

The National Education Policy (Nep) 2020 And Teacher Education in India: Transformations, Challenges, And Prospects

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Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a landmark reform in India's educational landscape, emphasising holistic, inclusive, and learner-centred teacher education. Teachers are recognised as pivotal agents of social transformation, responsible for fostering cognitive, creative, physical, social, and emotional development among students. This study explores the implications of NEP 2020 for pre-service and in-service teacher education, examining reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, institutional governance, and technology integration. Drawing on theoretical perspectives such as constructivism, socio-cultural theory, reflective practice, and motivational frameworks, the research identifies systemic challenges including outdated curricula, regional disparities, and the theory-practice gap. The study concludes by highlighting strategies for effective implementation, professionalisation, and global alignment of teacher education in India.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, Teacher Education, Holistic Development, Pre-Service and In-Service Training, Reflective Practice, Technology-Enabled Pedagogy, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Education has long been the cornerstone of societal development; however, the formal education system in many parts of the world, including India, continues to reflect outdated pedagogical practices. Despite decades of discussion and reform, meaningful transformation has been slow. Teachers, as highlighted by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE, 1998), play a central role in this process-guiding learners from ignorance to knowledge and shaping the foundations of an enlightened society. They serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as mentors, facilitators, assessors, and creators of effective learning environments. Effective teaching requires understanding students' social, cultural, and home experiences to foster holistic development (Bhatia, R., Rinkey, & Kaur, J., 2024, p. 270).

Teacher education in India has evolved through several policy reforms, including the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 and 1986, culminating in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP 2020 emphasises holistic, interdisciplinary learning, integration of technology, and continuous professional development (Jana, T.; Chattopadhyay, Dr. K. N., 2023; Sardana et al., 2021). It calls for restructuring teacher education through experiential learning, subject specialisation, and equitable access via scholarships, entrance tests, and professional upskilling. However, significant challenges persist-many Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) still focus on degree issuance rather than genuine teacher

preparation (Justice J. S. Verma Commission, 2012), while rote learning continues to dominate classroom practices (Kumar & Ganesh, 2022). The NEP 2020 seeks to address these gaps by modernising pedagogy, infrastructure, and accreditation to ensure quality teacher preparation aligned with national goals.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the key reforms introduced in NEP 2020 related to teacher education.
2. To analyse the roles and responsibilities of teachers in fostering holistic student development.
3. To explore theoretical frameworks underpinning NEP 2020's vision for teacher preparation.
4. To identify challenges in implementing NEP 2020 reforms in pre-service and in-service teacher education.
5. To evaluate institutional, governance, and professional development strategies recommended by NEP 2020.
6. To propose measures for improving teacher education quality and professionalisation in India.

Research Methodology:

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical study based on qualitative analysis.
- **Data Sources:**
 - Primary: Policy documents, official NEP 2020 texts, NCTE guidelines.
 - Secondary: Scholarly articles, government reports, books, and international best practices.
- **Analysis Techniques:** Content analysis of policy provisions, thematic synthesis of reforms, comparative study with global teacher education practice

Framework of Teacher Education in India

Teacher education in India functions under a federal structure, where the Central Government develops policy frameworks and the State Governments implement them through pre-service and in-service programs. **Pre-service teacher education** is governed by the NCTE, which sets standards, accredits institutions, and monitors program quality. **In-service teacher education**, designed to upskill existing teachers, is conducted through District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs), Block Resource Centres (BRCs), Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs), and State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs). National agencies such as NCERT and NIEPA play an important role in developing training modules and policy frameworks.

Teacher education programs aim to equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to fulfil their roles effectively. They focus on developing pedagogical skills, reflective practices, and awareness of cultural and contextual diversity, ensuring that teachers contribute meaningfully to educational and social transformation.

The Role of Teachers in Education

Teachers are the foundation of both education and personal development. Beyond imparting knowledge, they act as mentors, counsellors, role models, and guides who influence students' values and aspirations. Teachers' responsibilities include sharing knowledge, fostering ethical conduct, and mentoring students toward holistic growth. Modern education requires teachers to help students apply learning in real-world contexts, think critically, and cultivate self-awareness. Teaching is a creative and fulfilling profession that

demands patience, innovation, and communication skills, as well as a commitment to nurturing the intellectual and emotional growth of students.

