

Historical Development Of Teacher Education In India

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Abstract

The historical development of teacher education serves as a reflection of a nation's shifting educational, cultural, and socio-political paradigms. In the Indian context, teacher education has undergone significant transformation—from the informal, value-oriented systems of ancient times, such as the *Gurukuls*, which emphasized moral and spiritual guidance, to contemporary, institutionally structured programs that are aligned with national education policies and increasingly informed by global pedagogical standards. Teacher education in India was formalized during the colonial period under the influence of Western pedagogical models. Post-independence reforms emphasized democratization, quality enhancement, and the professionalization of teaching. Institutions such as the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) have been instrumental in standardizing curricula and ensuring quality assurance. Nonetheless, challenges persist in promoting equity, strengthening practical training, and addressing diverse classroom needs. This historical perspective highlights the need for teacher education to remain adaptive to evolving educational and societal contexts.

Key Words: Teacher education, Colonial Influence, Post-Independence Reforms, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Educational Policy, Teacher Training Institutions.

1.0 Introduction

Education is one of the most essential pillars of human development. Since the beginning of civilization, people have sought to educate themselves and future generations through both formal and informal means. It is the most powerful tool for the holistic development of individuals, as it nurtures the inherent potential within each person and helps them grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally. The Kothari Commission aptly stated, “The destiny of a nation is shaped in its classrooms,” highlighting that the quality of education determines a country's future. True quality in education lies in its ability to create self-actualized, responsible, and globally minded citizens. This is the ultimate aim of education—shaping individuals who are capable of shaping the world.

In India, teacher education has witnessed significant progress over the years. Reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, along with the integration of technology and emphasis on experiential learning, indicate a clear trajectory of improvement. However, education is a continuous journey, and there is no final destination when it comes to quality and excellence. The National Council for Teacher Education defines teacher education as a “programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre- primary to higher education level”. Any formal and informal activities and experiences that help people become qualified to perform their responsibilities as members of the teaching profession or to do so more successfully are referred to as teacher education, according to Goods Dictionary of Education. The programme for teacher preparation was known as teacher training between 1906 and 1956.

Teacher education dates back to the early 19th century, and teaching has long been regarded as a respected profession. In 1815, state-led efforts to train teachers were established, marking one of the earliest recognized acknowledgments of the importance of professional development for school educators. At the time of independence in 1947, there were 650 teacher training schools in operation, enrolling a total of 38,770 students. Across the country, only 42 secondary training colleges existed, with 3,100 teacher trainees enrolled. Since then, numerous new trends and innovations in teacher education have emerged both within India and internationally.

The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observes, “The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher.” Teacher training is essential for developing effective teaching skills, educational knowledge, and the use of modern methods. With changing global standards, teacher education must address current challenges and focus on quality. Trainees should learn various teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs and be prepared to apply the most suitable methods in the classroom.

1.1 Development of Teacher Education in India

The development of teacher education in India crossed different stages with different periods and reached its present form (Singh, 1990; Mohanty, 2003; and Sharma, 2004), which has been discussed below:

1.1.1 The Upanishadic Period or Vedic Period

The Upanishadic period (around 800–500 BCE) marked a transformation in education, moving away from ritual-based Vedic teachings to deeper philosophical and spiritual learning. Instruction was given in *gurukuls* through the *guru-shishya* system, where students resided with their teacher and learned through spoken dialogue, introspection, and meditation. Formal teacher training institutions did not exist; instead, educators were shaped through years of committed learning and personal reflection.

1.1.2 The Buddhist Period

During the Buddhist period, the monitorial system was commonly used. Teacher education became more structured with the establishment of monastic centers such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Takshashila. Monks took on dual roles as students and teachers, receiving thorough training in both intellectual pursuits and moral discipline.

1.1.3 The Medieval Period

During the medieval time, there were two types of schools—Madrassahs for Islamic education and Pathshalas for Hindu learning. Teachers didn't get any formal training. They were chosen because they knew religious texts well and were respected people. Even though schools existed, there was no proper system to train teachers. Teacher training wasn't a big focus because the rulers mainly wanted to spread their religion.

1.1.4 Modern Period

Pioneering Initiatives in Teacher Education during the Pre-Independence Era:

- **Monitorial System (1880)**

The Monitorial System, introduced in India around 1880, was an indigenous method of teacher training based on mutual instruction. In this system, a class was divided into small groups, each overseen by a capable student known as a 'monitor.' These monitors were responsible for maintaining discipline and teaching their peers, thereby gaining teaching experience themselves.

- **Teacher's Training School**

The first teacher training school, called the "Normal School," was started in 1793 at Serampore, Bengal, by Carey, Marshman, and Ward. In Bombay, the Native Education Society trained teachers to improve primary education. In Bengal, the Calcutta School Society and the Ladies' Society of Calcutta also helped train teachers. During the 19th century, the government set up several teacher training schools.

