



ELEVATING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION: FROM TRAINING TO TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Gunjan Dubey¹ & Ghazala Zia*²

¹. Professor, Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202002

². Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202002

Abstract

Teacher education has undergone significant global scrutiny due to the evolving demands placed on schools and the increasing complexity of contemporary classrooms. Traditional based training of teachers is no longer adequate in the 21st-century. Instead, teacher education must emphasize transformative approaches that integrate professional identity formation, reflective practice, cultural responsiveness and lifelong learning. This paper highlights the need to elevate the quality of teacher education by transitioning from training to transformation across both pre-service and in-service stages. The challenges facing the teacher education system, particularly in India, are discussed, along with the reforms introduced by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Pre-service, In-Service, NEP 2020

Introduction

Teacher education stands at the heart of educational quality and reform. Teachers shape not only learners' academic success but also their socio-emotional development, worldview, values, lifelong learning tendencies and make them productive. Kothari Commission (1964-66) also emphasis that if the education is related to productivity then an expansion of education leads to an increase in national income. Strengthening teacher education is widely recognized as one of the most effective strategies for improving educational outcomes. In an era marked by globalization, rapid technological advancement and increasingly diverse learner needs, the role of teachers has

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:	RESEARCH ARTICLE
Ghazala Zia Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202002 Email: ghazalazia19@gmail.com	

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expanded far beyond traditional classroom instruction. The aim of education is to promote the innate capabilities of the person as well as develop their self and democratic attitude (University Education Commission, 1948). Today's teacher is expected to function as a mentor, facilitator, curriculum designer, researcher, innovator and community leader. Teachers must integrate digital tools, address inclusive education, promote critical thinking and respond sensitively to cultural and social diversity. These complex and evolving responsibilities demand a high level of professional competence, judgment and adaptability. As a result, teacher education programs must move beyond narrow skill acquisition and equip teachers with the intellectual, ethical and reflective capacities required in contemporary classrooms.

If teacher education has been grounded in training-oriented models that emphasize procedural skills, content transmission and formal certification. Then, it leads to produce technicians who follow prescribed routines rather than reflective professionals capable of informed decision-making. Therefore, teacher preparation must be re-envisioned as a transformative process rather than a purely technical one. It encourages teachers to critically examine their beliefs, assumptions and practices, linking theory with real-world classroom experiences. Philosophically, it recognizes teaching as a moral and intellectual profession. Structurally, it calls for integrated programs that connect coursework, practicum and research. Pedagogically, it promotes inquiry-based learning, collaboration and problem-solving. A teacher who values collaboration may actively seek out opportunities to work with colleagues, sharing ideas and learning from one another to improve their collective teaching practice. They embrace professional development and innovation, which positively impacts the classroom environment and contributes to the academic success of their students (Hargreaves, 2000). Furthermore, transformative teacher education prepares teachers to become lifelong learners who continuously update their knowledge and skills. It fosters professional identity, agency and resilience, enabling teachers to respond effectively to diverse learner needs and changing educational contexts. Ultimately, investing in transformative teacher education is not merely an institutional responsibility but a societal imperative. High-quality teacher education lays the foundation for equitable, sustainable and future-ready education systems that can meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

Need to Elevate the Quality of Teacher Education

In the context of rapid social change, technological advancement and diverse learner needs, there is an urgent need to elevate the quality of teacher education to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared for contemporary classroom challenges. Traditionally, teacher education programs have focused on subject knowledge, pedagogical techniques and classroom management skills. While these components remain important, they are no longer sufficient on their own. Today's teachers must be reflective practitioners who can adapt to changing educational contexts, integrate technology effectively and respond to the diverse academic, cultural and emotional needs of learners. "Education of teachers needs to strengthen and stress upon the main attributes of a profession, such as the systematic theory, rigorous training over a specified duration, authority,

