

NEP-2020 and the Shift towards Integrated Teacher Education Programmes (ITEP): Implications for Teacher Educators

Dr. Jaspreet Kaur*

Assistant Professor, Khalsa College of Education, G.T. Road, Amritsar, India.

*Corresponding Author: kaurjaspreet1355@gmail.com

Citation: Kaur, J. (2025). NEP-2020 and the Shift towards Integrated Teacher Education Programmes (ITEP): Implications for Teacher Educators. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science, 07(04(III)), 64-68. [https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/7.4\(II\).8372](https://doi.org/10.62823/IJEMMASSS/7.4(II).8372)

ABSTRACT

The quality of an education system is fundamentally shaped by the competence and professional preparedness of its teachers. Recognising this critical linkage, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) introduces far-reaching reforms in teacher education, most notably through the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). Conceived as a four-year multidisciplinary programme, ITEP aims to integrate subject knowledge, pedagogical theory, school-based practice, and research from the early stages of higher education. By positioning teacher education within a holistic and interdisciplinary framework, the policy seeks to enhance the academic rigour, professional relevance, and societal credibility of teacher preparation programmes in India. This paper critically examines the shift towards ITEP and analyses its implications for teacher educators, who occupy a central position in translating policy vision into educational practice. The paper adopts a conceptual and analytical approach, drawing upon NEP-2020, policy reports, and contemporary research literature on teacher education reforms. It explores the rationale behind replacing traditional post-graduate teacher education models with an integrated framework and highlights how ITEP aligns with global trends that emphasise early professional socialisation, reflective practice, and sustained engagement with school contexts. Particular attention is given to the changing roles, responsibilities, and professional competencies expected of teacher educators within the ITEP framework. The discussion addresses curricular restructuring, pedagogical transformation, assessment reforms, and the growing importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and digital competence. The paper further identifies key challenges associated with the implementation of ITEP, including institutional readiness, faculty capacity building, and the need for continuous professional development of teacher educators. It concludes that while ITEP holds considerable promise for enhancing the quality, relevance, and credibility of teacher education in India, its success depends largely on empowering teacher educators through sustained professional learning, institutional support, and policy-level commitment. The paper argues that teacher educators must be positioned not merely as implementers of reform but as reflective professionals and change agents in the evolving landscape of teacher education.

Keywords: NEP-2020, Integrated Teacher Education Programme, Teacher Educators, Teacher Education Reform, Professional Development.

Introduction

Teacher education has long been recognised as a critical determinant of educational quality and national development. Teachers play a decisive role in shaping learners' intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical growth, and the effectiveness of teachers is closely linked to the nature and quality of their professional preparation. In contemporary educational discourse, the role of teachers has expanded beyond classroom instruction to include mentoring, curriculum interpretation, inclusive practices, and the

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integration of technology and innovation. Consequently, teacher education systems are increasingly expected to prepare teachers who are reflective, adaptive, and professionally competent.

In India, despite multiple reforms, commissions, and regulatory mechanisms, teacher education has often been criticised for its fragmented structure, limited integration of theory and practice, and inadequate emphasis on professional competencies. Traditional teacher education programmes have frequently been viewed as procedural or credential-oriented rather than as rigorous professional preparation. This has resulted in concerns regarding teacher preparedness, classroom effectiveness, and alignment with the changing needs of learners and schools.

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a significant milestone in addressing these long-standing concerns. By placing teachers at the centre of educational reform, NEP-2020 underscores the need for a robust, rigorous, and holistic system of teacher preparation. One of the most transformative recommendations of the policy is the introduction of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), which seeks to replace traditional models of teacher education with a four-year multidisciplinary programme embedded within higher education institutions.

This paper aims to examine the shift towards ITEP under NEP-2020 and to analyse its implications for teacher educators. Since teacher educators are responsible for curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, mentoring, research orientation, and assessment practices, their role becomes pivotal in determining the success of this reform. Understanding the changing expectations placed upon teacher educators is therefore essential for realising the broader goals envisioned by NEP-2020.

- **National Education Policy 2020: Teacher Education Perspective**

The National Education Policy 2020 articulates a comprehensive vision for transforming India's education system to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. Emphasising equity, quality, access, accountability, and flexibility, the policy advocates systemic reforms across all levels of education. In the context of teacher education, NEP-2020 recognises teachers as central agents in improving learning outcomes, fostering inclusive education, and strengthening the overall quality of the education system.

One of the key recommendations of NEP-2020 is that by 2030, the minimum qualification for teachers should be a four-year integrated B.Ed. degree offered by multidisciplinary higher education institutions. This recommendation reflects the policy's emphasis on treating teacher education as a rigorous academic and professional discipline rather than as an add-on qualification. The policy also highlights the importance of merit-based recruitment, transparent career progression pathways, and continuous professional development for teachers and teacher educators.

NEP-2020 further stresses the integration of pedagogy with subject knowledge, experiential learning, and research-oriented practices in teacher preparation. By repositioning teacher education within multidisciplinary universities and colleges, the policy seeks to enhance the academic rigour and professional status of teaching as a career. This shift reflects a broader understanding of teaching as a complex profession requiring deep disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical expertise, ethical commitment, and reflective practice.

- **Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP): Concept and Structure**

The Integrated Teacher Education Programme represents a fundamental rethinking of how teachers are prepared in India. Designed as a four-year undergraduate degree, ITEP integrates disciplinary studies with professional education from the outset. Unlike traditional models in which teacher education is pursued after completing a general degree, ITEP allows student teachers to develop subject expertise and pedagogical competence simultaneously over an extended period.

