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REINVENTING TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NEP 2020

***Ms. Richa**

Assistant Professor

Dewan Institute of Management studies, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

****Dr. Shivpal Singh**

Principal

ABSTRACT

NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and it replaces the thirty four year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. According to NEP 2020 education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. The policy aims to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. Educators are the important factor to provide education. The skilled workforces of professional educators are the main requirement to achieve the goal of NEP 2020. In this policy, the teachers have been put at the center of the most needed fundamental reforms in the education system. The policy has also emphasized re-establishing teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, as they shape the future generation of the country. Teachers with knowledge, skills, and dedication are today's demand. In the present scenario teacher education seems to be disconnected from schools. It is a challenge to prepare a more professional, experienced and skilled teacher workforce. It is time to reinvent teacher education for the purpose. There are several challenges to teacher education such as poor training, mushrooming of B.Ed. colleges, directionless teacher education institutes and non-retention of youth etc. NEP 2020 has many reforms in teachers' education which help to attract the youth for this profession by choice. Three types of B.Ed. courses, one year, two years and Integrated Teachers Education Program (ITEP), National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), National Mission for Mentoring (NMM), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and Scholarships for teacher trainees are such reforms in NEP 2020 which can change the scenario of teacher education. As a step forward, the NEP-2020 has also elaborated on the recruitment of good teachers in a transparent method, to give autonomy while also instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability in every teacher.

KEYWORDS: Integrated Teacher Education, Teacher professionalism, Mentoring mission

INTRODUCTION

NEP 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and it replaces the thirty-four- year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. According to NEP 2020 education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. For the progress of any country, it is necessary that the people there should be educated. It is only through education that new doors of development open. If the youth of the country get educated and make new inventions or do new research, then the country will not have to depend on any others for technological development.

Teaching is one of the largest professions all over the world. In India, there are nearly 9.7 million teachers, and still, there is a deficit of 1 million teachers. The demand for high-quality teachers is ever increasing. To make the teaching profession attractive and retain high-quality individuals, broad changes are needed in the way that the profession is professed. In the 20th century, more emphasis was made on standardizing curricula and standards, and this led to the development of scripted lesson plans and instructional content. As a result, a downward trend started in the level of autonomy of teachers. At the turn of the 21st century, teacher professionalism came into renewed focus for reforming the state of education. Improving teacher quality was identified as a critical factor in enhancing student learning and achievement.

NEED TO REINVENT TEACHER EDUCATION

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) has put the teacher at the center of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The new education policy aims to re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society because they truly shape our next generation of citizens, who contribute to the advancement of both the economy and the society. The Policy aims to build systems that must do everything to empower teachers and help them do their jobs as effectively as possible. The new education policy advocates for the best and brightest to enter the teaching profession.

With the recent technological advances in education and the ease of access to information, the role of a 21st-century teacher has evolved. Today, the teacher is more of a facilitator of student learning. A teacher is also responsible for guiding the students and creating an enabling environment to help them develop higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking. Thus education beyond the textbooks demands more professionalism.

CHALLENGES TO TEACHER EDUCATION

It is a well-known fact that teachers make all the other professions possible. But unfortunately, the teaching professionals have been facing grave career-related challenges at multiple levels, such as-

- On the career-growth front, teachers generally stay in the same position for 10 to 20 years, which is a very long period compared to other careers.
- There is a lack of mentorship and knowledge sharing of skills required for progressing along the career ladder.
- Also, poor training of professional teachers creates a hole in the scenario.
- A number of teacher training colleges are running without proper regulation.
- Teacher education institutes have been working in isolation from the rest of higher education institutes which creates a misleading path for youth.
- There is no system to select only motivated and meritorious individuals for this profession.

REFORMS BY NEP 2020 IN TEACHER EDUCATION

With changing times, a teacher's role has transformed from that of a knowledge provider to a facilitator and a mentor. Unfortunately, teachers are not equipped with the appropriate skill set for this new role. National Education Policy 2020 has very clearly addressed these issues and concerns of teachers, where the focus is to ensure quality teachers at all levels of school education. NEP 2020 has made recommendations to improve teachers' work conditions, career management processes, professional development strategy, etc. The end goal is to enhance every teacher's ability to understand each student's developmental needs proactively. This effort will require a significant update to a teaching professional's job description, requiring a different skill set altogether. Also, new assessment methodologies will be necessary to holistically evaluate each teacher's performance and student's academic progress in a multidisciplinary environment. These methodologies will focus on 21st-century skills and child-led teaching rather than mechanical teaching and rote learning. NEP 2020- put in place systemic reforms that would help Teaching as an attractive profession of choice.