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community sanction, ethical code and culture, generating knowledge through research and specialization.” Samsujjaman, (2017). Therefore, improving the quality of teacher education requires a shift from rote training models to holistic and transformative approaches that emphasize critical thinking, creativity and professional ethics. Elevating teacher education quality also involves strengthening the integration of theory and practice. Well-structured field experiences, mentoring and reflective practice enable prospective teachers to connect educational theory with real classroom situations. Teacher should maintain moral and values for creating a better classroom environment. Teachers who uphold these values in the classroom promote inclusivity and fairness, which leads to a supportive environment where all students feel valued (Nieto, 2004). Teachers who maintain high moral standards create a positive learning environment where students feel safe and respected (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Moreover, teacher education institutions must promote research-based practice, encouraging teachers to engage in inquiry, experimentation and continuous professional development. Such an approach not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also fosters lifelong learning among teachers. Another critical aspect of quality enhancement is the use of modern technologies in teacher preparation. Digital literacy, online pedagogies and innovative assessment methods must be embedded within teacher education programs to prepare teachers for technology-rich learning environments. Additionally, attention must be given to values such as inclusivity, equity and social responsibility so that teachers can contribute to building just and democratic societies. “Both Content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge is important on the part of a teacher as it helps a teacher in designing lessons for the students.” Jena, A. (2024). Thus, elevating the quality of teacher education is essential for improving student learning outcomes and achieving sustainable educational reform. High-quality teacher education produces competent, confident and reflective professionals capable of meeting the demands of twenty-first-century education.

Pre-Service Teacher Education: The Foundation of Transformation

Pre-service teacher education is the initial and most crucial stage in preparing individuals for the teaching profession. It refers to the formal training and education that prospective teachers receive before they begin their careers in schools. This stage lays the foundation for transforming education systems, classrooms and society as a whole. Through pre-service teacher education, future teachers develop essential knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for effective teaching. It equips them with a strong understanding of subject content, pedagogy, child psychology, assessment methods and classroom management. “The quality of pedagogical inputs in teacher education programmes and their effective utilization for the purpose of preparing prospective teachers depend largely on the professional competence of teacher educators and the ways in which it is utilized for strengthening the teacher education programme.” Lal, D. (2016). Equally important, it nurtures professional ethics, reflective thinking, creativity and a commitment to lifelong learning. In a rapidly changing world, pre-service teacher education plays a transformative role by preparing teachers to respond to diverse learners, inclusive classrooms and

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technological advancements. It encourages innovative teaching practices, learner-centered approaches and the use of modern educational tools. By demonstrating compassion, teachers help students feel heard and understood, which can enhance student motivation and well-being (Noddings, 2013). By engaging student-teachers in action research, lesson analysis, reflective journaling and peer observations, pre-service programs help them transition from passive learners to active decision-makers. Moreover, pre-service teacher education shapes teachers as agents of social change. Teachers trained at this stage are better prepared to promote values such as equity, democracy, respect and sustainability among learners. As teachers influence future generations, the quality of their initial preparation directly impacts the quality of education.

In-Service Teacher Education: Continuous Professional Evolution

Teaching is a lifelong learning profession. In-service teacher education plays a vital role in enhancing teachers' knowledge, updating pedagogy and renewing professional commitment. Transformative in-service programmes must move toward continuous, collaborative and school-based professional development where teachers learn through shared inquiry, mentoring and reflective dialogue. Such collaborative models empower teachers to become co-constructors of knowledge rather than mere recipients of externally delivered training. Additionally, digital platforms and MOOCs allow teachers to personalize professional development, access global best practices and participate in online communities of practice. Teacher must be up-to-date in his field, communicate effectively, have the knowledge of psychological principles and use them in teaching learning process (Anderson, 2004). Ultimately, in-service transformation helps teachers remain adaptive in the face of changing curricula, emerging technologies and evolving student needs.

Challenges in Elevating the Quality of Teacher Education

- A major challenge in teacher education is the disproportionate emphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical teaching experience. While educational theories are essential, excessive focus on abstract concepts without sufficient classroom exposure limits the professional readiness of prospective teachers. Teaching practice is often brief, poorly supervised or disconnected from real school contexts. As a result, trainee teachers struggle to apply pedagogical principles, classroom management strategies and assessment techniques effectively. Strengthening school–institution partnerships and extending mentored practicum experiences are essential to bridge this gap and ensure the development of practical teaching competence.
- The lack of effective integration between theory and practice remains a persistent challenge in teacher education. Often, theoretical courses and practical teaching experiences are treated as separate components rather than complementary processes. This fragmentation prevents trainee teachers from contextualizing theoretical concepts within authentic classroom situations. Without structured reflection and guided application, learning remains

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superficial. Effective teacher education requires deliberate linkage through reflective journals, case-based learning, and supervised teaching practice.

