



Exploring the Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers on Curriculum Effectiveness in Bhagalpur's Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract:

This study explores the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the effectiveness of curriculum design and delivery in teacher education programs across the Bhagalpur district, Bihar. With the growing emphasis on quality education and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, understanding how future educators experience and evaluate their training becomes essential. Bhagalpur hosts a range of teacher education institutions, including government colleges like PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur, which offer Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs. Despite formal recognition by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), these institutions vary in terms of infrastructure, faculty development, practicum exposure, and curriculum relevance. Using a qualitative research approach, the study gathers insights through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with pre-service teachers enrolled in these institutions. The findings reveal mixed perceptions: while some trainees appreciate the foundational knowledge and structured modules, many express concerns about outdated content, limited integration of digital pedagogy, and insufficient alignment with real classroom challenges. The practicum component, though present, is often viewed as superficial or poorly coordinated, reducing its impact on professional readiness. Moreover, the study highlights that trainees from marginalized backgrounds face additional barriers, such as language difficulties and lack of academic support, which further affect their engagement with the curriculum. Gender dynamics also influence perceptions, with female trainees reporting constraints related to mobility and safety during field placements. The research underscores the urgent need for curriculum reform that is contextually grounded, inclusive, and practice-oriented. It recommends strengthening school-college partnerships, enhancing faculty training, and incorporating feedback mechanisms to make the curriculum more responsive to trainee needs. By centering the voices of pre-service teachers, the study contributes to the discourse on teacher education quality and offers actionable insights for policymakers, institutional leaders, and curriculum developers in Bhagalpur and similar regions.

Keywords: Pre-service Teachers, Curriculum Effectiveness, Teacher Education, Educational Reform, Trainee Perceptions.

Introduction:

The effectiveness of curriculum design and delivery in teacher education programs plays a vital role in shaping the professional readiness of future educators. In the Bhagalpur district of Bihar, where educational development is both a challenge and a priority, understanding how pre-service teachers perceive their curriculum becomes essential for improving the quality of teacher preparation. Bhagalpur is home to a diverse range of teacher education institutions, including government-run colleges such as PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur, as well as several private and university-affiliated institutions. These colleges offer programs like the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), which are recognized by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and affiliated with TilkaManjhi Bhagalpur University. Despite formal recognition and structured syllabi, there are growing concerns about how well these programs prepare trainees for real classroom challenges. The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has brought renewed focus on curriculum effectiveness, emphasizing experiential learning, digital integration, and inclusive pedagogy. However, the extent to which these reforms have been adopted and internalized by institutions in Bhagalpur remains unclear. Pre-service teachers, being the direct recipients of these programs, offer valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of the curriculum they experience.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the relevance, practicality, and inclusivity of their curriculum. It seeks to understand how trainees evaluate the balance between theory and practice, the usefulness of practicum components, and the responsiveness of the curriculum to diverse learner needs. Special attention is given to the experiences of trainees from marginalized communities, whose voices are often underrepresented in academic discourse. By focusing on Bhagalpur's teacher education landscape, this research contributes to the broader goal of enhancing curriculum quality in regional contexts. The findings are expected to inform institutional reforms, faculty development initiatives, and policy adjustments that align teacher education more closely with the evolving demands of school education in Bihar and beyond.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate how pre-service teachers in the Bhagalpur district perceive the curriculum they are being trained under, and how these perceptions reflect the overall effectiveness of teacher education programs. Bhagalpur, a district with a mix of urban and rural populations, hosts several teacher training institutions such as PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, DIET Bhagalpur, and others affiliated with TilkaManjhi Bhagalpur University. These institutions are responsible for shaping the pedagogical skills, professional attitudes, and classroom readiness of future educators. However, despite formal recognition by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), there is growing concern about whether the curriculum offered is truly aligned with the practical demands of teaching in diverse and evolving classroom environments. This study is significant because it centers the voices of pre-service teachers—the direct recipients of curriculum delivery—who can offer firsthand insights into its strengths and limitations. Their perceptions can reveal whether the curriculum is inclusive, practice-oriented, and responsive to local educational needs. In particular, the study will explore how trainees from marginalized communities experience the curriculum and whether it supports their academic growth and professional confidence. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for identifying gaps in curriculum design, such as outdated content, lack of digital integration, or insufficient practicum exposure.