★ ITEP (Integrated Teacher Education Program)

The program aims to prepare teachers for Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary stages as per the new school structure of NEP2020 which is 5+3+3+4. It will ensure that outstanding students enter the teaching profession. A student undergoing this course will be grounded in Indian values, languages,

knowledge, ethos, and tribal tradition and also well versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy. This course caters to the need for 21st Century Skills.

The National Council for Teacher Education has released the NCTE ITEP 2022 notification and NCTE has invited online applications for the four-year integrated teacher education programs for the academic session 2023-24. ITEP is a dual-major bachelor's degree offering BA.B.Ed., BSc.B.Ed. and BCom.BEd. As per the official statement, ITEP will not only impart cutting-edge pedagogy but will also establish a foundation in early childhood care and education (ECCE), foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), inclusive education, and an understanding of India and its values, ethos, art, traditions, among others.

The four years Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) is offered after Senior Secondary (+2) and aims at preparing committed, responsible and professional teachers. In the first year of this program, teachers are prepared for the classroom through theoretical and practical training, as well as regular in-service teacher training. The program focuses on skills such as school leadership, IT skills, and English proficiency and also covers the pedagogy requirements of each subject. The opportunity for vertical mobility of teachers is also visualized through this program.

The program shall be offered in the institutions which are composite institutions as defined in Clause (b) of regulations 2 of the National Council for Teacher Education (Recognition, Norms and Procedures) Regulation, 2014, on the date of making an application for this program. The program shall permit sharing of existing physical resources in other Departments of the University or College or Composite teacher education institution.

★ NPST (National Professional Standards For Teachers)

The NEP has elaborated on the required attributes for teachers to make them good teachers to achieve the objectives of NEP and make it fruitful. The qualities and attributes such as punctuality, adherence to professional ethics, lifelong learning, passion for knowledge, and the capacity of engaging students with empathy make a teacher an ideal teacher.

However, in addition to teaching, nowadays, every teacher has multiple roles to be played in an institution where some responsibilities are administrative, including organizing various events, handling students' and employees' matters, etc. As such, a teacher may have to acquire some attributes to deal with these activities in the greater interest of an institution in general and as an ideal teacher in particular.

To inspire the best and brightest to enter the teaching profession and empower teachers and help them to do their job as effectively as possible, the National Education Policy has mandated the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in its restructured new form as a Professional Standard Setting Body (PSSB), to develop National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).

The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) shall be public statements of what constitutes teaching quality and what is required to improve the educational outcomes of students in India. These standards shall define the expectation of the role of a teacher at different levels of expertise at different stages of a career, and also define what effective teaching looks like and what competencies are required to practice as a teacher in 21st-century schools at each stage of teaching career.

The Policy defines that teachers teaching at each of the school levels should have growth opportunities within each level without a need to move to another level for career progression. The teachers' career progression should be dependent on their professional skills, quality of teaching, and overall teacher performance. The current NPST document proposes four career stages and professional standards for teachers at each stage. These four stages have been defined as follows:

- Beginner Teacher (Pragammi Shikshak)
- Proficient Teacher (Praveen Shikshak)
- Expert Teacher (Kushal Shikshak)
- Lead Teacher (Pramukh Shikshak)

Areas & Standards Of NPST

The career dimensions of the National Professional Standards for Teachers framework can be described through specific aspects of teachers' work. The framework is arranged in the following four interrelated areas called 'Standards' covering multiple domains.

1. Core Values & Ethics
2. Professional Knowledge & Understanding
3. Professional Competence & Practice
4. Professional Development & Growth

To meet the vision of NEP 2020, the standards across the four standards mentioned are defined elaborately to cover the lifelong career evolution of teaching professionals, starting from Trainee to Qualified to a Lead Teacher. In addition, standards will contain measurement criteria for regular performance

reviews for teachers at different levels, determining their promotions, salary raises, and skill development requirements.

★ NMM (National Mission for Mentoring)

Mentoring is a process for the informal/formal transmission of knowledge and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development.

National Mission for Mentoring will be operationalized by NCTE through the creation of a large pool of outstanding senior/retired professionals willing to provide mentoring to the ones seeking guidance and help. These potential mentors regardless of the age or position of the mentor and mentee will contribute towards realizing 21st century developmental goals of our nation.

