

Towards Quality Teacher Education in India

NCTE Regulatory Mechanism, Norms and Initiatives

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Abstract

Teacher education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of education at all societal levels. It equips teachers with the knowledge, skills and professional values needed to foster student learning and growth. Quality teacher education ensures that educators are not only subject matter experts but also skilled in pedagogy—the art and science of teaching. This includes understanding diverse learning needs, creating inclusive classrooms and applying modern instructional techniques to engage students. A strong foundation in teacher education also helps teachers manage classroom dynamics, address behavioural challenges and create a positive learning environment. In turn, this enhances student success, builds confidence and prepares young minds for future challenges. Teachers with intense training can inspire curiosity, encourage critical thinking and nurture creativity.

Fostering the continuous professional development of teachers is another crucial function of teacher education. As societies evolve and new technologies emerge over time, well-trained teachers can also adapt by updating their teaching strategies and remaining lifelong learners themselves. Ultimately, the importance of teacher education cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts the quality of education and by extension, the future of individuals and communities in a nation.

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TEACHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

Teacher Education in the Indian context traversed a journey of various Commissions and Committees since the post-Independence era. It began with the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948–49) which underlined the need for teacher training colleges to reorient themselves so that course curriculum theory and practice support each other. Then came the Kothari Commission (1964–66) which emphasised upon a sound programme of professional education for teachers to meet the requirements of the national system of education. After this, came the Chattopadhyay Commission (1983), which gave several suggestions in the areas of course duration, pre-entry test for admission, duration of practice teaching and course curriculum of the pre-service teacher education programmes. Then came the National Policy of Education (1986) and its Programme of Action (1992) that led to the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education, enmeshing pre-service and in-service in a single institution and paving the way for cross-learning in the path of continuous professional development of school teachers. After this, came the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 having multifaceted implications on

teacher education. Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education (2012) made crucial recommendations on improving various aspects of the teacher education environment in the country. After this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 devoted a separate chapter and underlined the need for enhancing the quality of teacher education in the country and to develop highly qualified and competent teachers.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHER EDUCATION

In the above context, the role of the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) becomes very important. The NCTE was set up as an advisory body in 1973. It was given a statutory status on 17th August, 1995 under the NCTE Act, 1993. The NCTE developed norms and standards for various teacher education programmes to bring national level uniformity and benchmarking of quality, and also to ensure planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system in the country. In order to undertake its main functions, four Regional Committees were constituted under the NCTE Act—the Northern Regional Committee (NRC), the Southern Regional Committee (SRC), the Western Regional Committee (WRC) and the Eastern Regional Committee (ERC), which were empowered under the NCTE Act to grant recognition to institutions (in their respective physical jurisdictions) to undertake programmes of teacher

education with pre-approved capacity of student-teachers.

The norms and standards of various teacher education programmes were framed centrally by the NCTE (Headquarters) through the NCTE Regulations, notified from time to time. For teacher education programmes leading to a degree (undergraduate or post-graduate programme), a teacher education institution (TEI) is affiliated to a University. In contrast, for a diploma programme, a TEI is affiliated to an examining body or a council of the State Government (like SCERT) in whose territorial limits, a TEI is situated. As on 30 September 2024, the NCTE had granted recognition to 1799 TEIs in Eastern states under ERC; 4290 TEIs in Southern states under SRC; 3103 TEIs in Western states under WRC; and 7725 TEIs in Northern states under NRC totalling to 16,917 Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) across India, mostly dominated by private institutions, to undertake 24,199 teacher education programmes with an approved intake of 17,90,658 (as on 31 March 2023) student-teachers.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THE TEACHER ELIGIBILITY TEST (TET)

One of the mandates of NCTE charter is to determine the standards of school teachers (Section 12A of the NCTE Act) in pursuance of which the NCTE has laid down the minimum qualifications for a person to be

eligible to be a teacher in a school at various levels—pre-primary, lower primary (Classes I–V), upper primary (Classes VI–VIII), secondary (Classes IX–X), and senior secondary (Classes XI–XII). These qualifications are a mix of academic qualifications (minimum marks in school/college) and professional qualifications (teacher education programme). This establishes the link between the teacher education programmes recognised by the NCTE and the minimum qualifications for being eligible to be a school teacher laid down by the NCTE. After the Right to Education (RTE) Act was enacted, the NCTE laid down a comprehensive set of minimum qualifications for a person to become a teacher vide its notification dated 23rd August, 2010, which NCTE subsequently amended from time to time.

