



Reimagining Teacher Education in India through the Lens of NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

The researchers have made a solemn effort to conduct a review of the transformation of teacher education through the lens of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The main aim of this paper is to review key policy developments, analyse official documents, and explore recent literature to elucidate the context, scope, and evolution of teacher education reforms. The paper focuses on the paradigm shift, especially research-driven teacher readiness, competency-based learning, multidisciplinary professional development and regulatory rigour to meet and tackle the challenges of the 21st century. The paper encompasses the challenges such as faculty shortages, regulatory issues, infrastructural constraints, and resistance to systematic change to ensure smooth functioning and implementation. The research delineates the evidence-based strategic solutions to bridge the gap between policy intent and practice. It also highlights the need for a skilled, responsible, self-driven, and teaching workforce equipped with 21st-century skills.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Teacher Education, Professional Development, Curriculum Reform

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) forms part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the global education development agenda), which aims “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (United Nations, 2020, p. 4). To achieve the above-stated lofty ambition, the education system has to be totally revolutionised, and that is only possible when learning becomes available to all to fulfil more inclusive Sustainable Development Goals. To accomplish this goal, SDG 4 Target 4.c seeks to “substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States” (United Nations, 2020, p. 4). Teacher education is of immense significance in creating a quality education system. In India, education is an important determinant of social and economic development, and it is indispensable to prepare and develop teachers to deliver quality education to all. The Indian teacher education system faces several limitations that adversely affect students’ learning.

India has 15,896 teacher education institutions offering pre-service courses in India (NCTE, 2023), but there is significant variation in their quality and capacity. There are still many issues in such institutions, such as a lack of facilities, not up-to-date curricula, and a shortage of competent faculty, which affect the effectiveness of pre-service teacher training. Participation in formal professional development programmes remains limited, indicating scope for strengthening the accessibility and reach of in-service teacher professional development.

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to strengthen teacher preparation and continuous professional development by revitalising the country’s entire teacher education system. Teachers are central to the quality of education and its contribution to national development (Kothari Commission, 1964-66), and they play a crucial role in shaping learners’ development within and beyond the classroom (National Education Policy, 2020). The present study examines the recommendations of NEP 2020 with respect to teacher education, analyses the challenges associated with their implementation, and proposes strategies for their effective implementation, drawing upon recent secondary data.

Conceptual Framework of Teacher Education

Teacher education means “programmes of education, research or training of persons for equipping them to teach at pre-primary, primary, secondary and senior secondary stages in schools, and includes non-formal education, part-time education, adult education and correspondence education” (NCTE, 1993, p. 4).

“Teacher education means all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help qualify a person to assume the responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge them more effectively” (Good, 1945, p. 409). Ideally, it is organised as a continuum comprising three stages: pre-service training, undertaken before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher; induction, which provides support and guidance during the initial years of teaching; and continuous professional development, an ongoing in-service process for practising teachers.

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) describes a teacher’s ability as the intersection of content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK), indicating that to teach in a classroom effectively, teachers must have knowledge about the three areas at the same time instead of being separated from one another. Another model that speaks to continual professional growth is the Reflective Practice Model (Schön, 1983). It underscores the need for teachers to reflect on their actions and analyse the instructional choices made in their classrooms.

Evolution of Teacher Education in India: Historical and Policy Perspectives

The importance of teacher training in India’s overall development has been recognised since before independence, as evidenced by the substantial number of commissions, committees and reforms enacted through policies and reports over time. Before independence, Wood’s Despatch (1854), also known as the Magna Carta of Modern Education in India, recommended the creation of the Departments of Public Instruction (DPIs) in Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Punjab, and North-Western Provinces. The importance of teacher training was recognised for the first time, and the establishment of teacher training institutes was recommended. The Hunter Commission (1882) highlighted the inadequate and uneven distribution of teacher-training institutions and recommended their expansion. The commission also stressed the need to expand the training centres.

After independence, the University Education Commission (1948-49) advocated understanding the differing needs of different regions, tailoring training programmes, and renewing curricula. Practical learning was emphasised more. The addition of new areas of expertise and hands-on activities revamped the teacher education syllabus. In 1952, the Secondary Education Commission envisioned continuous learning for teachers through refresher courses, specialised study programmes, and practical workshops. It aimed to provide the support teachers needed and to equip them with the latest knowledge and specialised skills. It recommended a one-year training course for graduates and a two-year course for non-graduates, as well as special and part-time courses for untrained teachers. The establishment of NCERT in 1961 marked a significant step in institutionalising teacher education. It focused on professional development by establishing five Regional Institutes of Education to provide integrated pre-service teacher education programmes and teacher educator programmes. It focused primarily on teacher training at the elementary and secondary levels and restructured students’ instruction and assessment methodologies.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) provided a comprehensive guiding framework for covering every aspect of training future educators. It included issues of scope and execution, classroom practices and pedagogical content. It recommended expanding teacher-training facilities, treating education as a discipline, opening schools of education at the university level, opening an integrated teacher education programme, and improving quality by adding internship programmes.