NEP 2020: Vision and Teacher Education Reforms

The NEP 2020 represents a comprehensive reform of the Indian education system, envisioning teachers as the heart of the learning process. It promotes learner-centric, inclusive, and equitable education (Sardana et al., 2021). By 2030, the minimum qualification for teaching is mandated as a four-year integrated B.Ed. degree with TET/CTET certification. The policy calls for strategic teacher recruitment, professional autonomy, and continuous professional development-at least 50 hours annually-to ensure quality teaching. It also focuses on improving working conditions, strengthening school management, and integrating technology and interdisciplinary learning into pedagogy. These reforms aim to enhance teacher motivation, accountability, and social respect.

Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning NEP 2020

NEP 2020's vision for teacher education draws upon major educational theories that emphasise holistic and learner-centred pedagogy:

- **Learner-Centred Approach:** Teachers act as facilitators of student-driven learning (Sardana et al., 2021).
- **Sociocultural Theory:** Teaching and learning occur within social and cultural contexts that shape cognition (Eun, 2021; Bashir-Ali, 2011).
- **Constructivist Theory:** Learners actively construct knowledge under teacher guidance (Kumar & Ganesh, 2022).
- **Motivational Factors:** Teachers' intrinsic motivation, altruism, and self-efficacy strongly influence career satisfaction and effectiveness (Sardana et al., 2021).
- **Reflective Practice:** Teachers critically evaluate and refine their instructional approaches for continual improvement (Dange & Siddaraju, 2020).

By aligning reforms with these frameworks, NEP 2020 aims to produce reflective, skilled, and socially responsible educators.

Pre-Service Teacher Education Reforms

The NEP 2020's **National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2021)** focuses on restructuring pre-service programs to integrate theory and practice effectively. The policy introduces a **four-year integrated B.Ed. degree** as the minimum qualification, blending disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge (Kumar et al., 2020). Admission will be through NTA-conducted aptitude and academic tests to ensure merit-based selection.

Multidisciplinary universities are encouraged to offer teacher education programs combining education with psychology, philosophy, sociology, and the sciences. Core components include learner-centred pedagogy, inclusive education, assessment literacy, and educational technology. Short post-B.Ed. certification programs will enable specialisation in leadership and pedagogy. Additionally, PhD scholars must complete credit-based pedagogy courses and teaching assistantships to strengthen teaching competencies. These measures aim to professionalise teaching and align teacher education with global standards.

In-Service Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development

NEP 2020 emphasises continuous professional development (CPD) for in-service teachers, advocating for sustained, reflective, and need-based training programs (Sardana et al., 2021). Teachers are encouraged to engage in peer learning, mentoring, and collaborative reflection (Tuli & Oljira, 2020). School-based models help address contextual challenges and promote locally relevant solutions (Donaher & Wu, 2020). The policy promotes technology-enabled training through blended and online platforms like **SWAYAM** and **DIKSHA** (Kumar & Ganesh, 2022), allowing flexibility and inclusivity. It also encourages personalised professional growth, where teachers set learning goals and undergo periodic evaluations (Kanjilal et al., 2022). Leadership training for head teachers and school administrators is also prioritised (Rout & Behera, 2014). These approaches foster a culture of lifelong learning and professional excellence among teachers.

Holistic Development and the Role of Teachers

Holistic education is a central principle of NEP 2020. It promotes cognitive, creative, physical, social, and emotional development, ensuring that students are equipped for academic success, personal fulfillment, and global citizenship. Teachers play a vital role in this process by fostering curiosity, empathy, and social responsibility among learners.

Five key dimensions of holistic development are emphasised: **cognitive skills** (critical thinking and adaptability), **creative skills** (innovation and imagination), **physical skills** (motor and spatial coordination), **social skills** (communication and collaboration), and **emotional skills** (self-regulation and resilience). Teachers must integrate these dimensions through inclusive and inquiry-based pedagogy, using ICT tools to enhance participation and personalised learning.

India's vast school network requires teachers who can adapt to diverse learners and environments, making their role in holistic development more crucial than ever.

Institutional and Governance Reforms

To ensure quality and accountability in teacher education, NEP 2020 introduces institutional reforms such as transforming TEIs into autonomous, multidisciplinary institutions, replacing affiliation systems with graded autonomy, and creating research- and teaching-intensive universities. The policy envisions increased investment in education—raising expenditure from 4% to 6% of GDP (Nand, 2020).

