standards will be reviewed and revised in 2030, and thereafter every ten years, on the basis of rigorous empirical analysis of the efficacy of the system". (Para 5.20, NEP 2020)

However, standards should be applied keeping in view that teachers work in schools with different resources, student populations, languages and constraints. So, it is necessary to consider the conditions in which teachers work and avoid reducing teaching quality to narrow performance indicators during the evaluation process. The developmental purpose of standards is best served when they encourage reflective practice and improvement rather than administrative compliance.

2.4 Continuous Professional Development

CPD is an essential component of professional growth as highlighted by NEP 2020. The policy expects school principals and teachers to participate in at least 50 hours of CPD opportunities annually, including activities relevant to their interests and developmental needs (NEP, 2020).

It includes workshops, subject-specific training, mentoring, collaborative lesson planning, educational research, online courses, peer observation and reflective discussion. We cannot measure the effectiveness of the programme only based on hours completed. Professional development programmes should address actual classroom needs and provide opportunities to apply new knowledge, with follow-up support and feedback (Kennedy, 2016). A sustainable CPD system should combine structured training with school-based collaboration, self-directed learning and reflection.

2.5 Mentoring and Professional Support

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proposes to overhaul the education system in alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4): Quality Education. It recognises that teacher professional development requires a multidisciplinary perspective, cultivation of professional dispositions, ethical values and continuous enhancement of teaching-learning practices through structured mentoring by experienced and competent mentors. The NEP 2020 (Para 15.11), therefore, proposes the National Mission for Mentoring (MITRA (NMM)). MITRA (NMM) aims to create a large pool of outstanding professionals (Mentors), who are willing to provide short- and long-term professional support and cross-learning among school teachers (Mentees), contributing to their continuous professional development/capacity building.

Mentoring can be useful for teachers to connect theoretical preparation with the practical demands of classroom teaching. In this mentoring system, experienced teachers, teacher educators and other qualified professionals can guide early-career teachers in lesson planning, classroom management, assessment and learner support. NEP 2020 envisages a National Mission for Mentoring to support professional development through appropriate arrangements.

Mentoring relationships should encourage constructive feedback and professional confidence rather than function merely as supervision.

2.6 Technology-Enabled approach

Digital technology is useful to expand access to educational resources, professional learning and collaboration. Online environments enable teachers to access training materials, participate in courses and exchange ideas beyond the boundaries of their institutions, and digital resources may support differentiated instruction, formative assessment and multilingual materials. However, its effectiveness depends on teachers' digital competence, reliable connectivity, appropriate devices and the suitability of resources for local contexts. Therefore, it is the need of the hour to select, evaluate and use digital resources responsibly, and technology should complement rather than replace meaningful interaction between teachers and learners.

2.7 Teacher Eligibility and Recruitment

NEP 2020 emphasises transparent recruitment, appropriate professional qualifications and the use of teacher eligibility tests in accordance with applicable requirements. Eligibility tests can establish minimum expectations concerning subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding, but professional suitability also involves communication, ethical judgement, inclusive attitudes and classroom decision-making. Recruitment should be transparent and merit-based while remaining aligned with legal and regulatory provisions, and should operate alongside professional development as a complementary mechanism. The admission of the student in the teacher education programme is through the National Common Entrance Test conducted by NTA.

2.8 Teacher Educators and Institutional Transformation

The quality and success of an educational system depends upon the competences of the teacher educators. Teacher educators play a major role in preparing future teachers. This requires attention to teacher educators' qualifications and development, research capacity, governance and school partnerships. Institutions cannot prepare reflective and innovative teachers if their own practices remain dominated by rote learning, fragmented curricula or inadequate practical engagement.

3. Challenges in Implementing NEP 2020 in Teacher Education

To implement NEP 2020 in teacher education effectively, there are various challenges as follows:

3.1 Infrastructure and Resource Gaps

Teacher education institutions differ in their access to libraries, laboratories, digital facilities, qualified faculty and school-based training opportunities. Therefore, transitioning from standalone colleges to multidisciplinary universities requires substantial infrastructure, modern laboratories, updated libraries, and strong school networks. There are still many small or private training colleges that lack the physical and financial resources to support holistic, experiential learning, due to which it is difficult to reduce the existing gap between institutions (Babu, 2023).

3.2 Faculty Shortages and Preparation

Transformation of the education system depends on teacher educators who combine disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical expertise and practical understanding of school education, and who have opportunities for faculty development, research and collaboration. Without attention to teacher educator quality, changes in programme structure may produce limited improvement in professional competence. The success of teacher education depends directly on the quality of teacher educators. Currently, there is an acute shortage of faculty who possess both strong disciplinary scholarship and practical mastery of modern, stage-specific pedagogy. (Bari & Goswamee, 2024).