The requirement of passing the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) to be considered eligible for appointment as a school teacher for elementary Classes (I–VIII) was an innovative and new concept introduced by the NCTE in 2010 as part of the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009. The TET guidelines were issued on 11 February 2011. The rationale for including TET as a minimum qualification for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher was threefold: “(i) to bring national standards and benchmark of teacher quality in the recruitment process; (ii) to induce teacher education institutions and students

from these institutions to improve their performance standards further; and (iii) to send a positive signal to all stakeholders that the Government laid special emphasis on teacher quality.” (para 3, TET Guidelines February, 2011). The TET was to be conducted at the national level and at the level of each State by designated professional bodies in a multiple-choice question pattern in various subjects—Child Development and Pedagogy, two Languages, Mathematics and Environmental Studies (for Classes I–V), and Mathematics and Science or Social Studies (for Classes VI–VIII). People eligible to appear in the TET had acquired the NCTE recognised professional qualifications (D.El.Ed, B.Ed., etc.) or were pursuing the teacher education courses relating to those prescribed for primary and upper primary classes. However, in States where there was extreme shortage of teachers and the existing TEIs could not meet the gap between demand and supply (of teachers), persons with certain specified academic qualifications (but not possessing the requisite professional qualification laid down by the NCTE) were also allowed to appear for the TET examination, with the stipulation that if they were recruited as a school teacher, they had to acquire the professional qualification within a stipulated time period.

Following these guidelines, the CBSE was assigned the task for conducting the TET examination for schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya,

Navodaya Vidyalaya, etc. Similarly, most States started conducting the TET at their own level, assigning examining bodies, such as State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), State School Board, etc., to conduct the State TET. Only those who cleared the TET could be considered for recruitment as school teachers. Conversely, those who did not clear the TET would not be considered, even though they may possess the professional qualifications recognised by NCTE (such as D.Ed., B.Ed., etc.). However, they could appear for the TET again. Over time, the TET has become an important quality parameter for the teacher education institutions, as passing the TET is considered a positive quality outcome of an institution. Over the last 10–12 years, several states have conducted state-level TET exams at different points of time and those who have passed the TET exam were recruited for the elementary classes of government aided schools.

TEACHER EDUCATION FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

At the international level, the teacher education scenario and its priorities have evolved and changed over time, with differing priorities attached to education (in general) and teacher education in particular affiliating across different points of time. Pre-service teacher education has evolved and changed in terms of the course content, course

duration, role of universities, the differing levels of autonomy given to the teacher education institutions. The perception of teacher education institutions' quality has changed over time, leading to regulatory challenges. Various statutory frameworks and regulatory mechanisms have been implemented to address these issues. Additionally, recommendations from different educational commissions and committees have significantly influenced the teacher education system in India.

In the Asia-Pacific region, as well as in Europe and Latin America, distinct phases of teacher education have evolved. The first wave (the 1980–1990) saw the wide expansion of the educational systems to meet the requirements of national economic developments, with an emphasis on teacher education on ICT-enabled learning. During the second wave of educational reforms in the region (the 1990), enhancing stakeholders' satisfaction became the emphasis. The third wave (2000), marking the turn of the millennium, underlined the need to enable the young generation to meet the challenges of globalisation and IT. Pre-service teacher education focused on developing teachers as facilitators in this interwoven globalised educational ecosphere.

In countries, such as Norway, Netherlands, South Africa and several Latin American countries, the beginning of the eighties witnessed

assessment studies, especially (PISA) reports, indicating insufficiency in the quality of especially the state-supported school systems. Insufficient academic qualifications of teachers and the poor quality of teacher educators became major concerns, accompanied by a growing emphasis on accountability in teacher education. This precipitated a transition from the previous autonomous nature of teacher education systems to more uniform and regulated programme formats, methodologies and curricula. The turn of the millennium saw the prevalence of a host of assessment studies, such as PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Internationally, colleges and universities have initiated the revamping of teacher education programmes, emphasising accountability and developing standards for teacher education institutions.