It also establishes a **National Mission for Mentoring (NMM)** to connect experienced educators with young teachers and proposes transparent recruitment, appraisal, and reward systems to maintain motivation and accountability. These structural reforms aim to enhance institutional efficiency, decentralise decision-making, and ensure equitable access to quality teacher education.

Global Practices and Comparative Insights

NEP 2020 draws lessons from global best practices in teacher education. Countries such as **Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands** emphasise multidisciplinary preparation, extended teaching practice, and strong links between theory and practice (Korthagen et al., 2006). Similarly, **China's "Double Development Plan" and "National Training Plan"** stress national teaching standards, quality assurance, and continuous professional development (Han, 2012). These global trends highlight the importance of integrating reflective practice, competency-based learning, and professional accountability into teacher education systems.

Challenges in Teacher Education

Despite its ambitious vision, India's teacher education sector faces multiple challenges. These include the theory-practice gap, outdated curricula, inadequate practical training, and limited opportunities for in-service professional development (Kumar & Ganesh, 2022; Some Inputs for Draft NEP, 2016, 2017). Many private TEIs focus on certification rather than quality training, while regional disparities and resource constraints hinder effective implementation. Addressing these systemic issues requires sustained financial investment, effective monitoring, and collaboration between central and state institutions.

Innovative Teaching Methods in Teacher Education

To address the limitations of traditional pedagogy, NEP 2020 advocates interactive, learner-centred, and reflective teaching methods. Strategies such as **cooperative learning, group discussions, storytelling, role play, dialogues, and experiential learning** are encouraged to promote critical thinking and creativity. Emphasis is placed on learning how to teach rather than what to teach, ensuring teachers can design contextually relevant and engaging lessons that develop students' problem-solving and analytical abilities.

Equity, Inclusion, and Digital Education

The NEP underscores the need for equitable and inclusive education through initiatives such as the **Gender Inclusion Fund** and **Special Education Zones** to support women, transgender, and marginalised learners. It encourages private institutions to expand scholarships and financial aid through the **National Scholarship Portal**.

To promote accessibility, NEP 2020 supports **Open and Distance Learning (ODL)** and proposes establishing the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** to advance digital innovation and research. These measures ensure that teacher education remains inclusive, resilient, and future-oriented.

Language, Research, and Professional Education

Language and research are integral components of NEP 2020. It promotes Indian languages as media of instruction through institutions like the **Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI)** and new national centres for **Pali, Persian, and Prakrit**. The establishment of the **National Research Foundation (NRF)** aims to strengthen interdisciplinary research and integrate professional education—such as law, health, agriculture, and engineering—into mainstream higher education.

Findings of the Study:

1. NEP 2020 emphasises a four-year integrated B.Ed. as the minimum teaching qualification, ensuring a blend of theory, practice, and subject specialisation.
2. Continuous professional development (CPD) and reflective practice are central to in-service teacher education.
3. Technology-enabled pedagogy and online learning platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM enhance flexibility and inclusivity in teacher training.
4. Institutional reforms such as autonomous TEIs and research-intensive universities aim to professionalise teacher education.
5. NEP 2020 promotes learner-centred, inclusive, and holistic education, integrating cognitive, creative, physical, social, and emotional development.
6. Challenges include outdated curricula, regional disparities, theory-practice gaps, resource constraints,

and limited monitoring mechanisms.

7. Global best practices highlight the importance of multidisciplinary preparation, competency-based learning, and structured mentoring systems.

Suggestions of the Study:

1. Strengthen financial investment and resource allocation to TEIs to ensure equitable access and infrastructure improvements.
2. Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure quality in pre-service and in-service teacher training.
3. Promote interdisciplinary and experiential learning in teacher education curricula.
4. Encourage collaborative and reflective practices through mentoring, peer learning, and school-based interventions.
5. Expand professional development opportunities using blended learning and ICT tools to ensure continuous teacher upskilling.
6. Foster equity and inclusion by supporting marginalised groups and promoting multilingual and culturally responsive pedagogy.
7. Align teacher education reforms with international standards while adapting them to local social and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a transformative moment in Indian education, redefining teacher education as the foundation for holistic national development. By promoting reflective, multidisciplinary, and technology-enabled pedagogy, NEP 2020 seeks to empower teachers as nation-builders and lifelong learners.

Its success depends on effective implementation, adequate funding, and sustained collaboration among policymakers, institutions, and educators. When realised in full, NEP 2020 will professionalise teaching to global standards and cultivate a generation of creative, critical, and compassionate educators equipped to meet 21st-century challenges.

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