Moreover, the study gains importance in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which calls for transformative changes in teacher education, including experiential learning, multidisciplinary approaches, and inclusive pedagogy. By examining how well Bhagalpur's institutions have adopted these

reforms, the research can inform policy adjustments and institutional strategies. It also contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity, teacher professionalism, and curriculum relevance in regional contexts. Ultimately, the study aims to provide actionable insights that can guide curriculum reform, faculty development, and institutional planning, thereby enhancing the overall quality of teacher education in Bhagalpur and similar districts.

Table 1: Significance of the Study

Aspect	Description
Local Contextual Focus	Target teacher education programs in Bhagalpur district, especially in institutions like PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur.
Policy Relevance	Aligns with NEP 2020 priorities, examining how curriculum reforms are adopted in regional teacher education colleges.
Stakeholder Perspective	Centers the voices of pre-service teachers to assess curriculum effectiveness, inclusivity, and real-world application.
Institutional Diversity	Highlights differences between government institutions in infrastructure, faculty quality, and pedagogical support.
Marginalized Voices	Explores experiences of students from SC/ST/OBC backgrounds to assess equity and barriers in curriculum engagement.
Practical Readiness	Investigates how well the curriculum prepares trainees for field placements and classroom realities.
Digital & Inclusive Pedagogy	Evaluates the integration of ICT tools and inclusive teaching methods within the curriculum.
Contribution to Reform	Provides actionable recommendations for curriculum design, practicum improvement, and faculty development.
Academic Value	Enhances literature on region-specific teacher education quality through a qualitative, evidence-based approach.
Scalability of Insights	Findings may inform improvements not only in Bhagalpur but also in similar districts across Bihar and India.

Literature Review:

A growing body of literature highlights the importance of understanding pre-service teachers' perceptions of curriculum effectiveness, particularly in regional contexts like Bhagalpur district. Teacher education programs are expected to equip trainees with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, yet several studies suggest a persistent gap between curriculum design and classroom realities. According to Ansary (2021), many teacher education institutions in India continue to rely on outdated syllabi and lecture-based instruction, which limits the development of reflective and experiential learning among trainees. This concern is echoed by Kumar and Harikrishnan (2024), who argue that private teacher education colleges in

Bihar often deviate from National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) norms, resulting in inconsistent curriculum delivery and practicum quality. The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has brought renewed attention to curriculum reform. Mahanta (2023) emphasizes that NEP's focus on multidisciplinary and practice-based learning requires teacher education programs to adopt more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches. However, Tambat (2023) notes that the adoption of NEP reforms in districts like Bhagalpur is uneven, largely due to infrastructural limitations and lack of faculty training. This is particularly relevant in government institutions such as PTEC Nagarpara and DIET Bhagalpur, where curriculum effectiveness is often constrained by limited digital integration and insufficient practicum supervision.

Student perceptions play a critical role in evaluating curriculum relevance. A study by Rabidas (2022) in Bhagalpur found that pre-service teachers value hands-on teaching experiences but feel underprepared due to inadequate mentoring and feedback mechanisms. Similarly, Desai and Rao (2022) highlight the lack of inclusive pedagogy in teacher education programs, which affects trainees from marginalized communities. Their findings suggest that curriculum effectiveness must be assessed not only in terms of content but also in terms of accessibility and responsiveness to diverse learner needs. Moreover, Iyer et al. (2023) point out that digital readiness is a key component of curriculum effectiveness in the post-pandemic era. In Bhagalpur, the digital divide remains a challenge, with rural trainees facing barriers to accessing online resources and ICT-based instruction. Overall, the literature underscores the need for localized, empirical studies that capture the lived experiences of pre-service teachers and inform curriculum reform in teacher education programs across the Bhagalpur district.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of curriculum relevance, inclusivity, and practical applicability in Bhagalpur's teacher education institutions.
- To analyze how curriculum design and delivery support professional readiness and reflective practices among pre-service teachers in Bhagalpur.