Countries across the world developed different paths for reforming teacher education. Multiple types of programmes, such as the 3–4 year undergraduate programmes (B.Ed, B.A, B.Sc.) leading to QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) and the 1-year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) mainly for developing teaching skills among the secondary school teachers were in practice in England. Similarly, Sweden reformed its teacher

education system in 2001 with a graduate programme composed of general education (pedagogical, relational and inter-disciplinary topics), orientation area (disciplinary and inter-disciplinary topics relevant to the age groups), and specialisation area (deepening of existing knowledge and competencies).

Finland has a 4–5 year programme for primary school, which includes a composed major in educational studies, a minor combining various school subjects, a master's thesis in education, teaching practice, and optional courses in language and communication. For secondary schools, the teacher education programme is of 5 years duration, which includes major in different school subjects, minor in one or two other subjects, a master's thesis in academic subjects, teaching practice, and optional courses in language and communication.

The USA provides the best examples of how educational policy initiatives impacted teacher education. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) sought to professionalise school teaching by developing teaching standards regarding teacher competencies and knowledge, backed by performance-based teacher assessment for certification. This majorly impacted the teacher education programmes in the mid-1980s and 1990s. The launch of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2009 in a way led to centralisation of the K-12

system of assessment and evaluation in several core subjects, also facilitated by the legislation of 2001 known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Further reforms were initiated post 2015, including the creation of a single accreditation organisation, the Council for the Accreditation of Educational Preparation (CAEP), which led to the revision and updation of existing standards.

Before 1990, primary teachers in France were trained in Ecoles Normales, or higher education institutions. In the late 1980s, primary teachers received 4 years of post-bachelor training. Secondary teachers were trained at the university. The orientation law on education of July 1989 led to creation IUFMs (university Institutes of Teacher Education) which were in-charge of initial teacher preparation, and contributed to both in-service teacher training and educational research, bringing along with uniformity in teacher preparation system—3-years degree programme at the university level, followed by 2 years at IUFM. In 2005, the government decided to integrate IUFMs into the University system, in sync with the international trend of teacher training becoming part of the university system. In September 2013, the IUFMs were cancelled and replaced by new institutions: ESPES (Ecoles Superieures du Professorat et de l'Education), which are internal schools within universities, one each

in the 32 academies. The ESPEs were to offer professional training for 2 years, after acquiring the Bachelor's degree, leading to a Master's degree MEEF, which combines academic courses with practice in schools.

Latin America has a heterogeneity of practices and programme durations of teacher education. In Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay, teacher education takes place in post-secondary teacher training institutes and at the university level, which is predominant in Costa Rica and Cuba. Responsibility of teacher education also varies across countries, with the Ministry of Education taking the responsibility in countries, such as Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, to universities administering it in Chile, to an independent agency under the Ministry of Education, as in Uruguay. Countries such as St. Kitts, Antigua, Barbuda and Mexico have national level standards to guide the initial teacher education programmes, while some other countries have developed national accreditation centres, while some other have laws mandating evaluation and accreditation. Qualifications for teacher educators also varies across countries, from a professional degree along with five years of school teaching experience, five years of study and a passing grade in that study course (as in Peru) to just a bachelor's degree with a specialisation (as in Columbia and Costa Rica).

QUALITY AND STANDARD OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of education in India by ensuring that teacher training programmes meet national standards. Its primary goal is to regulate and ensure that teachers are well-prepared to meet the evolving needs of learners.

It develops curriculum frameworks that integrate the latest pedagogical practices, ensures the quality of teacher training institutions, and establishes rigorous standards for admission, training and certification. The NCTE ensures that aspiring teachers are equipped with the essential skills and knowledge necessary for effective teaching by setting guidelines for teacher qualifications and training processes.

Through its regulations, the NCTE directly influences the improvement of education standards across India. It works towards making teacher training more inclusive, ensuring that teachers are sensitive to the diverse needs of students, including those from marginalised and differently-abled groups. Additionally, by emphasising professional development, the NCTE helps teachers stay updated with innovations in education, such as digital literacy and modern assessment techniques.

