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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 WITH REFERENCE TO TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The National Educational Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) represents a remarkable transformation initiative aimed at reforming the Indian education system, with teacher education situated as a central driver of modification. This study disparagingly interrogates the provisions of NEP 2020 with precise reference to teacher education, emphasizes on its theoretical foundations, structural transformation and accomplishment challenges. Adopting an analytical study based on thematic analysis of peer-reviewed published research papers and government documents. This study shed light on the key components, containing National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), Four-year Integrated B.Ed. Program along with the Continuous Professional Development (CPD), more extended to mentoring system besides Technology integration. The analysis in this study illuminates that while NEP 2020 articulates a rational and futuristic vision uniformed with global trends in teacher professionalization, it is marked by a major gap between policy objective and institutional reality. Structural transformation, through conceptually sound, is constrained by limitations in institutional capability, readiness of faculty and infrastructural resources. Equally initiatives such as CPD and NPST risk becoming compliance-driven in the lack of proper supportive professional cultures and surrounding adaptability. The incorporation of technology while promising is further complicated by insistent digital diversity. This study suggests that the importance of NEP 2020 based not merely on policy design but on its capacity to address organized and contextual difficulties. The study concludes that significant reform in teacher education needs sustained investment, institutional strengthening and a refined approach for the execution that balances standardization with adaptability.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Four-year Integrated B.Ed. Program, National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), National Mission for Mentoring (NMM).

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education has progressively been placed at the center of educational transformation discourses, both globally and within the Indian context, as teacher quality is widely recognized as the most significant school-based factor influencing student learning outcomes. In India, still teacher education historically been described by structural fragmentation, weak governmental oversight and a constant disconnect between speculative preparation and classroom practice (Kumar, 2021). Regardless of successive policy interventions, besides the National Policy of Education (1986) and the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009), the section remains in struggle with issues like quality, relevance and institutional integrity (Rao, 2021).

The beginning of NEP 2020 represents a significant attempt to address these longstanding problems by revisiting the role of teacher education within a wide framework of organized transformation. The policy specifically comprehends teachers as the “most important resource” in the education system and proclaims that suggestive reform is contingent upon enhancing teacher quality and professional capability (Government of India, 2020). In this regard, NEP 2020 progresses a panoramic set of reforms focused at restructuring teacher preparation, improving professional standards, and fostering continuous learning. Among the most important proposals are introducing the four year integrated Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program along with the establishment of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and the most essential institutionalization of continuous professional development (CPD), and the blending of digital technologies within teacher education (Government of India, 2020). All these reforms reflect a shift of reviewing teaching as a complex professional practice involving the amalgamation of disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical

proficiency and reflective capacity. However, while the policy's vision unfolds rational and uniform with global trends, it elevates critical questions about its fundamental assumptions and practical potentiality. Existing scholarship on NEP 2020 has primarily interested on its progressive features, often presenting it as a transmute policy framework (Sharma, 2021; Saxena, 2022). Still, such illustrations tend to overlook the structural and institutional restrictions that shape policy execution in the Indian context.

One of the main concerns communes to the postulate that structural reforms, like introduction of integrated teacher education programs, impetuously lead to enhancements in teacher quality. Research indicates that educational change is basically a complex process persuaded by institutional culture, faculty capacity along with governance structures instead of policy design alone (Fullan, 2007). Similarly, the focus on regularize through mechanism like NPST elevates questions about the equilibrium between accountability and professional autonomy, especially in a diverse and varying educational landscape (Nair, 2021). Additionally the policy's strong dependence on technology as a means of improving teacher education must be interrogated in the light of persistence digital diversity across regions and institutions (Singh & Mehta, 2022). Without handling these structural disparities, technology-driven transformations may risk reinforcing present disparity rather than just promoting inclusivity.

