

Challenges and Prospects of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 in India

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Abstract

The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) as part of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a noteworthy step towards transforming teacher education in India by offering a four-year integrated, multidisciplinary, and practice-focused approach. This study explores the issue of ITEP in the context of India's growing school and higher education system, along with the issues and challenges it faces. The study is qualitative and descriptive-analytical based on secondary data gathered from NEP 2020, NCTE documentation and UDISE+, Government reports and relevant literature. The results suggest that ITEP has great potential in enhancing the teacher quality with the integration of subject competence, pedagogy, school practice, inclusive education, professional ethics and reflective practice. According to the government data, India has crores of students in its school system, over one crore teachers and a vast network of government schools, hence the teacher preparation reform is of immense importance. The effective implementation of ITEP, however, relies on institutional preparedness, qualified faculty, multidisciplinary infrastructure, effective school-university partnership, meaningful practicum, affordability and region equity. The study concludes that viewing ITEP as a mere change in the degree structure is wrong and it is a long-term systemic reform of the teacher education in India to professionalise it. It will need to be backed with robust regulation, ongoing monitoring, sufficient investments and equitable access in various regions and institutions to be successful.

Keywords: Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP); NEP 2020; Teacher Education; Multidisciplinary Education; School Internship; Teacher Professionalisation; NCTE; Higher Education Reform; India.

Introduction

In the twenty first century the importance of teacher education has risen to be a major policy concern in the field of education as the quality of the school education depends not only on the reform of the curriculum or infrastructure and digital access, but also on the professional competence, subject knowledge, and pedagogical judgement of teachers. Worldwide, education systems are transforming initial teacher education to overcome learning gaps, technological change, inclusive education, competency-based learning and lifelong

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professional development. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) highlight the need to address teacher recruitment, preparation, teacher support, and teacher retention as interdependent priorities. Likewise, OECD (2020) posits that effective teacher education ought to comprise of subject knowledge, educational theory, clinical practice, reflective inquiry and ongoing professional learning. In this global context, the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) introduced under the National Education Policy 2020 is an important effort to shift the teacher preparation from a disorganized post-graduate professional programme to an integrated, multidisciplinary and practice-rich undergraduate pathway.

ITEP's global relevance is that it is consistent with worldwide initiatives to professionalise teaching through extended, sequential and in-school preparation. The research on teacher education indicates that effective teacher education programmes are characterized by close ties between the university-based courses, subject specialization, pedagogical education, and school-based practice (Hammerness, 2020). ITEP's dual major (content and education) aims to address the limitations of a traditional separation between content and pedagogy. It also represents the evolving role of the teacher as curriculum designer, inclusive practitioner, reflective professional, technology user, and as an ethical contributor to society.

ITEP falls under the umbrella of the reform agenda of NEP 2020 which seeks to foster multidisciplinary education, competency-based pedagogy, a more flexible curricular organization, and increased institutional regulation in India. According to the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), the 4-year integrated B.Ed program which will be offered by multidisciplinary higher education institutions will be the minimum qualification for teachers in schools by 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2020). The National Council for Teacher Education has notified ITEP as a four-year dual-major programme with options like B.A. B.Ed., B.Sc. B.Ed. and B.Com. B.Ed., which can lead teachers to the Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stages of the 5+3+3+4 school structure (NCTE, 2021; PIB, 2023). The recent admissions on the basis of the National Common Entrance Test also reflect a move towards uniformity in the process of entry into teacher education.

ITEP is conceptually a combination of integration, multidisciplinary and professionalisation. Integration is the development of disciplinary knowledge, educational foundations, pedagogy, school experience, assessment skills, values and professional ethics. Multidisciplinary involves positioning teacher education in an institution where access is available to humanities, sciences, social sciences, commerce, languages, arts and technology. Professionalisation is the transition from certification for limited duration to ongoing teacher identity formation, and reflective practice. The curriculum framework for NCTE highlights psychology, sociology, philosophy, studies in the curriculum, inclusive education, ICT, and internships and community engagement (NCTE, 2021), and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 is based on experiential learning, conceptual understanding, and assessment reform (NCERT, 2023).