- The quality of teacher education largely depends on the competence and commitment of teacher educators. However, many institutions face challenges related to insufficient professional development opportunities, limited research engagement and heavy teaching workloads for teacher educators. Without continuous upskilling, teacher educators may rely on conventional methods and outdated content. This directly affects the preparation of future teachers. Teacher should be influential for stability, nation cohesion, enlightenment and good conduct (Mc Carty, 2003). Regular professional development, research incentives and exposure to innovative pedagogies are essential to strengthen teacher educators' capacity and ensure high-quality teacher preparation programmes.
- Teacher education programmes often prioritize content delivery and certification over reflective and transformative learning. As a result, trainee teachers may acquire knowledge without developing critical self-awareness or professional identity. Reflective practice is essential for understanding one's beliefs, assumptions and teaching practices. The absence of structured reflection limits teachers' ability to adapt, innovate and respond to diverse learner needs. Incorporating reflective journals, action research and mentoring can promote transformative learning, enabling teachers to become reflective practitioners rather than passive implementers of prescribed curricula.
- Despite the growing importance of digital literacy, many teacher education institutions struggle to integrate technology meaningfully into teaching and learning. Limited infrastructure, lack of training and resistance to change hinder the adoption of digital pedagogies. As a result, trainee teachers are often unprepared to use educational technologies, online assessment tools and blended learning models effectively. This gap became particularly evident during emergency remote teaching situations.
- Teacher education is often shaped by ambitious policies that emphasize quality and reform; however, gaps between policy intentions and ground-level implementation remain significant. Frequent policy changes, rigid regulations and bureaucratic procedures can restrict institutional autonomy and innovation. Additionally, lack of monitoring and support weakens effective implementation. To improve teacher education, policies must be flexible, context-sensitive and supported by adequate resources, capacity-building mechanisms, and continuous evaluation frameworks.
- Contemporary classrooms are increasingly diverse, yet teacher education programmes often inadequately prepare teachers to address cultural, linguistic and socio-economic diversity. Limited attention to inclusive education, multilingual pedagogy and special educational needs reduces teachers' ability to create equitable learning environments. Cultural insensitivity and stereotypical assumptions may persist without proper training. Integrating culturally responsive pedagogy and inclusive practices into teacher education is essential to ensure that teachers can meet the needs of all learners and promote social justice in education.

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- A weak research culture in teacher education institutions limits the adoption of evidence-based teaching practices. Trainee teachers are often insufficiently trained in educational research methods, data interpretation, and classroom-based inquiry. As a result, teaching practices may rely on tradition or intuition rather than empirical evidence. Encouraging action research, reflective inquiry and engagement with scholarly literature can strengthen professional competence.
- Assessment systems in teacher education frequently emphasize examinations, grades and certification over actual teaching competence. Such assessment practices may fail to capture essential skills such as classroom management, communication, adaptability and reflective practice. Consequently, qualified teachers may enter the profession without adequate professional competence. Shifting towards performance-based assessment, teaching portfolios and continuous evaluation can provide a more holistic understanding of teacher readiness. Competency-based assessment is essential for ensuring quality and accountability in teacher education programmes.

NEP 2020: A Framework for Transformational Teacher Education

The National Education Policy 2020 presents a landmark opportunity to re-envision teacher education in India. NEP 2020 recognizes that teacher quality is the most crucial factor in improving learning outcomes and thus proposes wide-ranging reforms aligned with global best practices.

- Teacher education plays a crucial role in shaping future generations and therefore must be strengthened significantly. The preparation of teachers should be holistic, drawing from multidisciplinary perspectives, nurturing ethical values and professional attitudes and providing meaningful exposure under experienced and capable mentors.
- Teachers must not only be well-versed in contemporary educational theories and pedagogical innovations but also remain deeply connected to India's cultural heritage, values, languages, traditional knowledge systems, and social ethos, including the rich traditions of tribal communities.
- The teacher education sector, along with its regulatory mechanisms, requires urgent and comprehensive reform to enhance quality, transparency, accountability and effectiveness. Restoring trust and dignity to the profession demands a thorough revitalization of institutions and governance structures.
- To ensure quality and credibility, the regulatory framework will be empowered to take firm action against underperforming and non-compliant Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). Institutions failing to meet basic academic standards will be given a limited period for improvement, after which strict measures may be enforced. By the year 2030, only academically robust, multidisciplinary, and integrated teacher education programs will be permitted to operate.