In this context, a critical exploration of NEP 2020 with precise reference to teacher education becomes necessary. Such an analysis should move beyond explicit accounts of policy provisions to involve with the profound stresses between policy vision and institutional reality. This study shed light on the contribution to this discussion by examining the conceptual foundations, practical implications and execution of the challenges of teacher education reforms under NEP 2020. By situating the policy inside wide theoretical and empirical debates, the study focuses to furnish a nuanced understanding of it's transmute potential while emphasizing the conditions required for its effective realization.

OBJECTIVES

The study is guided by the below stated objectives:

1. To explore and understand about the teacher education reforms as mentioned and proposed under NEP 2020.
2. To analyze the fundamental assumptions about teacher quality and professionalization.

RELATED LITERATURE

The existing literature on both the teacher education and National Education Policy 2020 can broadly be classified into several thematic areas and they are teacher quality and professionalization, structural reforms, professional development along with technology integration and the problem related to the implementation challenges.

Teacher quality is extensively recognized as one of the most important factors that influencing learner academic and educational outcome. Studies have displayed that well-trained teachers contribute considerably to effective learning atmosphere along with improved academic performance among students (Hammond, 2017). In the matter of Indian context, many scholars have argued about strengthening teacher education is important for improving generic quality of the education system.

Sharma (2021) intensified about the policy of NEP 2020 where teachers are the core of educational reform by recognizing them as the most essential resource for education system. Saxena (2022) mentioned about the professionalization of teaching need to include clear standards, effective training along with the institutional support for teachers.

The conception about teacher professionalism related not only subject expertise but also pedagogical competence along with ethical responsibility and the ability to deal with diverse classroom situations (Nair, 2021). NEP 2020 suggested all these aspects by suggesting the advancement of NPST (National Professional Standards for Teachers), aims to mention about the competencies and the main responsibilities are anticipated from teachers at distinctive stages of their careers. Rao (2021) stated about the establishment of professional standards can enhance teacher accountability and improve the status of the teaching profession. By outlining clear anticipations and evaluation criteria, specialized standards could inspire teachers to consistently improve their teaching practices.

Further major theme in the literature communes the structural reforms in teacher education programs. Traditional teacher education programs in India have frequently been condemned for focusing extensively on theoretical knowledge while not focusing practical teaching experience (Kumar, 2021).

NEP 2020 attempts to manage the issue by starting the four-year integrated B.Ed. program as the minimal qualification for teachers within 2030. The integrated B.Ed. program depicts a major improvement over former teacher education models because it connects subject knowledge along with pedagogy and practical training in a single program (Kumar and Singh 2021). The integrated program also highlights school internship and field experiences that furnish teacher trainees with the chances of observing and practice teaching in real time classroom atmosphere. In addition to NEP 2020 mentioned that teacher education programs need to offer mainly by multidisciplinary universities and colleges. The main purpose of this reform is to make improvement of the academic standards and prevent low-quality teacher

education institutions (Rao, 2021). The new innovations of teacher education institutions are scheduled to improve the sincerity and quality of teacher training program in India.

Continuous professional development (CPD) has appeared as another significant theme in the literature on teacher education. Researchers have continuously enhanced that teacher learning must be considered as a lifelong process instead of just one time training event (Mishra, 2020). NEP 2020 comprehends this viewpoint and requires teachers to involve in at least 50 hours of professional improvement related activities every year. All these conditioning might be involved in workshops, training programs along with online courses and combined learning practices. Professional development programs help teachers to remain modernize with new effective teaching strategies, updated curriculum changes and the advancement of technology. CPD programs can effectively enhancing teachers' instructional skills beside classroom practices (Mishra 2020). Further important area of teacher professional improvement is mentoring. NEP 2020 suggested the establishment of a National Mission for mentoring which help to involve the experienced teachers accompanying and substantiating novice teachers. Mentoring programs are especially effective for newly joined and recruited teachers who may face difficulties throughout early stages of their careers. In this matter experienced mentors with their effective guidance can suggest practical advice along with emotional support and professional guidance for improving the teaching strategies of new teachers (Saxena, 2022). Research has shown about the effectiveness of mentoring programs which positively improving retention of teachers, job satisfaction along with professional growth (Sharma, 2021).