ITEP is the product of potentially transformative aspects, but the implementation of ITEP is beset with serious challenges. Faculties, infrastructure, accreditation status, digital capacity, curriculum readiness and school partnership models can vary significantly across institutions.

Stand-alone teacher education institutions may have difficulty in fulfilling the multidisciplinary demands. There is also a question of whether an internship will truly become 'school-embedded'; whether nationally there will be adequate support for rural schools and private schools; and whether changes in nationally-based entry systems might be creating new barriers to access for disadvantaged students. In this sense, ITEP is not only the reform of curriculum but it is institutional restructuring which impacts on admission, staffing, practicum, regulation, assessment and future identity of teacher education in India.

There are significant research gaps: much that has been written remains descriptive and policy affirming. There are few studies that critically look at institutional readiness, regulatory viability, equity considerations, and long-term professional outcomes. The study then analyzes ITEP as a systemic reform that relies on different elements of coherence, governance, multidisciplinary infrastructures and socio-educational accessibility. It is important because it offers a well-rounded view of how India can move towards professionalization of teacher education without compromising on quality, equity and feasibility.

Literature Review

The ITEP is a significant move towards reconfiguring teacher education in India under the National Education Policy 2020. The rise has to be seen in the general context of the worldwide phenomenon that teacher quality is at the heart of issues of equity in education, learning outcomes and social development. International research has consistently stated that teacher's education must be coherent between the knowledge of the discipline, pedagogical theory, practice in the school and establishment of their professional identity. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) emphasize that teacher shortages and inadequate teacher professional preparation are significant challenges in achieving quality education worldwide. Likewise, OECD (2020) states that teacher professionalism requires autonomy, collaboration, mentoring and continuous professional development in addition to formal qualification. The global discussions are pertinent to ITEP as the programme aims to shift teacher preparation in India from a disjointed model of certifications to a cohesive, multidisciplinary and practice-based professional pathway.

ITEP is grounded in the international discourse on coherent teacher preparation. Darling-Hammond (2006) suggested that one of the attributes of high-quality teacher preparation is the close relationship between the coursework, practicum, and professional standards in teacher education. Hammerness (2020) also noted that prospective teachers must have a number of opportunities to experience, practise, rehearse and reflect on teaching in a real classroom. In their systematic review of practice-based teacher education, Matsumoto-Royo and Ramírez-Montoya (2021) identified the following core teacher education practices: modelling, feedback, rehearsals and core teaching practices. These studies back the logic of ITEP particularly the efforts of combining subject content, educational bases, pedagogy and internship. They also suggest that more time is not enough to achieve integration, as this necessitates institutional coherence, good mentoring, well-trained teacher educators and productive school-university collaboration.

ITEP can be realized as a response to the chronic weaknesses in teacher education such as institutional quality, practicum, regulation, commercialization of teacher education colleges, and the disjunction between content knowledge and pedagogy in India. By 2030, NEP 2020 recommends that the minimum qualification for school teachers should be 4 year integrated B.Ed. and teacher education should be based in multidisciplinary higher education institutions (Ministry of Education, 2020). The vision has been translated into programmes by the National Council for Teacher Education such as B.A. B.Ed., B.Sc. B.Ed. and B.Com. B. Ed to prepare teachers at various levels of the new 5+3+3+4 school structure (NCTE, 2021). This is important because it tries to professionalise the teaching from the undergraduate level, not as a secondary job.