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- Since teacher preparation inherently depends on interdisciplinary learning, all teacher education programs must be housed within comprehensive multidisciplinary higher education institutions. Universities and colleges offering diverse disciplines will establish education departments that not only conduct advanced research in education but also deliver B.Ed. programs in collaboration with departments such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience, Indian languages, arts, music, history, literature, physical education, science, and mathematics. Additionally, all standalone TEIs will be required to transition into multidisciplinary institutions by 2030 in order to offer integrated four-year teacher education programs.
- NEP-2020 proposes that by 2030, the four-year integrated B.Ed. degree offered by multidisciplinary higher education institutions will become the minimum qualification for school teachers. This program will function as a dual-major undergraduate degree, combining education with a specialized subject such as languages, mathematics, sciences, social sciences, arts, physical education, or technology. The curriculum will extend beyond modern pedagogy to include foundational knowledge in psychology, sociology, history, science, early childhood care and education, foundational literacy and numeracy, and India's cultural and ethical traditions. Institutions may also offer a two-year B.Ed. program for graduates and a one-year B.Ed. program for candidates holding a four-year specialized undergraduate degree. To attract talented individuals to the teaching profession, scholarships will be made available for deserving students across all B.Ed. pathways.
- Higher education institutions providing teacher education will offer a wide range of specialized courses and draw expertise from education professionals and allied disciplines. Student teachers will gain hands-on experience through internships and teaching practice in a network of affiliated government and private schools. Engagement in community service, adult education, and vocational initiatives will also be encouraged as part of teacher preparation.
- Admission to pre-service teacher education programs will be conducted through standardized subject-based and aptitude assessments administered by the National Testing Agency. These assessments will be designed with sensitivity to India's linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity while ensuring uniform standards nationwide.
- Education departments will aim to build a diverse and highly qualified faculty, placing strong emphasis on teaching competence, field experience, and research expertise. Institutions will actively recruit and retain faculty trained in disciplines closely related to school education, including psychology, child development, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, economics, political science, and subject-specific education such as science, mathematics, language, and social science education, to strengthen interdisciplinary teacher preparation.
- As part of doctoral education reforms, all Ph.D. scholars, irrespective of discipline, will be required to undertake credit-based coursework in teaching, pedagogy, educational theory and academic writing relevant to their field. Since many doctoral graduates eventually take

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up teaching or public engagement roles, exposure to instructional methods, curriculum planning, assessment practices, and communication skills will be essential. Doctoral candidates will also be required to gain practical teaching experience through teaching assistantships or similar opportunities, leading to a reorientation of Ph.D. programs across higher education institutions.

- To enhance the quality of teaching and learning at the higher education level, existing systems and initiatives for in-service professional development of college and university faculty will be expanded and strengthened. Digital platforms such as SWAYAM and DIKSHA will be widely utilized to deliver large-scale, standardized online training programs efficiently.
- Furthermore, a National Mission for Mentoring will be launched to create a robust network of distinguished senior and retired faculty members, including those proficient in Indian languages. These mentors will provide sustained professional guidance and academic support to university and college teachers through both short-term and long-term mentoring arrangements.

Together, these reforms provide a comprehensive framework for transforming teacher education in India. Their success, however, hinges on effective implementation, institutional collaboration, and sustained funding.

Conclusion

Elevating the quality of teacher education from training to transformation is essential for building an equitable, future-ready and learner-centered education system. The shift requires rethinking on pre-service and in-service teacher education program. Quality teacher education must move beyond the transmission of pedagogical skills to fostering professional identity, critical reflection, cultural sensitivity and a commitment to lifelong learning. Such transformations enables teachers to respond effectively to diverse learners, technological advancements and evolving societal expectations. In the Indian context, persistent challenges continue to affect the effectiveness of teacher education programs. However, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a promising framework for systemic reform by emphasizing integrated teacher education programs, multidisciplinary learning, and sustained professional development. These reforms signal a paradigm shift towards viewing teachers as reflective practitioners and agents of educational change rather than mere implementers of curricula. Ultimately, elevating the quality of teacher education requires a holistic and sustained approach that integrates policy support, institutional accountability and professional empowerment. By embracing transformative practices across both pre-service and in-service stages, teacher education can play a pivotal role in strengthening educational quality and contributing meaningfully to national development goals.

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