- **Wood's Despatch (1854)**

Wood's Despatch played a key role in improving teacher education in India. It strongly recommended setting up teacher training schools to better prepare educators for their roles.

- **Lord Stanley's Despatch (1859)**

He placed strong importance on teacher training. Secondary school teachers were trained at Government Normal Schools in Madras (1856) and the Central Training School in Lahore (1877). The first dedicated training college for secondary teachers was established in 1886 at Saidapet in Madras. This was followed by the creation of a Secondary Department at the Nagpur Training School in 1889. By the end of the 19th century, only six training colleges existed in India.

- **The Calcutta University Commission, popularly called Sadler Commission (1917-19)**

As a result of the Sadler Commission's influential suggestions, Mysore University took the step of founding a Faculty of Education in 1925, marking a key development in teacher training.

- **The Hartog Committee (1929)**

Although the committee mainly focused on primary education, it also made significant contributions to teacher training. One key recommendation was that teachers in rural areas should be selected from individuals familiar with rural life and communities. Influenced by the Sadler Commission's suggestions, 13 out of 18 universities in India went on to establish faculties of education. Lady Irwin College was founded in New Delhi as part of this movement. Andhra University introduced the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree in 1932, while Bombay University launched the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program in 1936.

- **The Abbott- Wood Report (1937)**

While the primary emphasis of the report was on vocational education, it also presented valuable recommendations for teacher training. It suggested a three-year training period to facilitate the simultaneous study of general education and professional pedagogy.

- **The Sargent Report (1944)**

The "Sargent Plan," proposed by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in 1944, emphasized the selection of capable boys and girls for teaching careers immediately after high school. It highlighted the necessity of practical training, periodic refresher courses, and access to research facilities. Consequently, by 1947, the country had established 41 secondary teacher training colleges.

1.1.5 Post-Independence Period Teacher Education:

Post-Independence, the changing socio-economic and political environment had a profound effect on the development of teacher education in India. A major challenge was the high number of untrained teachers, which brought attention to issues of both quality and quantity in the system. In response, various commissions were established to strengthen and expand teacher education.

- **University Education Commission (1948-49)**

The Radhakrishnan Commission criticized teacher training colleges for their absence of focus on fundamental teaching principles. To improve the system, it recommended the integration of theoretical and practical components, recruitment of trainees with real teaching experience, and the development of socially responsive and adaptable curricula. The Commission strongly supported the redesign of teacher education in India.

- **Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)**

The Secondary Education Commission, commonly referred to as the Mudaliar Commission, conducted a thorough review of teacher-related issues and existing training programs. It categorized teacher training institutions into three types: those for primary teachers, secondary teachers, and college-level educators. The Commission proposed the establishment of two distinct training tracks—one for school-leaving certificate holders and another for university graduates. It further emphasized the need for training in co-curricular activities, the introduction of refresher courses, and the encouragement of research work, particularly at the M.Ed. level. The use of progressive teaching strategies, such as the activity-based and project-based methods, was also strongly recommended.

- **Kothari Commission (1964-66)**

The Kothari Commission highlighted the necessity of a comprehensive and high-quality teacher education program to ensure the overall improvement of educational standards. It proposed several strategies to strengthen the preparation of teacher educators. In alignment with these recommendations, some universities began offering summer schools and correspondence programs aimed at supporting untrained teachers. Stressing the primacy of quality in teacher education, the Commission advised that training for primary teachers should span two years, while graduates should undergo a one-year training program. Following these guidelines, universities such as Aligarh, Kurukshetra, and Kanpur introduced M.A. courses in Education.

- **National Policy on Education (1968)**

The NPE outlined key policy measures concerning the professional rights of teachers, including their employment terms, academic freedom, and access to continuous professional development through in-service training.

- **National Commission on Teachers (1983-85)**

The Commission, led by Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, proposed reforms aimed at improving teacher education. It recommended that candidates for the teaching profession be selected based on qualities like good health, language ability, and broad general knowledge. The selection process, it suggested, should involve a combination of objective tests, group discussions, and interviews. For effective professional development, the Commission stressed the importance of integrating theoretical study, practical teaching, and skill development in teacher education programs.

- **National Policy on Education (1986)**

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was passed by the Lok Sabha on May 8, 1986. It brought major changes to teacher education in India. It introduced the National Curriculum Framework and the 10+2+3 education system across the country. The policy said that teacher education should be a continuous process, including both pre-service and in-service training, and that both are equally important. As part of the reforms, training schools were upgraded to District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), and training colleges became Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs).

- **Acharya Ramamurti Committee (1990)**

According to the committee's review of the National Policy on Education (1986), teacher training should incorporate an internship system, as it is fundamentally based on acquiring real-world classroom experience and the continuous practice needed to develop effective teaching abilities.