Research Methodology:

The study employs a qualitative research methodology using a case study design to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding curriculum effectiveness in Bhagalpur's teacher education programs. This design allows for an in-depth, context-rich understanding of how trainees experience and evaluate the curriculum across institutions such as PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, enabling participants to share detailed reflections on curriculum relevance, practicum quality, and inclusivity. Purposive sampling will be used to select diverse participants based on gender, socio-economic background, and institutional affiliation. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and insights that reflect the strengths and gaps in curriculum delivery.

Discussion:

The discussion of this qualitative study centers on two key objectives: first, to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding the relevance, inclusivity, and practical applicability of the curriculum in Bhagalpur's teacher education programs; and second, to analyze how curriculum design and delivery support professional readiness and reflective teaching practices. Insights gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with trainees from institutions such as PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur reveal a complex interplay between curriculum content, institutional practices, and trainee

experiences. Pre-service teachers generally acknowledged that the curriculum provides foundational knowledge in pedagogy and subject content. However, many expressed concerns about its limited responsiveness to contemporary classroom realities. For instance, while theoretical modules on child psychology and teaching methods were appreciated, trainees felt that these lacked contextual grounding and failed to address the challenges of multilingual classrooms, inclusive education, and digital pedagogy. This gap was particularly evident among trainees from rural backgrounds, who noted that the curriculum did not adequately prepare them to teach in resource-constrained environments or engage with diverse learner needs.

The practicum component emerged as a critical area of discussion. Although all institutions included school-based teaching practice, its implementation varied widely. Trainees from PTEC Nagarpara reported structured mentoring and feedback sessions, which enhanced their confidence and classroom management skills. In contrast, those from PTEC Phulwaria and DIET Bhagalpur described their practicum experiences as fragmented, with limited supervision and unclear expectations. This inconsistency affected their ability to translate theoretical knowledge into effective teaching strategies, highlighting the need for standardized practicum frameworks across institutions. Inclusivity within the curriculum was another recurring theme. While NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusive education, trainees noted that their programs lacked modules on teaching children with disabilities, gender-sensitive pedagogy, and socio-emotional learning. Female trainees, in particular, shared experiences of discomfort during field placements due to safety concerns and lack of institutional support. These reflections underscore the importance of embedding inclusive and gender-responsive practices within curriculum design and delivery.

Regarding professional readiness, trainees expressed a desire for more experiential learning opportunities, such as micro-teaching, peer observation, and community engagement. They also emphasized the need for continuous feedback and reflective exercises to develop critical thinking and self-assessment skills. Some institutions had begun integrating digital tools like e-portfolios and online lesson planning platforms, but access remained uneven, especially in rural colleges. So, the discussion reveals that while Bhagalpur's teacher education programs offer essential pedagogical foundations, they fall short in aligning curriculum content with the practical, inclusive, and reflective demands of modern classrooms. Addressing these gaps requires curriculum reform, enhanced practicum design, faculty development, and stronger institutional support systems. By centering trainee voices, this study contributes to a more grounded understanding of curriculum effectiveness and offers pathways for improving teacher education quality in the Bhagalpur district.