The National Policy on Education (1968) suggested that educators should be considered highly esteemed in society. While reviewing the qualifications and duties, the teachers’ working conditions should be satisfactory and adequate. They should be supported to continue their education throughout their careers and allowed to strengthen their professional growth.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was established in 1973 to serve as an advisory body to the government on all aspects of teacher education. However, as per the NCTE Act of 1993, NCTE was granted legal status in 1995. The establishment of NCTE was based on the provisions of the National Policy on Education of 1986 and the Programme of Action of 1992. NCTE’s main aims are to enable the coordinated, planned growth of the national teacher education system and to establish regulations and standards to guide it.

The National Commission on Teachers, established in 1983, chaired by Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya, emphasised that research and development should be included in the curriculum. It emphasised continuous assessment with proper records, which should be reflected in the student-teachers’ final report cards. It further recommended the short but systematic training courses for the teachers during their service.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 emphasised that salaries and working conditions should be commensurate with teachers’ professional and social responsibilities. It further suggested establishing accountability norms by rewarding teachers for good performance and imposing appropriate disincentives for poor performance. It also emphasised the establishment of DIETs to organise pre-service and in-service courses for elementary teachers and to phase out sub-standard institutions. The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 designed to implement the revised National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, strengthened specialised institutions such as DIETs.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 suggested changes in pedagogy and emphasised constructivist pedagogy and reform of examination practices. It asserted that teachers’ quality is affected by academic and professional training, as well as by their professional standards and working

conditions. The National Knowledge Commission (2009), chaired by Sam Pitroda, recommended improving SCERTs and DIETs and incorporating ICT into the teaching-learning process wherever possible. A shift towards critical pedagogy was suggested, with more emphasis on the integration of theory and practice by the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009. New pedagogical models, such as constructivism, collaborative learning, context-based teaching, and the use of information technology, have also received attention. The Yashpal Committee Report (2009) called for integrating teacher education into the broader academic and research structures of higher education.

It is suggested that institutions of higher education carry this out, as universities' lack of interest in teacher training has led to low academic quality, and the Justice Verma Commission (2012) recommended increased funding for educator development, support, and quality training. The higher education system should help future teachers gain more profound knowledge and skills. It stressed the importance of face-to-face instruction in initial teacher education and throughout a teaching career for continuous professional development. Although initial progress has been made to date, the demands of today's educational landscape require further changing. There is an urgent need to establish ongoing commitment to prepare our future educators for a continually changing world that will, in turn contribute to develop well-resourced and empowered educators in our communities. Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) has been prescribed as part of NEP 2020 and is one method of ensuring inclusion within teacher education. CBTE, therefore, requires a new definition; an integration into existing programs; requires an implementation of a four-year integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree; ongoing professional growth and continuing education programmes throughout an educators' career; to enhance entry level credentials to the profession to attract highly skilled individuals to teaching.

Objectives

1. To study the key recommendations on teacher education under NEP 2020.
2. To analyse the major challenges in implementation of teacher education reforms under NEP 2020.
3. To propose effective strategies to strengthen teacher education through the implementation of NEP 2020.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative descriptive research method, especially document analysis to gather data from numerous sources. The analysis of the documents included a review of available literature related to NEP 2020, the implementation of NEP 2020, challenges, and proposed strategies. Data for the literature search were collected from academic databases such as Google Scholar and ResearchGate, as well as government publications and reports. The teacher education aspect of the NEP 2020 was analysed using secondary data and resources such as reviews, books, journal articles, policy documents, drafts of NEP and other relevant documents. Once the themes were identified, they were compiled and used as the basis for discussion in this research.

Current Status of Teacher Education

After independence in 1947, there was a revival of interest in teacher education in India through the recommendations made by the University Education Commission (1948-49). The creation of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1973, as an advisory body along with its later establishment as a statutory authority regulating teacher education in 1995 was one such landmark. In response to the National Policy on Education (1986), several other institutions, including District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), were created to improve teacher training programmes. Furthermore, The NCTE subsequently developed the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) in 2009 which served as the principal guiding document for teacher education until the reforms introduced under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. According to the 28th Annual Report (2022-23) of the National Council for Teacher Education, 15,896 institutions offered teacher education programmes, with a total of 22,706 recognised courses and an overall approved intake of 1,790,658 seats. The teacher education programmes recognised by the NCTE include DPSE (Pre-Primary), D.El.Ed. (Elementary), D.El.Ed. (ODL), Diploma in Arts Education, Integrated B.A./B.Sc.-B.Ed., B.El.Ed., B.Ed. (ODL), Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed., M.Ed., D.P.Ed., B.P.Ed., M.P.Ed., and ITEP (NCTE, 2023).