The integration of digital technologies in education has consistently improving in recent years. Advancement with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought new opportunities in the area of teaching, learning and teacher training. NEP 2020 has highlighted the importance of digital literacy and inspires the use of technology in the field of teacher education programs. From varieties of digital platforms to online courses and virtual learning environment have positively giving access to teachers to use educational resources along with training opportunities (Singh & Mehta, 2022). With the help of technology innovating teaching methods like blended learning, flipped classroom to collaborative learning environment are effective enough for student engagement and learning outcomes.

In India, teacher education institutions frequently deal with funding, faculty quality and governance issues and all these factors can restrict effectiveness of policy reforms (Verma, 2022). The implementation of theory stresses that success of educational reforms mainly depends on not only policy design but also on the volume of institutions for legislative change (Fullan, 2007).

Several scholars have studied NEP 2020 in depth and clearly mentioned about its strengths and limitations. While the policy has been received positive feedback for its comprehensive vision and design with global trends (Sharma, 2021; Saxena, 2022), critics asserts that it undervalue the challenges of large-scale implementation and diverseness of Indian education system (Joshi, 2022; Gupta, 2021). This suggests the importance of more critical and delicate analysis of its suggestions for teacher education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is mainly stranded in an integrative theoretical framework that pictures constructivist learning theory besides professional capital theory and implementation theory for critically interrogate the reforms of teacher education as proposed under National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). These theoretical viewpoints provide a conceptual lens to know about the policy plans implementation in educational practice and the effectiveness of teacher quality is contrives inside institutional environment.

Constructivist learning theory, mainly connected with Piaget (1972), posits that learning is an functional process in which individual can construct knowledge through dealing with their environment. In this context of teacher education, constructivism main focuses on learner centered pedagogy, experiential learning along with reflective engagement. NEP 2020 specifically aligns with this viewpoint by advocating for pedagogical approaches like inquiry based learning, experiential education along with critical thinking (Government of India, 2020). However the main principle of teacher education deals with preparedness of teachers beside the condition of institution inside which they operate. Research denotes that despite policy features on learner centered approaches, classroom practices frequently remain teacher centered because of the difficulties in rigid curricula, assessment systems and absence of professional autonomy (Kumar, 2021). Thus, constructivist theory emphasizes that gap between pedagogical ideals and the reality of classroom situation which is the predominant for critical analysis of NEP 2020.

Professional capital theory, as enunciated by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), provides a wide framework for understanding teacher quality as a methodical rather than an individual credit. The theory envisions professional capital as containing human capital (individual skills), social capital (collaborative bonding), along with decisional capital (professional verdict). NEP 2020 reflects principles of this framework through its focus on continuous professional development (CPD), assistance systems along with professional standards like National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). These action aims to improve teacher skills and foster a culture of professional knowledge. However, the theory also emphasizes that professional capital cannot be improves solely through policy accreditations. It needs

supportive institutional atmosphere, collaborative chances and trust in teachers' professional verdict (Saxena, 2022). In the absence of all the conditions, efforts to professionalize teaching may outcome in elevated bureaucratic control instead of genuine empowerment.

Implementation theory further complements thus analysis by emphasizing on the processes through which policies are approved in practice. According to Fullan (2007), the process of change in education is complex, nonlinear that affect by several factors like institutional capacity, leadership beside the engagement of stakeholder. Policies often fail to provide fruitful result not because of flawed design but due to difficulties during implementation. In the matter of NEP 2020, the ambitious scope of teacher education transformation raises queries about readiness of the institutions for adopting advanced structures, curricula and practices. Challenges like lack of infrastructure, limited faculty expertise along with resistance to change can affect the entire translation of policy in practice (Verma, 2022). Implementation theory thus provides a critical lens to interrogate the gap between the policy vision and grounded level realties.