The programme is multidisciplinary in nature, enabling students to study liberal arts, sciences, mathematics, or vocational subjects alongside education courses. This multidisciplinary exposure is intended to broaden the intellectual horizons of future teachers and enable them to draw connections across disciplines. ITEP places strong emphasis on school internships, practicum experiences, reflective journals, community engagement, and research-based learning.

Through sustained engagement with school contexts, student teachers are expected to develop a deeper understanding of classroom realities, learner diversity, and inclusive educational practices. ITEP also aims to standardise teacher preparation by ensuring consistent quality across institutions. Entry into the programme is merit-based, and it is envisaged that only high-quality institutions with

adequate infrastructure and faculty expertise will be permitted to offer ITEP. This focus on quality assurance is intended to restore credibility and public trust in teacher education.

- **Rationale for the Shift towards ITEP**

The transition towards ITEP is driven by the limitations of existing teacher education models. Conventional one-year or two-year B.Ed. programmes have often been treated as add-on qualifications, resulting in superficial engagement with pedagogical theory and limited professional immersion. Such programmes frequently fail to provide adequate opportunities for sustained practice, reflection, and meaningful integration of theory and practice.

ITEP seeks to address these shortcomings by offering early and continuous professional preparation. International research suggests that integrated teacher education programmes contribute to stronger professional identity, better classroom readiness, and higher retention rates among teachers. By aligning teacher education with multidisciplinary learning and experiential pedagogy, ITEP supports NEP-2020's vision of holistic, learner-centred, and competency-based education.

The shift towards ITEP also reflects the changing demands placed on teachers in contemporary classrooms. Teachers are now expected to address diverse learner needs, integrate digital technologies, promote critical and creative thinking, and foster inclusive and equitable learning environments. These expectations necessitate a comprehensive and integrated approach to teacher preparation that goes beyond traditional models.

- **Changing Role of Teacher Educators under ITEP**

The implementation of ITEP significantly redefines the role of teacher educators. No longer confined to delivering education courses, teacher educators are expected to function as mentors, facilitators, curriculum planners, researchers, and reflective practitioners. They must collaborate closely with disciplinary faculty to design integrated curricula that meaningfully connect subject knowledge with pedagogical practice.

Teacher educators are also responsible for guiding student teachers through reflective practice, school-based experiences, and research activities. This requires a shift from transmission-oriented teaching to facilitative, inquiry-based, and dialogic approaches. Moreover, teacher educators play a critical role in modelling professional ethics, reflective thinking, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

Under ITEP, teacher educators are expected to engage actively in research, innovation, and continuous professional development. Building a research-informed teacher education culture is essential for preparing future teachers who can adapt to evolving educational contexts and contribute to school improvement and educational reform.

- **Implications of ITEP for Teacher Educators**

The shift towards ITEP has wide-ranging curricular, pedagogical, and professional implications for teacher educators. Curricularly, it necessitates interdisciplinary coordination and alignment between subject departments and education faculties. Teacher educators must actively participate in curriculum design processes that emphasise coherence, progression, and integration across disciplines.

Pedagogically, ITEP demands the adoption of learner-centred, experiential, and technology-enabled teaching strategies. Teacher educators must design learning experiences that promote critical thinking, reflective practice, collaboration, and professional inquiry. Assessment practices also require transformation, with greater emphasis on formative assessment, reflective portfolios, performance tasks, and continuous feedback. These changes call for enhanced assessment literacy and professional judgement among teacher educators.

Additionally, the programme places increased emphasis on digital competence and innovative pedagogical tools. Teacher educators must therefore update their technological skills to effectively integrate digital resources into teaching, mentoring, and assessment processes.

- **Challenges in Implementing ITEP**

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of ITEP presents several challenges. Many teacher education institutions may lack the infrastructure, faculty strength, and interdisciplinary culture required for integrated programmes. Resistance to change, rigid institutional structures, and limited exposure to innovative pedagogical practices can further hinder effective implementation.

Teacher educators may face challenges in adapting to expanded roles without adequate professional development and institutional support. Curriculum restructuring, assessment reforms, and coordination with schools for internships require sustained effort, leadership, and strategic planning. Addressing these challenges necessitates strong institutional leadership, capacity-building initiatives, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

- **Opportunities and Future Prospects**

ITEP offers significant opportunities to revitalise teacher education in India. By enhancing academic rigour, promoting research culture, and strengthening school-university partnerships, the programme can contribute to improved quality of school education. For teacher educators, ITEP opens avenues for professional growth, interdisciplinary collaboration, and leadership in educational reform.

If implemented effectively, ITEP can help establish teaching as a respected and intellectually demanding profession. The programme also aligns teacher education with global best practices while remaining grounded in national priorities, cultural contexts, and societal needs.

Conclusion

The Integrated Teacher Education Programme represents a transformative step in reimagining teacher education under NEP-2020. While the policy provides a strong conceptual framework, the success of ITEP depends largely on the preparedness, professional competence, and sustained engagement of teacher educators. Empowering teacher educators through continuous professional development, institutional support, and collaborative practices is essential for translating policy intent into meaningful outcomes.

The shift towards ITEP holds significant promise for strengthening the quality, relevance, and credibility of teacher education in India. By positioning teacher educators as reflective professionals and change agents, the programme can contribute to the development of a new

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