NCTE AS A REGULATORY BODY

The role of NCTE as the regulatory body of the teacher education

institutions and the teacher education programmes has always been a matter of extensive discussion, and several suggestions have been made. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (now Ministry of Education) had in September–October, 2007 conducted a review of the functioning of the Western Regional Committee of the NCTE (WRC, Bhopal). The Review Report made several findings and recommendations about the regulatory role of the Regional Committee, how the Regional Committee undertakes its functions, the procedures followed by the Regional Committee in its decision-making process, etc. The report made various recommendations for improvement, including how views of the State Government need to be incorporated, the system to be followed for selecting inspection team members, and the internal procedures to be devised, etc. The MHRD undertook a similar review of the functioning of the Northern Regional Committee (NRC, Jaipur) in June 2010, in which several issues were addressed, including how the monitoring mechanism needs to be improved.

The quality of teacher education programmes, and the need for a strong and credible monitoring mechanism remains paramount. As observed by NITI Aayog “While teacher education institutes churn out a large number of candidates with a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in education, the quality of teacher education has not

been assured. In 2015, only 13.53 per cent of candidates who appeared for the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) qualified the ‘Strategy for New India @ 75’ (2018).” On the state of teacher education, it recommended developing a transparent objective and rigorous criteria to recognise institutions by the NCTE and developing an accreditation system to close fraudulent or dysfunctional institutions.

JUSTICE VERMA COMMITTEE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

The High Powered Commission on Teacher Education (Report of August, 2012) under the Chairmanship of Justice JS Verma, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, with eminent academicians as its members was constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India at the behest of the Supreme Court (which was hearing SLP Nos. 4247 and 4248/2011) ‘to examine the entire gamut of issues which have a bearing on improving the quality of teacher education as well as improving the regulatory functions of NCTE’. The Commission made various recommendations, including higher government investment for increasing teacher preparation capacity, having pre-entry test for admission to the various teacher education programmes, placing teacher education in a higher education system in a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary environment, review of norms and standards by the NCTE

and development of a comprehensive system for accreditation of the teacher education institutions. Accordingly, NCTE has made the provision of periodic inspection of an institution at any point of time under Section 13 and 17 of NCTE Act which empower NCTE if it is found “that a recognised institution has contravened any of the provisions of this Act, or the rules, regulations orders made or issued thereunder, or any condition subject to which recognition under sub-section (3) of section 14 or permission under sub-section (3) of section 15 was granted, it may withdraw recognition of such recognised institution, for reasons to be recorded in writing...” (NCTE Act, 1993).

TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION (NEP 2020)

The NEP 2020 recommended 4-year integrated dual degree B.Ed programmes on teacher education which could be offered in multi-disciplinary Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and by 2030, becomes the minimal degree qualification for school teachers, which is essential for revitalisation of the regulatory system to ‘restore credibility, integrity, efficacy and quality of the teacher education system’ and to take ‘stringent steps against substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions’. The NEP 2020 emphasises the importance of improving the quality of teacher education. It advocates for NCTE

to ensure that teacher education programmes across the country adhere to best global practices, focusing on rigorous curricula, continuous assessments and high academic standards. The policy stresses that teacher education institutions must prepare teachers to handle diverse classroom needs, including inclusive education. The regulatory system of higher education will ensure that the distinct functions of regulation, accreditation, funding, and academic standard setting will be performed by distinct, independent and empowered bodies. These four structures will be set up as four independent verticals within one umbrella institution, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). The first vertical of HECI will be the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC). It will function as the common, single point regulator for the higher education sector including teacher education (NEP 2020 para 18.2).

In terms of the recommendations of NEP 2020, the NCTE developed a curriculum framework for the 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) in 2023. The NCTE notified the Norms and Standards of the ITEP vide its Regulation dated 22 October 2021, and 64 HEIs across the country were given approval for commencing the ITEP from the academic session 2023–24 in respect of 79 ITEP courses and for the subsequent academic session.