Concurrently, these theoretical offer a comprehensive framework to dissect NEP 2020. Constructivist theory mainly highlights the pedagogical aspirations, on the other side professional capital theory focuses on systematic nature of teacher improvement beside implementation theory sketches attention to the practical challenges of transformation. By amalgamating all these perspectives, this study shifts beyond a descriptive analysis of policy to disparagingly interrogate the conditions under which teacher education modification can be efficiently realized.

MAJOR REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROPOSED BY NEP 2020

The National Educational Policy 2020 has proposed several structural and pedagogical transformations for improving the quality, professionalism and enhancement of teacher education in India. These positive changes aim to assure that teachers are well prepared, professionally trained and ability to deal with diverse learning need for learners in this 21st century (Government of India, 2020).

- **Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Program** is one of the important reforms has been introduced by NEP 2020. This program aims to incorporate subject knowledge, pedagogy along with practical training in an encyclopedic manner. Unlike the traditional B.Ed. programs that mainly used to join after graduation, now this integrated B.Ed. course allows students to enroll in teacher education directly after passing class 12th. This program is designed to assure that future teachers improve a deep understanding in subject with the skill of pedagogy. It is the inclusion of school internship, teaching practice along with classroom observation (Kumar & Singh, 2021). Additionally the program stresses interdisciplinary learning and encourages students to know and learn about multiple subjects, thereby promoting a multidisciplinary way to the teacher education. This approach is anticipated to enhance the overall quality of teacher preparation and produce skilled educators who can adjust in changing educational environments.
- **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** is another important reform as mentioned in NEP 2020 for more improvement. The purpose of these standards is to delineate the professional skills, knowledge, and ethical liabilities anticipated from teachers at different stages o their respective careers. The NPST framework has several purposes like the guidelines for teacher recruitment, evaluation process, promotion and the improvement of professional competencies (Nair, 2021). By demonstrating clear professional standards, the policy concerns with the improvement of accountability along with professionalism inside the teaching profession. The standards help to assure the consistency in teacher quality throughout all states and educational institutions. Teachers will be assessed based on their subject knowledge, teaching effectiveness, skill to manage classroom along with the positive approach toward student learning. Additionally, NPST encourages teachers for engaging in continuous professional development and thoughtful practice, which are important for further enhancement of teaching effectiveness.

- **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)** is another key element of NEP 2020. The policy appreciates that teacher learning is not ending with initial training rather must continue throughout the entire teaching career of teachers. As policy mentioned that teachers are expected to engage in at least 50 hours of professional improvement activities every year (Government of India, 2020). All these activities are inclusion of workshops, training programs, different online courses, and peer learning sessions along with collaborative research projects. CPD programs are mainly designed for upgrading the skill and knowledge of teachers with the changing scenario of education. Example like teachers may enter in training with new teaching methods, curriculum changes, updates assessment technique and digital technologies. Research shows that continuous professional improvement can positively improve teaching skills and students learning outcomes (Mishra, 2020). Therefore, CPD programs are important to preserve the quality and relevance of teacher education.

- **Mentoring and Support Systems** by NEP 2020 mainly feature for teachers specifically for newly joined teachers who are facing difficulties to deal with early stages of career. To address this kind of issues this policy suggests the establishment of **National Mission for Mentoring (NMM)**, where experienced teachers give essential guidance and all possible support to young teachers (Government of India, 2020). This program can help new teachers to gain professional competencies, effective teaching strategies. With the help of experienced

mentors knowledge and experience novice teachers can mitigate the complexities of teaching profession. Mentoring advertises collaborative learning with teachers and inspires for the positive exchange of ideas with best practices.