In general, the recent Indian policy debates describe ITEP as a progressive reform that has some strong promise. The programme can shorten the total time for a trained teacher, motivate students to take up teaching at an early age, enhance the integration of subject and pedagogy and enhance the academic status of teacher education. The multi-disciplinary approach also aligns with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, which prioritises: Experiential Learning, Competency-based assessment, Multi-lingualism, Inclusion and Stage-specific pedagogy (NCERT, 2023). However, a careful study of the literature reveals the importance of the actual readiness of institutions to the success of ITEP. However, qualified faculty, lab facilities, library facilities, digital infrastructure, school partnerships and teacher education environments for research may present a challenge to many higher education institutions.

One of the major problems in the literature is that there is a disconnect between the aspiration of the policy and the capacity to implement it. International research indicates that, without structured mentoring, feedback and opportunities for reflective practice, clinical practice is not effective for student teachers (Hammerness, 2020). In India, however, internships in school have been considered as a formality. Without effective relationships with schools, the practicum experience may be merely a procedure and not a transformative one. In the same manner, the policy assumption that teacher education should be delivered only by multidisciplinary institutions will have positive effects on the quality of teacher education in the long term but has significant implications for teacher education colleges which are stand-alone institutions, particularly in rural and semi-urban contexts.

Equity and access are also issues that can be seen in the literature. The standardisation at National level through entrance mechanism and multi-disciplinary institutions may be effective, but in the absence of easy availability of affordable institutions, they may have a negative impact on students from rural and economically weaker and first-generation learner backgrounds. The NEP 2020 is very strong in the equity space, but existing discourse has not been extensive in terms of considering regional disparity, language barriers, fee structures or social accessibility when discussing ITEP. This is a significant constraint as teacher education reform should not only be measured in terms of curriculum design, but in terms of inclusiveness and distributive justice.

Conceptually, descriptively and policy-based, much of the existing Indian literature on ITEP remains at the methodological level. Little empirical research has been conducted on the

perceptions of student-teachers, teacher educators, institutional administrators, school mentors and policies. Comparative studies among other central universities, state universities, private institutions and rural colleges are also limited to a very few. The literature from abroad offers some good theories about coherence, practice-based learning and teacher professionalism, but these have not been sufficiently taken up in the Indian context of ITEP.

a critical evidence-based and integrated analysis of ITEP challenge and prospects is a research gap. The present study makes a contribution in analysing ITEP, not only as a policy reform, but as a systemic change, with respect to the curriculum integration, institutional restructuring, the quality of the practicum, equity, and regulation and professionalisation. This has a major consequence since the success of ITEP will rely not only on the formal design, but also on its functioning with the wide spread of education in India.

Research Methodology

This present study is qualitative research since it involves secondary data and descriptive and analytical in nature. It systematically explores the challenges and possibilities of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 in India based on policy documents, government reports, the recommendations of the NCTE, the provisions of NEP 2020, academic articles, institutional notifications and relevant international literature on teacher education. It employs thematic analysis to categorise key themes including curriculum integration, institutional readiness, quality of the practicum, equity, access, and regulatory reform and professionalisation of teachers. The results are critically analysed to find the gaps in implementation, policy implications and future possibilities towards strengthening teacher education in India.

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) in NEP 2020 is a systemic reform and not a limited curriculum revision. The policy objective is to shift from the current teacher preparation system, which is characterized by fragmentations, towards a four-year integrated B.Ed. in multidisciplinary HEIs. Under NEP 2020, it is clearly mentioned that integrated B.Ed. which includes content and pedagogy with good practicum experiences will be the minimum qualification needed for the school teachers by 2030. This indicates that ITEP is created to address the concerns which have existed in Indian teacher education such as poor linkage between subject and pedagogy, inadequate exposure to the schools and also the differences in the quality of institution. The study framework uploaded is also rightly considered as an institutional restructuring project of ITEP related to admission, appointment, practicum, assessment, regulation and future identity of teacher education in India.

