



A Critical Review of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) as a Tool for Modernizing Teacher Training in India

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Abstract

This paper critically reviews the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) initiated as an outcome of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, as a vehicle for reforming teacher education. ITEP is an integrated four-year programme that replaces the previously fragmented models of teacher education and aims to professionalize the standards of a teacher, align teaching pedagogy to meet current needs while removing systematic deficiencies in teacher education, training and practice. The review questions the logic, framework and expected achievements of ITEP in a global landscape of teacher education. It finds that while this programme has significant potential to improve teacher quality by incorporating subject matter content, pedagogy and practice-based learning from the first day of professional education, there are challenges that arise in terms of institutional readiness, curriculum saturation, variability of capacity, issue of scale of ITEP and

so forth. In conclusion, while it is acknowledged that the initiation of ITEP is a promising and progressive reform in teacher education and practice, its eventual success will depend on its implementation, available financing, iterative improvement and evaluation.

Keywords: Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP); National Education Policy 2020; Teacher Education Reform; Teacher Training; Pedagogy; India; Higher Education

Literature Review

1. Teacher Education in India: Historical Context

In the extended history, including British colonial rule and independence, teacher education in India had existed as a fragmentation model with individuals being educated as undergraduate arts, science, or commerce graduates and then an additional one-year or two-year B.Ed. As Batra (2014) and Govinda (2017) pointed out, the B.Ed. system treats practicing as a subarea of theory (the course) without a professional identity or providing a context in which content and pedagogy could be connected. The Justice Verma Commission (2012) established serious doubts about teacher education institutions, including concerns about "degree shops" in private colleges.

2. NEP 2020 and Integrated Teacher Education Programme

The National Education Policy of 2020 heralds the transformation of teacher education with the introduction of a four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) which will be the minimum degree for all school teachers by 2030 (Government of India, 2020). ITEP will integrate subject matter, pedagogy, and field experiences in one professional degree similar to integrated models in Finland and Singapore. As Tilak (2020) contends, the ITEP reform accounts for fragmentation, increased rigor, and aligns teacher educations with the rigorous preparation of teachers internationally.

3. Global Approaches to Integrated Teacher Education

Global Landscape of Integrated Teacher Education Participants across the world are utilizing integrated programs to prepare teachers and teacher educators. In Finland, for example, all teacher education is planned as a five year master's degree organized as an integrated program of knowledge about research, pedagogy, and professional practice (Sahlberg, 2015). In contrast, Singapore frames their teacher training in an extremely selective integrated model with a focus on mentoring and practicum (Tan & Ng, 2007). Cross-national studies (Darling-Hammond, 2017) hold that integrated programs result in teachers that are more identity-professionalized and demonstrate more pedagogical knowledge than sequential programs as well as stronger classroom proficiencies.

4. Anticipated Benefits of ITEP

- Professionalization of Teaching: To afford a strong integrated base from the beginning of teacher education through professional development.
- Early Pedagogy: Child psychology, pedagogy, and practicum for four years simultaneously.

- Competency Curriculum: To take the National Education Policy's intended focus on learning outcomes rather than programmed learning outcomes seriously.
- Uniform Quality: The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) will seek to standardize all programs in as much as curriculum will be offered in units with minimal variation between institutions.

5. Issues and Critiques

Scholars raise issues surrounding the scale of ITEP, the challenges of implementation, and the time required. Azam (2021) questions whether higher education institutions, especially public universities, will be able to effect change under ITEP, which includes reorganizing curriculum, staff development, and changing infrastructure. Mehrotra (2021) highlights the potential for a curriculum traffic jam since ITEP requires disciplinary study combined with considerable pedagogical study. Another issue is that by establishing ITEP as the minimum exit requirement, late entrants and career changers are travelling on a more difficult road (Singh, 2022).

6. Research Gaps

While policy establishes the overall contours of ITEP, there is limited empirical evidence on pilot ITEP programs. There is no empirical research in the form of ITEP pilot research investigating how ITEP is changing teacher quality and learning achievement over the long term, which confirms the need for continual and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To analyse in detail the rationale for adopting ITEP in India.
2. To work through the design of ITEP as a new model of teacher education.
3. To compare ITEP with international approaches to integrated teacher preparation.
4. To identify challenges and gaps around the implementation of ITEP.
5. To indicate how ITEP can be further strengthened as a source of teacher education reform.