- **Integration of Technology in Teacher Education** has become progressively important in this digital age. NEP 2020 indentifies the role digital technologies for the improvement of teaching and learning procedures. The policy inspires the use of online platforms, digital learning resources along with educational technologies in teacher education programs. Teachers are expected for improving digital literacy and technological skills for the effective use of technology within the classroom (Singh & Mehta, 2022). Digital platforms like virtual classrooms, online courses, and effective educational apps can improve teacher training and open the door of wide range of learning resources. It is quite true that the successful technology integration requires stable internet connectivity, updated digital infrastructure along with appropriate training for teachers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This entire study is based on analytical and descriptive in nature. Secondary data sources included for the entire study and they are Government policy documents (NEP 2020), academic publications, books, research articles published in various national and international journals. All the secondary data analysis helps to understand and examine the existing perspectives about teacher education reforms along with policy implementation process. With the help of thematic analysis and policy analysis techniques teacher education transformation were identified and systematized into categories like structural reforms, professional improvement, and integration of technology. This study is restricted to secondary data sources. Therefore, the findings are grounded on policy documents beside existing scholarly literature.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The dissection of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) discloses that while the policy articulates an extensive and forward-looking framework for new reformation in teacher education, it is mainly characterized by a set of fundamental stress between policy design and execution realities. These tensions arise across structural, professional along with pedagogical and technological dimensions rearing essential questions about the feasibility and sustainability of the suggested reforms.

A main finding of the study is that NEP 2020 visualizes teacher quality primarily through structural transformation mechanism, specifically the introduction of four-year integrated training program (B.Ed.). This transformation is intended to address the long standing disintegration between disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical training in teacher education (Government of India, 2020). From a theoretical point of view this aligns with global models that highlight coherence and clinical practice in the area of teacher education. However, the policy appears to undertake that structural integration will impetuously lead to pedagogical transformation. This postulation is problematic, as research denotes institutional practices, faculty preparedness along with curriculum design play a positive role in shaping teacher competencies (Rao, 2021). Lack of systematic reforms in these areas, the integrated B.Ed. course might be in risks becoming a figurative version of existing programs instead of a transformative innovation.

Another critical issue enterprises the prelude of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), which is mainly intended to standardize teacher skills and improve accountability. While the establishment of professional benchmark is consistent with international trends in the area of teacher education, the policy does not adequately address the contextual differences of the Indian education system (Nair, 2021). India's educational landscape is identified by important variations in socio-economic conditions, institutional capacity beside learner needs. In this context, a uniform set of benchmark may lead to a form of administrative standardization that organizes compliance over professional judgment. As Saxena (2022) explains professionalization cannot be moderated to standard-setting alone; it needs the improvement of institutional cultures that reinforces autonomy, collaboration along with reflective practice.

The highlight on continuous professional development (CPD) describes another significant angle of NEP 2020. The policy accreditation that teacher fascinates in at least fifty hours of professional improvement annually, mirroring a shift toward reviewing teaching as an enduring learning profession (Government of India, 2020). While this approach has positive and theoretically sounded, its useful implementation raises concern. Few documentations from existing CPD programs recommends that compulsory training needs often lead to superficial participation, where teachers involve in activities mainly to complete administrative requirements rather than to improve professional skill (Mishra, 2020). Additionally, the policy does not deliver adequate clarity about the design, delivery, and assessment of CPD programs. Destitute of strong emphasize on context-specific, practice oriented beside collaborative learning ways, CPD risks becoming a procedural exercise with restricted effect on classroom practices (Sharma, 2021).

The addition of mentoring system, especially through the suggested National Mission for Mentoring is another important feature of the policy. Mentoring has been broadly recognized as an efficient strategy to support new appointed teachers and facilitating professional growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, the success of mentoring enterprises on the accessibility of experienced guide, institutional support along with cultural collaboration. In Indian context, especially

in the case of rural and under-resourced areas, these approaches are not adequately possible. Therefore, there is a risk that mentoring programs may remain symbolic or unequally enforced across regions.