Mentoring offers individuals to engage in the processes of learning under an experienced professional. The different ways of engaging in mentor-mentee interactions can enable skill and capacity building for teachers, school leaders, and professionals. These comes with an opportunity to network with experts, engage in forums to exchange learning, and best practices, and disseminate findings across various domains such as but not limited to school leadership & management, curriculum, pedagogy, educational policies, and assessments.

As mentioned in the Mentoring blue book by NCTE the main actors at play for this mentoring mission are mentors and mentees.

- Mentees are individuals from a cadre of the education sector that are seeking professional development in a field.
- Mentors are individuals from the same cadre or above, who have been seeking professional development in the same field for a while.
- Administrators (individual or unit) are responsible for continuously improving the quality and frequency of all interactions taking place between mentors and mentees. In addition, they ensure the continued development of the mentoring structure and its institutionalization by the Ecosystem.

The interactions between these actors will primarily be centered around the exchange of knowledge, skills, and mindsets, and improving the quality and value offered by these exchanges. The value of the interaction is guided by four elements - namely the Promise, Bargain, Rules, and Tools.

- Promise - A promise of guided customized professional development guaranteed for the mentee by the mentor.

- Bargain - A bargain of investment of time and efforts towards the learning exchange between mentor and mentee.
- Rules - The rules followed in the interaction like roles by actors, modes used for interaction, etc.
- Tools - The tools used during the interaction like platform, technology, progress tracking mechanisms, etc.

The ultimate goal is improvement in school education through enhanced, decentralized leadership in education. While achieving these goals is a continuous journey, there are some concrete stages of the mission that will indicate its progress. Key phases of the mission are Preparation, Capacity building, Familiarity, Strengthening, Growth, and Sustainability.

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

“Teachers must be given constant opportunities for self-improvement and to learn the latest innovations and advances in their profession.”

CPD is a planned, continuous, and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and improve their knowledge, skills, and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organization and their pupils. CPD combines different methodologies for learning, such as email, newsletters, summarizing international educational journal articles, online resources, and videos, training workshops, conferences and events, e-learning programs, best practice techniques, and ideas sharing, all focused on an individual to improve and have effective professional development.

Engaging in Continuous Professional Development ensures that both academic and practical qualifications do not become outdated or obsolete, allowing educators to continually grow their skills, regardless of occupation, age, or educational level.

CPD allows an educator to focus on what specific skills and knowledge they require over a short-term period, in order to be confident there is recognizable improvement within their proficiency and skill sets.

In India, the NCFTE (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education) which was published in 2009-10 by the NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) has described an approach for Teacher CPD. Various organizations have been tasked with implementing CPD for teachers, including Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs), University Departments of

Education, and the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), in close collaboration with SCERTs. Academic Staff Colleges (ASE) routinely conduct ‘refresher’ sessions for teachers.

The SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan) has even defined that each teacher is to receive 20 days of training every year. And while there is some activity happening in this field, it is far from satisfactory and a lot needs to be done.

★ SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships for meritorious students will be established for the purpose of attracting outstanding candidates to the 4-year, 2-year, and 1-year B.Ed. programs. NEP 2020 has provisions to ensure that outstanding students enter the teaching profession - especially from rural areas - a large number of merit-based scholarships shall be instituted across the country for studying quality 4-year integrated B.Ed. programs. In rural areas, special merit-based scholarships will be established that also include preferential employment in their local areas upon successful completion of their B.Ed. programs. Such scholarships will provide local job opportunities to local students, especially female students, so that these students serve as local-area role models and as highly qualified teachers who speak the local language.

Incentives will be provided for teachers to take up teaching jobs in rural areas, especially in areas that are currently facing an acute shortage of quality teachers. A key incentive for teaching in rural schools will be the provision of local housing near or on the school premises or increased housing allowances.

CONCLUSION

Teachers, as the most respectful person and builders of the future of our society and nation, have an important role in the education system. As the demand of the 21st century, NEP 2020 redefines the role of teachers, their position, and attributes to meet the present requirements. To overcome various problems of preparing a professional and well-qualified teacher NEP 2020 suggests reforms like different types of teachers training courses, a national mission for mentoring teachers for their career support, continuous professional development to upgrade the skills of teachers, and scholarships to motivate talented and young individuals to choose the teaching profession.

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