- **Yashpal Committee (1993)**

In its 1993 report *Learning Without Burden*, the Yashpal Committee emphasized the need to refine teacher education by introducing specialization. It suggested that teacher training programs should respond directly to school-level demands and foster learners' capacity for critical thinking and autonomous learning.

- **The National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005)**

In response to the 1993 Learning Without Burden report, NCERT reviewed the 2000 NCFSE and formed a national committee, led by Prof. Yash Pal, with 21 focus groups. The 2005 NCF emphasized that teacher education should be flexible, child-centered, and socially relevant. It called for stronger teacher recruitment and training policies, encouraged inclusive classroom practices, and stressed the need to improve teachers' language skills and critical thinking. It also recommended that in-service training be updated to suit teachers' actual needs.

- **National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2009)**

The NCFTE 2009 was shaped by the NCF 2005 and the Right to Education Act, 2009. It aimed to improve teacher education and promote teachers as professionals. It emphasized quality teaching based on subject knowledge, teaching skills, course duration, and care for students' needs.

The framework encouraged teachers to be facilitators, not just information providers, and highlighted the need for strong professional commitment. It also called for better pre-service training and major changes in in-service teacher programs. To improve quality, NCTE and NAAC took steps to support standards in teacher education.

1.2 Major Turning Points in Indian Teacher Education

- **NCERT:** Established in 1961, NCERT set up Regional Colleges of Education in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, and Mysore to offer integrated four-year programmes combining academic content with pedagogical training.
- **SCERT:** Every state established a State Council of Educational Research and Training responsible for the supervision and administration of elementary teacher training programs in the state.
- **NCTE:** The Ministry of Education established the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1973 to maintain quality in teacher education, coordinate state councils, promote research, and improve teacher standards. NCTE regulates the growth of teacher training institutions and has successfully brought most institutions under its control, reducing commercialization. It extended the duration of the B.Ed. correspondence course to two years, while the face-to-face B.Ed. program remained one year. In 2014, NCTE revised the face-to-face B.Ed. course to two years but did not adjust the duration of the distance mode course accordingly. It also made ICT literacy a mandatory part of the B.Ed. course to familiarize trainees with technology in teaching.
- **National Education Policy 2020:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Indian government on July 29, marks a significant shift in educational planning. Replacing the NEP of 1986, it emphasizes major reforms in all levels of education, including teacher education. A notable change is the restructuring of school education into the 5+3+3+4 model. According to the NEP 2020, postgraduate students will be eligible for a one-year B.Ed. course offered by multidisciplinary institutions. The policy further aims to make integrated teacher education program the standard by 2030, which could lead to a more complex teacher education framework.

1.3 Insights into Teacher Education Reforms under the National Education Policy 2020

According to the NEP 2020, the current teacher education system and work environment require significant improvement. The policy stresses the importance of empowering teachers and enhancing the attractiveness of the profession to top-performing students. It also calls for improvements in the Teacher Eligibility Test and promotes lifelong learning through mandatory continuous professional development of at least 50 hours annually. NEP 2020 calls for recognizing and promoting teachers who demonstrate exceptional performance, accompanied by salary increases. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has been tasked with formulating National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) by 2022 and will be restructured into a Professional Standards Setting Body. These standards will guide the revision of pre-service teacher education programs. The NPST is scheduled for periodic review every ten years, starting in 2030. The policy also aims to shift teacher education into multidisciplinary colleges and universities by 2030 to enhance content and pedagogical quality. Furthermore, by 2030, teacher educators will be required to hold a four-year integrated B.Ed. degree. The B.Ed. curriculum will emphasize inclusive, learner-centered, and collaborative teaching methods, as well as multi-level instruction and education for students with disabilities and special needs. Post B.Ed., certificate programmes will be available so that teacher can move to other specialized areas of teaching as per their interest. In order to restore the integrity and quality of the teacher education there would be stringent action taken against those Institutions/Colleges which do not meet with the set standard. In order to maintain uniform standard of teacher education all across the nation, there would be common entrance test conducted for admission in pre-service teacher education programme. Outstanding experienced and retired teachers could also be employed to deliver long or short professional support to the colleges or universities.

1.4 Conclusion

Teaching is a professional field that requires specialized knowledge, skills, and ethical conduct. An effective teacher must possess communication abilities, teaching skills, and leadership qualities. The quality of education largely depends on the teacher's role. Teacher education aims not only to improve teaching techniques but also to develop a positive attitude towards the profession.

After independence, teacher education in India expanded in both scope and quality. Teachers are now seen as facilitators rather than mere transmitters of knowledge. Training institutions must adopt innovative methods to enhance school education. Various commissions and bodies like UGC, NCERT, NCTE, and NAAC have played vital roles in strengthening teacher education through policies and reforms.

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