Technology integration comprises a significant pillar of NEP 2020, reflecting the growing consequence of digital tools in education. The policy visualizes that the use of online platforms, digital resources along with virtual training programs to improve teacher education (Government of India, 2020). While this vision agrees with global direction, it fails to complete account for the structural realities of the Indian context. It I quite true that the digital divide remains a big challenge, with distinct in access to devices, connectivity beside digital literacy across regions (Singh & Mehta, 2022). According to Gupta (2021), technology driven transformation may unintentionally exacerbate existing inequalities if not attended by targeted efforts to develop and improve digital infrastructure. Furthermore, an assumption about integration of technology might replace face-to-face pedagogical engagement that overlooks the relational and contextual extent of teaching and learning process.

A broader structural problem is identified about the questions on the capacity of institutions. NEP 2020 stated that a comprehensive restructuring for the teacher education institutions as well as inclusion of their integration into multidisciplinary universities. This transformation aims to improve academic quality along with significant investment for the infrastructure, faculty improvement beside government mechanism. However, the policy has not given any roadmap to achieve the reform. Due to lack of resources and institutional support there is always a risk that the reform may remain unequally implemented, supporting existent disparities between adequate resource and needy resource institutions (Verma, 2022).

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

With the help of analysis and findings of this study, few indications can be proposed for further improvement considering the execution of teacher education reforms under NEP 2020.

First, the government needs to increase funding for all the teacher education institutions to improve the faculty, infrastructure along with training facilities. Decent financial reinforcement is crucial for enforcing the reforms proposed in NEP 2020.

Second, every single teacher education institutions must improve their academic program and embrace innovative teaching methods for promoting critical thinking and experiential learning.

Third, digital infrastructure need to be improved specially in the area of rural, to ensure equitable access for the technology based teacher training programs.

Fourth, the collaboration technique can be adopted between universities and teacher training institutions for the encouragement of teacher trainees to provide them a better practical training opportunity.

Fifth, the monitoring and evaluation system need to be more accurate and updated for assessing the effectiveness of the teacher education reforms to assure accountability.

Sixth, incentives and recognition for the professional excellence of teachers can help to motivate and encourage their participation in professional competency development programs.

Finally, research and innovation in the field of teacher education must be publicized for developing new teaching methods, training models along with advanced educational technologies that help further improvement in the quality of teacher preparation.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy 2020 describes one of the most aspiring attempts in recent decades to transform teacher education in India. By positioning teachers at the heart of educational reformation, the policy articulates a vision that corresponds with global understandings of teaching as a sophisticated and knowledge-intensive profession (Hammond, 2017). It focuses on the assimilation of teacher preparation, professional standards; spontaneous learning along with technology integration indicates an extensive approach for improving teacher quality. However, the dissection in this study indicates that the transmute potential of NEP 2020 is the delegation upon its capability to occupy with the structural and institutional facts of the Indian education context. While the policy gives a rational framework for transformation, it concurrently reveals a set of rudimentary tensions that may restrict its credibility of not adequately addressed. One of the foremost challenges lies in the presumption that structural transformation will lead to significant improvement in teacher education. The beginning of Four-year B.Ed. Program for example indicates a remarkable shift in design, yet its success depends on the capability of institutions to enforce meaningful pedagogical modifications. Without corresponding transformation in curriculum design, faculty improvement along with the institutional governance, structural modifications may remain predominantly symbolic (Rao, 2021). Similarly, the establishment of NPST for teachers shows a kind of effort to standardize teacher professionalism. While standardization can improve liability, it must be stable with the requirement for the contextual adaptability and professional autonomy. In a challenging educational situation such as India, rigid standardization may risk the erosion of creativity and workability that efficacious teaching requires (Nair, 2021). The focus on CPD further demonstrates the policy's identification of teaching

as a lifelong learning procedure. Still, as the analysis signifies, the efficiency of CPD doesn't depend on number of hours but on the quality, relevancy besides contextualization of learning occurrences. Technology integration, while contributing remarkable opportunities for enlarging access and innovation and also represents a set of exceptions related to equity and infrastructure. NEP provides a robust conceptual framework for reviewing teacher education in India. However, its effect will finally be determined by the extent to which it can steer the difficulties of implementation and translate policy objectives into meaningful practice.

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