RECENT INITIATIVES BY NCTE

1. The NCTE has recently modified the inspection formats and made it online (as against physical inspection) to enhance transparency, probity, accountability and ease of work. The latest inspection format has incorporated some additional features, such as geo-tagging, geo-referencing, etc., to make it near zero human interface for an effective and efficient system that is more transparent, cost-effective, accountable and fool-proof compared to the earlier format. Further, the selection of Visiting Team (VT) members is done through an online random VT selection mechanism, and its report is required to be submitted within 24 hours of completion of the inspection on a portal developed by NCTE for the purpose.
2. In September 2019, the NCTE introduced the concept of Performance Appraisal Report (PAR) which was required to be mandatorily submitted annually by every recognised TEI to the NCTE on a portal of NCTE. This new requirement was introduced from the perspective of quality enhancement of the TEIs and monitoring by NCTE the performance of the TEIs. In order to make PAR fool-proof, several features, such as geo-tagging, geo-referencing, alerts in case of duplicate faculty members, images of various mandatory infrastructure and instructional facilities, adoption of fully online procedure with no human interface, etc., were incorporated in the PAR portal. Further, a mobile application named 'PAR-NCTE' has also been developed, which is linked to the PAR portal, enabling fetching the precise coordinates of the location of a TEI.
3. The NCTE developed new curricula for teacher education programmes, such as D.El.Ed., B.Ed., and M.Ed. These updated programmes emphasise skill-based and learner-centered education. The curricula promote inclusive education, digital literacy, critical thinking and competency-based learning, aiming to make teachers more adaptable to the needs of the 21st century classrooms.
4. Another initiative is the launch of the National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) by NCTE, a pivotal initiative aimed at institutionalising a structured mentorship framework within India's teacher education system. Aligned with the NEP 2020, the NMM seeks to enhance the professional competencies of educators by providing systematic, high-quality mentorship at various stages of their careers. The mission emphasises creating a nationwide pool of highly qualified

mentors—comprising retired faculty, experienced educators, and domain experts—who will offer teachers tailored, ongoing professional guidance. This initiative supports educators' Continuous Professional Development (CPD), helping them navigate pedagogical challenges, integrate new teaching technologies and promote inclusive education practices. The NMM also targets improving teacher retention by fostering a support network, particularly for early-career teachers, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and efficacy.

5. Synergising with National and State Bodies (NCERT/SCERT/SIE/Universities) NCTE sets guidelines for teacher training institutions, while state bodies assist in enforcing these norms, granting approvals and monitoring compliance. The NEP 2020 places the teacher at the centre of the fundamental reforms proposed in the education system. Towards this end, it recommended the development of a National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). The NCTE has developed a guiding document in 2023 on NPST to serve as a guide that defines the expectation of the role of a teacher at different levels of expertise at various stages of a career. These standards provide a common understanding of what is valued in the profession

and expectations from teachers nationwide. The standards also define effective teaching and the competencies required to practise as a teacher in the 21st century schools at each stage of the teaching career.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The future of teacher education in India will be guided by the philosophy and recommendations contained in NEP 2020, leading in the long term to an environment where majority of the teacher education programmes will be further placed in multi-disciplinary higher education institutions, moving away from the present ecosystem, dominated by standalone teacher education institutions. This will be further enriched by long duration teacher education programmes, mostly the 4-year ITEP recommended by the NEP 2020. A beginning has already been made, with NCTE granting recognition to several universities and multi-disciplinary institutions to offer these programmes. Further, with the change in the course curriculum as envisioned in the curriculum framework of ITEP, one can expect the student-teachers coming out of the new system to be much better prepared to take up the challenges of the school system and meet the new and emerging demands of education in our country. The regulatory environment of teacher education, spearheaded by NCTE would also undergo a radical change,

becoming more dynamic, quality conscious, along with a robust system of accreditation of the teacher education institutions, especially where expectations from teachers would be brought in sync with NPST.

Moreover, the NCTE will be instrumental in addressing the shortage of qualified teachers, ensuring that institutions offering teacher education meet certain accreditation standards, promoting educational research. By doing so,

it will not only enhance the quality of teacher preparation but will also contribute to improve the overall education system in India.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the NCTE is critical for standardising and improving teacher education in India. It ensures that the nation's educators are prepared to foster the holistic development of students, thereby elevating the quality of education across the country.

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