Key Recommendations on Teacher Education under NEP 2020

1. Integration of Indian values with modern pedagogy

Teacher education demands the integration of multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, and the cultivation of dispositions and values. NEP 2020 recommends the development of classroom practice under the guidance of the best mentors and focuses on integrating Indian knowledge Systems with modern pedagogical advancements (NEP 2020, p. 42, para 15.1).

2. Revitalisation of stand-alone TEIs and regulatory reforms

Urgent revitalisation of teacher education institutions is needed through radical action to raise standards and restore integrity and high quality to the teacher education system (NEP 2020, p. 49, para 15.2). Empowerment of the regulatory system is required to take strict action against substandard Institutions (NEP 2020, p. 42, para 15.3).

3. Multidisciplinary approach in teacher education institutions

All multidisciplinary institutions are expected to establish education departments to conduct advanced, multidisciplinary research on various dimensions of education in collaboration with different departments. In addition, all stand-alone teacher education institutions need to be converted into multidisciplinary institutions and offer the four-year teacher education programme (NEP 2020, p. 42, para 15.4).

4. Integrated B.Ed. programmes

The integrated B.Ed. programmes offered by higher education institutions should be designated as the minimum qualification for teachers by 2030. This programme is structured as a dual-major degree, combining a Bachelor's in Education with a specialised subject. It includes training in modern pedagogy along with a grounding in sociology, philosophy and psychology. (NEP 2020, p. 42, para 15.5).

5. Higher education institutions-school collaboration

It is recommended that Higher Education Institutions ensure access to experts in education-related subjects such as philosophy, psychology, and sociology, as well as in specialised and pedagogy-related disciplines. Each HEI should establish and maintain a network of government and private schools with which it collaborates closely, so that prospective teachers can engage in student teaching as well as in community service, adult education, vocational education, and similar activities (NEP 2020, p. 43, para 15.6).

6. Standardised admission through NTA-based aptitude testing

To maintain uniform standards in teacher education, it is recommended that entry into pre-service teacher education programmes be determined by relevant subjects and aptitude-based tests. The entrance examination for teacher education should be standardised and should reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the nation. (NEP 2020, p.43, para 15.7).

7. Enhancing teachers' profiles

Departments should maintain a diverse faculty with strong teaching, field, and research experience. Teacher education institutions should attract and retain faculty from key social science disciplines and subject-specific education fields to strengthen the multidisciplinary preparation of teachers and enhance conceptual rigour (NEP 2020, p.43, para 15.8)

8. Pedagogical training for Ph.D. Scholars

All Ph.D. entrants, regardless of discipline, should complete courses in curriculum design, pedagogy, and academic writing during Ph.D. coursework. They should also gain a minimum number of hours of teaching experience through teaching assistantships and similar roles, with exposure to pedagogical practices, curriculum design, assessment, and communication, since many will become faculty or public communicators in their fields. Ph.D. programmes across universities should be reoriented to support this (NEP 2020, p.43, para 15.9).

9. Continuous faculty development

Continuous professional development for all teachers should be strengthened and expanded to support quality education. Use of platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM for teacher training should be promoted, enabling standardised programmes to reach large numbers of teachers in a short span of time (NEP 2020, p.43, para 15.10).

10. Establishment of National Mentoring Mission

Establishment of National Mentoring Mission, comprising experienced and retired faculty who include those accomplished in teaching through the Indian language and can give short and long-term mentoring and professional support to the teachers (NEP 2020, p.43, para 15.11).

Challenges in Implementing Teacher Education Reforms

Studies have identified various challenges in teacher education reforms in India, including limited infrastructure, faculty shortages, and inconsistent quality across training institutions. Imam and Ansari (2024) highlighted the lack of transparent recruitment processes and accountability for non-performing teacher education Institutions. Rana (2025) highlighted the insufficient infrastructure, especially among disadvantaged and rural schools.

The policy aims to establish advanced classrooms equipped with technological infrastructure, but some schools lack basic facilities such as electricity, Internet access, and smart boards. Teacher preparation is also an issue to reconcile with competency-based teaching strategies after many years of practising traditional teaching methods. The issue of inadequate in-service training, coupled with resistance to change within traditional teacher-training institutes, may act as an obstacle to the progressive agenda of the National Education Policy 2020 (Usmani et al., 2025; Yalem, 2026).