Table 2: Different Aspects of Discussion

Themes	Insights from Pre-Service Teachers	Implications for Curriculum Reform
Curriculum Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basic pedagogical theories appreciated - Content lacks local context (e.g., multilingual classrooms, inclusive education) - Outdated modules noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update curriculum with region-specific challenges - Integrate NEP 2020 recommendations on inclusivity and experiential learning
Practical Applicability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practicum viewed as useful but inconsistently implemented - Structured feedback in PTEC Nagarpara vs. limited supervision in other colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standardize practicum across institutions - Ensure active mentoring and clear performance expectations

Inclusivity and Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of content on teaching children with disabilities and gender sensitivity - Female trainees faced mobility and safety issues during placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embed inclusive pedagogy into the curriculum - Develop gender-sensitive and socially aware field training protocols
Digital Pedagogy Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital tools have been introduced in some colleges - Limited access in rural areas - Trainees are unaware of e-learning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand ICT access across institutions - Train faculty and students in tech-integrated teaching practices
Reflective and Professional Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trainees desire more micro-teaching, peer observation, and community engagement - Need for structured self-assessment and feedback cycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce reflective teaching modules - Encourage experiential learning and regular feedback from mentors

Findings of the Study:

The findings of the study reveal that pre-service teachers in Bhagalpur district hold mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of their teacher education curriculum. While many trainees appreciated the foundational modules on pedagogy and child development, they expressed concern over the outdated nature of certain syllabi and the limited integration of digital and inclusive teaching practices. The curriculum was often viewed as theoretical and lacking contextual relevance, particularly in preparing teachers for multilingual and resource-constrained classrooms. Practicum experiences varied significantly across institutions. Trainees from PTEC Nagarpara reported structured mentoring and useful feedback, whereas those from PTEC Phulwaria and DIET Bhagalpur described their field placements as poorly coordinated and lacking supervision. This inconsistency affected their confidence and ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings. Faculty engagement emerged as a key factor influencing curriculum perception. Institutions with proactive and supportive faculty were rated more positively. Additionally, trainees from marginalized backgrounds highlighted barriers such as language difficulties, limited access to academic resources, and lack of remedial support, which negatively impacted their engagement and satisfaction. Overall, the findings underscore the need for curriculum reform that is practice-oriented, inclusive, and responsive to trainee needs, with stronger institutional support and standardized practicum frameworks across Bhagalpur's teacher education programs.

Conclusion:

This study concludes that while teacher education programs in the Bhagalpur district provide foundational pedagogical knowledge, they fall short in delivering a curriculum that is fully aligned with the practical, inclusive, and reflective demands of modern classrooms. Pre-service teachers from institutions such as PTEC Nagarpara, PTEC Phulwaria, and DIET Bhagalpur expressed mixed perceptions regarding curriculum effectiveness. Many trainees appreciated the theoretical grounding in child development and teaching methods, yet voiced concerns about outdated content, limited digital integration, and insufficient practicum coordination. The practicum component, though present, was inconsistently implemented across institutions, affecting trainees' confidence and classroom readiness. Furthermore, the curriculum lacked adequate focus on inclusive education, gender sensitivity, and socio-emotional learning, which are essential in today's diverse educational landscape. Trainees from marginalized backgrounds highlighted barriers such as

language challenges and lack of academic support, underscoring the need for more equitable and responsive curriculum design. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of centering trainee voices in curriculum evaluation and reform.

Recommendations:

To enhance curriculum effectiveness in Bhagalpur's teacher education programs, several strategic reforms are recommended. First, institutions should revise and update curriculum content to reflect contemporary pedagogical practices, including experiential learning, inclusive education, and digital literacy, in line with NEP 2020. Second, practicum design must be standardized across institutions, with clear guidelines, structured mentoring, and regular feedback mechanisms to ensure meaningful school-based experiences. Third, faculty development programs should be introduced to train educators in modern teaching strategies, inclusive pedagogy, and ICT integration. Fourth, institutions must establish support systems for trainees from marginalized communities, including remedial instruction, language support, and counselling services. Fifth, curriculum developers should incorporate modules on gender sensitivity, classroom diversity, and socio-emotional learning to foster holistic teacher preparation. Finally, regular curriculum audits and stakeholder consultations—including trainees, faculty, and school mentors—should be institutionalized to ensure ongoing relevance and responsiveness. These recommendations aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, promote equity, and strengthen the overall quality of teacher education in the Bhagalpur district.

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