3.3 Curriculum Reform and Pedagogical Readiness

Teachers may find difficulty in meeting new expectations when curriculum guidance, training or learning resources are inadequate. Hence, it requires shifting from traditional, exam-oriented instruction towards competency-based, inquiry-driven pedagogy demands a mindset shift among educators. For effective reform there is a requirement of coherent materials, sustained professional support and opportunities to discuss practical difficulties

3.4 Digital Disparities

While technology opens doors to remote learning and open educational resources, due to unequal access/ digital disparities, digital resources can limit the reach of technology-enabled professional development, particularly for teachers in remote or under-resourced areas. In rural and geographically isolated areas, unequal access to stable internet and digital devices remains a major hurdle.

3.5 Workload and Professional Well-Being

It has been seen that most of the times of the, teachers are overburdened due to non-academic administrative duties, large class sizes, data collection duties, election duties and extensive assessment tasks etc in an educational institution. Sometimes, training requirements are added without scheduling or workload management; professional development may become a compliance exercise.

3.6 Diversity and Inclusive Classroom Practice

No two individuals are alike. Keeping in view this statement, students differ in their learning levels, languages, socio-

economic circumstances and access to resources. Teachers need preparation and support to respond to such diversities without lowering expectations or excluding learners.

So, to fulfil the needs of multilingual, highly diverse classrooms, it requires more than theoretical coursework. Teacher educators need practical tools, localized learning materials, and specialized training to support learners with varied learning needs and socioeconomic backgrounds effectively.

3.7 Policy Coordination and Institutional Capacity

To implement NEP 2020 effectively, it involves strong and healthy coordination among multiple bodies, including the Ministry of Education, NCTE, NCERT, SCERTs, and state university systems. A lack of clear alignment or conflicting guidelines among these agencies creates administrative confusion and delays institutional accreditation and syllabus implementation. Therefore, clear responsibilities, transparent procedures, appropriate funding and regular review are necessary for coherence.

3.8 Balancing Accountability and Professional Autonomy

Quality assurance is a major part of teacher education, but excessive emphasis on documentation may limit teachers' ability to respond to their students' diverse needs. Sustainable reform requires a balanced governance framework that maintains high standards while granting teachers the creative freedom to adapt instruction to their students' unique contexts. An effective system combines accountability with professional autonomy, constructive feedback and room for innovation.

4. Ways and means to Strengthen Teacher Education under NEP 2020

To overcome the above-mentioned challenges, a coordinated and long-term approach is required to strengthen teacher education as per NEP 2020. The following measures are to strengthen teacher education:-

- 1) It is the responsibility of the institutions to strengthen the integration of educational theory, disciplinary knowledge and supervised school experience, building partnerships and maintaining healthy relationships with schools to provide meaningful practicum opportunities, mentoring and feedback.
- 2) While organising professional development programmes, it should be based on identified learning needs rather than only standardised schedules. The relevance of CPD can be improved by keeping in view needs assessment, collaborative planning, classroom observation and follow-up mentoring.
- 3) There must be a proper provision that teacher educators should receive sustained opportunities for learning and research, including contemporary pedagogy, inclusive education, assessment literacy, digital competence and reflective supervision.
- 4) Institutional investment requires more attention. Institutions should prioritise libraries, laboratories, digital infrastructure, accessible environments and adequate staffing, recognising regional differences and

the needs of disadvantaged institutions. Furthermore, teachers must be appointed on merit cum demonstration basis and must be paid salaries as per norms to retain talented teachers in the institutions.

- 5) The Curriculum should systematically address inclusion, multilingual education, gender sensitivity, ethical practice, inclusive education and the needs of learners with disabilities, integrated into practical experience rather than limited to theory.
- 6) Teachers need opportunities to evaluate digital resources, protect learner privacy, address accessibility and select technologies that serve clear educational purposes. So, it is necessary to encourage teachers to use the latest technologies in their classrooms to make the teaching-learning process effective.
- 7) It is the responsibility of each institution to examine meaningful indicators such as the quality of school-based experiences, evidence of reflective teaching, student participation, mentoring effectiveness and responsiveness to identified learning needs.

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5. Conclusion

NEP 2020 establishes an important framework for reforming teacher education in India. Its emphasis on multidisciplinary preparation, integrated teacher education, CPD, mentoring, professional standards and institutional transformation reflects the central role of teachers in improving educational quality. Its contribution lies in connecting teacher preparation with the broader goals of learner-centred education, inclusion, critical thinking and lifelong learning.

NEP 2020 represents a paradigm shift in the Indian education system with profound implications for teacher-training¹. institutions. In alignment with the objectives and provisions of NEP 2020, teacher training institutes can play an important role in shaping the future of education in India. However, implementing NEP 2020 in teacher education requires joint efforts of all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, administrators and communities; only then can the earlier discussed challenges be resolved effectively.

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