Table 1*Literature-Based Classification of Key Dimensions and Challenges in Teacher Education*

Sl. No.	Research Studies	Key Dimensions	Identified challenges in Teacher Education
1	Bhattacharyya & Halder, 2025; Imam & Ansari, 2024; Rana, 2025; Singh, 2025; Usmani et al., 2025; Yalem, 2026	Institutional readiness	• Infrastructure in educational institutions • Transparency and accountability in recruitment and institutional performance • Funding for teacher education
2	Bhattacharyya & Halder, 2025; Singh, 2025; Waris & Shaheen, 2024	Faculty competency	• Alignment of teacher educators' mindsets with multidisciplinary approaches • Teaching practice opportunities • Quality and implementation of teaching practice programmes
3	Bhattacharyya & Halder, 2025; Imam & Ansari, 2024; Mahanta, 2023; Singh, 2025; Waris & Shaheen, 2024; Yalem, 2026	Regulatory and policy framework	• Collaboration among schools, administrators, and teacher education institutions (TEIs) • Collaboration among governmental bodies and educational institutions • Regulation of teacher education institutions
4	Imam & Ansari, 2024; Usmani et al., 2025; Yalem, 2026	Digital & CPD access	• In-service teacher training • Integration of digital tools in teaching, learning, and assessment
5	Imam & Ansari, 2024; Mahanta, 2023; Usmani et al., 2025; Yalem, 2026)	Curriculum- and pedagogical practice	• Traditional and theoretical curriculum orientation • Rote memorisation practices • Student participation and engagement • Development of learners' life skills

Effective Strategies for Strengthening Teacher Education

The research covering major reforms in teacher education globally includes a focus on evidence-based practices, the accreditation process, and ongoing professional development. To address the issues of teacher education within the Indian system will require an inclusive effort involving collaboration, planning, reform, and financial resources. The following are strategies that will assist in meeting the challenges associated with teacher education within India:

1. **Accountability and rapid resolution for issues:** Problems related to recruitment, placement, mentoring, and supervision need to be resolved from an organisational perspective, thus addressing structural issues related to education, rather than making teachers the sole recipient of blame.
2. **Adequate financial resources:** Money must be allocated to improve the quality of teacher education programmes by upgrading facilities, training teachers (staff), and providing curricula aligned with local needs and standards.
3. **Phasing out low-quality programmes:** Through evaluation and monitoring of existing teacher education programmes, low-quality programmes that fail to meet minimum standards or have been unproductive, should be identified and phased out.
4. **Shift to multidisciplinary institutions:** A shift of single-discipline teacher-training institutions to Multi-discipline institutions that enhance academic integration and academic quality should happen in phases over a period of time.
5. **Encouraging outstanding achievers:** There is a need to promote outstanding students to enrol in the teaching field using merit-based scholarships and initiatives designed to attract students from rural areas to build the number of qualified teachers entering the teaching profession. By providing these measures, it will create a larger number of talented people who will enter in the teaching profession.

6. **Paid internships for prospective teachers:** There should be a provision for paid internships for prospective teachers, similar to other professional disciplines, to increase enrolment of outstanding aspirants into the teaching profession.
7. **Inter-sector collaboration:** Collaboration between institutions of teacher education, government agencies, and the private sector should be encouraged to share best practices, innovative ideas, and resources. Schools must foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration to promote excellence, curiosity, and empathy.
8. **Integrating AI and digital education:** Technology plays a critical role in improving quality education. Appropriate technology may be introduced in education and provide the necessary digital skill sets for teachers to make effective use of technology. The classroom operation will become smoother, and teachers can grow professionally.
9. **In-service teacher programmes:** In-service teachers should get exposure to feasible, robust, and actionable teaching and training programmes to contribute at the root level to nurture the fertile minds of the young generation.

With the above suggestions implemented, India will strive to reform its teacher education system to nurture motivated and empathetic teachers as mandated by NEP 2020.

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 provides an innovative approach to improve teacher education in India with the vision of preparing competent, passionate, and socially responsible teachers. This policy will only succeed when certain hurdles, such as insufficient infrastructure, lack of adaptability, and regulation related issues of teacher education institutions, are addressed. Important steps include digitalisation, professionalisation through paid internships, cooperation among all teacher education institutions, private organisations, and governments, and empowering the substandard or low-quality programmes. It is necessary to implement the recommendations of the National Education Policy 2020 effectively and systematically to overcome the existing problems of the education system.

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