Table-01: Key Government Data Relevant to the Implementation of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 in India

Indicator	Recent government data/report	Relevance for ITEP
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School system size	24.69 crore students, 1.01 crore teachers and about 14.71 lakh schools in 2024–25	Shows the large teacher-preparation demand in India
Teacher growth	Teachers crossed 1 crore for the first time in UDISE+ 2024–25	Indicates expansion, but also the need for quality preparation
Higher education enrolment	4.33 crore students in AISHE 2021–22	Shows the scale of undergraduate pathways available for ITEP
Female higher education enrolment	2.07 crore in AISHE 2021–22	Suggests scope for expanding women’s participation in teacher education
Government school share	In 2023–24, government schools formed 69% of total schools, enrolled 50% of students and employed 51% of teachers	Indicates that ITEP-trained teachers will strongly affect the public education system

Source: Compiled from Government of India reports and databases, including *UDISE+ 2024–25*, *UDISE+ 2023–24*, *AISHE 2021–22*, *National Education Policy 2020*, Ministry of Education, Government of India, and National Council for Teacher Education documents on ITEP.

India's school system has around 24.69 crore students and 1.01 crore teachers in nearly 14.71 lakh schools, ranking it as one of the world's largest school education systems as per the UDISE+ 2024–25 data. The Ministry of Education also reports that the number of teachers has for the first time exceeded one crore in 2024–25, increasing by 6.7% from 2022–23. This growth is noteworthy, as it indicates that the number of teachers is increasing, which is important, but it does not necessarily lead to increased quality in education. ITEP hence gains its significance as India needs more teachers but also professionally trained teachers who can work with diverse learners, multilingual classrooms, competency-based curriculum, digital tools and inclusive pedagogies.

According to the 2023-24 data from UDISE+, the government school makes up 69% of the total schools, 50% of the total students and 51% of total teachers. This means it will have a direct impact on ITEP as good teacher preparation will have a significant impact on the public school system. In the event that ITEP generates reflective, subject competent and professionally trained teachers, then it will be able to enhance process in the classroom of government schools particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas. Nevertheless, if the work is only done in the better-resourced universities, then the reform may not meet the real teacher-quality demands of the public sector. Hence, the debate needs to go beyond the policy optimism, and address the issue of distribution across regions, institutional access, and the affordability of ITEP.

Another crucial dimension is offered by the AISHE 2021-22 data. In 2021–22, higher education enrolments were 4.33 crore, with 2.07 crore being female, the Ministry of Education said. This growing higher education base provides good conditions for the implementation of ITEP as an

undergraduate professional program. Can motivate students to take up teaching right after Class XII and shorten the time taken in the traditional graduation plus B.Ed way. The increase in the enrolment of women is particularly significant as teaching is a prominent profession for women in India. But the more people who are enrolled, the less certain the access to them. Students from rural, marginalised and first-generation learner backgrounds may be impacted by fee structure, examination preparation and language barriers and regional availability.

According to ITEP government data, there are a whopping 24.69 crore students, 1.01 crore teachers and 14.71 lakh schools in India. Government schools make up 69% of schools, 50% of students and 51% of teachers, and are in need of quality teacher preparation via ITEP. UDISE+ 2024–25, Ministry of Education, Government of India depicts the vastness of the school education system in India, 24.69 crore students, 1.01 crore teachers and 14.71 lakh schools. This means that the implementation of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 is of great importance to enhance the quality of teachers in a huge and diverse educational system. The relatively smaller number of teachers compared with the student population highlights the need for professionally trained, subject-competent and pedagogically skilled teachers. It thus has a potentially significant role in improving teacher preparation, dependent upon the quality and equitable deployment of ITEP at the institutional level and the quality of practicum.

The UDISE+ 2023-24 reveals that government school makes up the highest proportion of the school education in India (69%) out of the total schools. But they teach 50% of students and hire 51% of teachers, suggesting a significant percentage of India's students and teachers are still relying on the public school system. This is directly relevant to the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) under NEP 2020 where the quality of teachers trained will have a significant impact on government schools. The results indicate that ITEP's primary focus should be to provide for the needs of the public sector, to target rural schools, to provide for inclusive pedagogy, and to provide for strong school-based practicum so that all teachers can be improved in an equitable manner.