Research Methodology

Using qualitative critical review, this study compared primary and secondary sources:

- Primary sources: NEP 2020 document; NCTE guidelines; UGC document reports.
- Secondary sources: Peer-reviewed journals; critiques of policies; international literature on teacher education.
- Analytical Approach: Thematic analysis of rationale, design, global comparison, planned benefits and challenges.
- Limitations: We were unable to carry out longitudinal empirical data, because ITEP has only just begun to be implemented.

Results

The results section discusses the major findings of the review of ITEP without making interpretations.

1. Program structure and design

ITEP is an integrated program that includes subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, and school-based field studies, throughout a four-year program instead of the sequential B.Ed. after graduation program.

ITEP is competency-based and focuses on child psychology, inclusive pedagogy, assessment, and current pedagogy.

National guidelines provide for 50% school-based and practical content to enable students learn through practice

2. Alignment with global forms of teacher education

ITEP aligns with integrated programs internationally in Finland, Singapore, and Kenya, and functions on a theoretical-practical balance.

ITEP's intent is to graduate teachers with a professional identity and prepared for the classroom upon graduation.

3. Strengths

Provides professional coherence and continuity throughout the teacher preparatory experience.

Early exposure to classroom-based contexts and possible practice approaches.

Integrated development of professional teachers who understands content knowledge, pedagogy, and soft skills.

4. Challenges identified

Institutional readiness: Universities continue to struggle with their capacity in terms of trained staff, technological and other infrastructure, and ICT support to run programs.

Curriculum overload: There is a concern related to the whole exercise of integrating discipline studies with perhaps long pedagogues may burden students.

Variability of Implementation at the State-Level: Implementation capacities are incredibly heterogeneous, risking discrepancies in quality across India.

Access Dearth: ITEP can exclude career changers or late entrants because it has four-year integrated condition.

Discussion

The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) is a monumental step in legitimising teaching as a profession by combining disciplinary content, pedagogy and practicum experience to develop teachers to have better capabilities to address the demands of the classroom, particularly with respect to early literacy and numeracy skills. In comparison to the conventional B.Ed. programs, ITEP helps improve teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes as illustrated by some international models such as Finland and Singapore (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sahlberg, 2015). However, part of the downside to ITEP is the requirement for institutional readiness of universities, but especially in rural or impoverished areas, they could struggle to deliver NEP expectations, or work to curriculum, to provide mentoring and academic support. NEP 2020's goal to transform teaching to a profession lends itself to ITEP, but there are really important equity issues to consider, for instance negatively impacting mid-career or growing joiners, and increasing regional disparities due to differences in the implementation of the program even if it is not intentional on the part of the state. International experience suggests that teacher education programs only work with combined teacher training institutions when they are also accompanied by select recruitment, good faculty and sufficient funding. It highlights that India's ITEP has the potential to provide the same benefits, provided there are substantive

resource commitment; quality development monitoring; and continuous, professional learning opportunities. Going forward, the ability of ITEP to create change must be developed through systemic support through the development of the faculty and development and up-skilling, infrastructure development and ICT integration, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and flexible entry points for inclusivity to leverage this impact on teacher quality and student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) is a groundbreaking transformation of India's teacher education system, and resonates fittingly with the vision of NEP 2020 to professionalize teaching and sophisticated training. By blending disciplinary knowledge, pedagogy, and extensive field-based practicum, ITEP has the potential to produce effective, classroom-ready teachers who possess a sound professional identity. However, its effectiveness is dependent on the correction of systemic challenges such as institutional readiness, educator capacity, curriculum structuring, equitable access, and fiscal and operational inconsistencies between state-level implementation. Where ITEP is effectively implemented, it has the potential to fundamentally transform teacher training and preparation in India, bring about substantive change in learning outcomes, and help to develop a more enduring, future-friendly education system. Ongoing monitoring of performance, proper funding and support for policy laundering are critical to realizing ITEP's transformational potential.

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