A big institutional issue is also discussed. NEP 2020 calls for a gradual shift of teacher education from a single- to multi-disciplinary college and university by 2030. This is academically sound because future teachers must be exposed to liberal education, depth in discipline, educational psychology, technology, research and school practice. But, there are many teacher education institutions that are standalone colleges with limited infrastructure and scope of academic program. It can take significant investment, recruitment of faculty, and curriculum and regulatory changes to become a multidisciplinary institution. If this is not done, ITEP could develop a chasm between those institutions that could implement and those that are smaller that are struggling with compliance.

One of the other key points is the quality of practicum. NEP 2020 focuses on good preparation with a strong emphasis on the practicum, Indian teacher preparation has often been viewed as a process rather than a reflective and mentored experience. ITEP would be unsuccessful without school internships for observation, lesson planning, supervised teaching, feedback, practice in the classroom, assessment design, and reflective journals. The data from the government indicates the vastness of the Indian school system and its diversity; thus, practicum

models should incorporate various school types, such as rural, urban, government, private, multilingual and inclusive school settings. There is a risk that the uniform internship organization without local adaptation could diminish the professional value of ITEP.

Following the discussion, Author argues that ITEP is needed and difficult. The vast number of students, increasing teacher population and increase in higher education enrolment of India warrants the need for a professional and integrated teacher education system. Meanwhile, the readiness of institutions, equality of access, quality of faculty, quality of practicum and regional balance are significant issues. While the potential for ITEP is great, sufficient funding, policy and regulatory clarity, and school-university collaboration and ongoing assessment will determine its success. As such, ITEP should be viewed as a long-term effort for teacher quality reform, not just a new degree program.

Conclusion

NEP 2020 is a radical reform that includes the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) to change teacher education in India. It changes the way teachers are prepared from a disjointed, short-duration approach to an integrated, multidisciplinary, practice-based four-year teacher preparation. The study reveals that ITEP can be used to enhance teacher quality in combination with the various elements of ITEP: subject knowledge, pedagogy, school internship, inclusive education, professional ethics and reflective practice. It is all the more relevant in the vast school system of India where Crores of students are reliant on professionally trained teachers.

The government still educates a significant portion of students and teachers and ITEP can have direct impact on the quality of public education. However, it needs to be implemented effectively, have the requisite staff, be prepared by the institution, have meaning in internships, be affordable, have regional equity, and have regulatory clarity. The study's conclusion is that ITEP is not just another education degree, but is a long-term teacher-quality initiative to create a professional, inclusive and future-focused education system.

Suggestions

There is a need for institutional planning and ongoing policy support to successfully implement the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). Firstly, the higher education institutions must be prepared adequately to implement ITEP, in terms of qualified faculty, subject-specific departments, digital infrastructure, libraries, laboratories and research facilities. Secondly, the school internship should be more practical, supervised and reflective through good collaboration between universities and government and private schools in the vicinity. Thirdly, special care must be taken that the ITEP is not confined to well-resourced urban institutions, but must also include rural and backward and economically weaker regions.

The government must make sure there are a fair fee system, scholarships and availability of ITEP seats in different regions to encourage equity and access. Adhere to NEP 2020 requirements and maintain quality is also required with regular monitoring by NCTE, to prevent commercialisation. Ongoing professional development of teachers' educators in competency-based pedagogy, inclusive teaching and learning and ICT and assessment reforms

should be provided. Lastly, student-teachers, school mentors, faculty and administration feedback should be gathered on a regular basis to enhance curriculum, practicum and implementation. These measures can make ITEP a meaningful reform towards the production of professionally competent, inclusive and future ready teachers in India.

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