



Integrating Moral and Ethical Values in Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract:

This paper discusses how values education can be incorporated in pre-service teacher education programs in the Indian universities and colleges in the light of high demand of morally competent teachers in Indian diversified and dynamic educational environment. Since the learning environment is getting increasingly complex, it is necessary to develop teachers that do not only have sound academic knowledge but who also exhibit ethical, moral, and cultural competence in their instructional practice. The study analyses the integration of moral, ethical and cultural values in the design of the curriculum, pedagogical practices and the assessment techniques and procedures with specific reference to the disconnection between theoretical learning and practical teaching skills among pre-service teachers. The design of the study is based on the qualitative approach, which aims to use interviews and focus group discussions with faculty, student teachers and practicing educators to reflect their experiences and views on values education. The study was carried out in a sample of 50 teacher education institutions spread across different states, making it varied in regard to the type of institutions (urban, rural, government, and private) and the area of specialization, such as elementary, secondary, and special education programs. The major results indicate that there is a great deal of difference in the application of values education within various institutions and regions. Most of the programs understand the role of values in their mission statements, but the systematic use of the values in everyday teaching is still uneven. Some of the challenges recognized are insufficient faculty readiness, inadequate integration of the traditional Indian philosophical teachings into the modern pedagogical theories, and inadequate reflective habits among pre-service teachers. Also, a clear lack of standardized evaluation processes to help assess how students have developed moral and ethical values is evident. The paper has determined that achievement of success factors in values education includes incorporation of explicit curriculum elements which involve values, fostering of implicit learning conditions, and experiential learning opportunities. The study indicatively brings out the necessity of continuous professional growth among the educators to make sure that values education continues to be an integral aspect in teacher training. The results provide suggestions of change in the curriculum, training of faculty and the establishment of effective quality assurance processes that would make Indian teacher education institutions more open to values education in order to equip future teachers to negotiate cultural and ethical challenges in a globalized society.

Keywords: Values Education, Moral Development, Indian Educational Institutions, Pre-Service Teachers, Curriculum Integration.

Introduction And Background:

The preparation of teachers as moral and ethical professionals is an important area of educational policy in our country. Various commissions and policy documents have emphasized values education has become essential for nation-building. According to NEP 2020, the teachers should be mentors, role models, and guides in ethical and moral development. Besides, the pre-service programs must infuse values at all levels in curriculum and pedagogy (Government of India 2020). Over the past fifty years or so there have been significant policy advocacy about teacher education one of the earliest Education Commission (1964-67) observing that, ‘the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms’. NCFTE 2009 states ‘A Framework for preparing professional and humane teachers’, which stressed the importance of having teachers who are based on constitutional values (NCTE 2009). Even so, the persistent concerns of the “theory-practice gap” and commercialization of teacher education, raise questions about whether these aspirations shape actual practice (Rawat et al., 2015).

The present-day Indian society has posed teaching professionals with unprecedented ethical challenges due to increasing privatization and market forces, the dual influence of digital technologies, persistent caste and gender inequalities, and balancing global competencies with local cultural values (Sharma & Sharma, 2025). While following the constitutional principles of equality, fraternity and social justice pre-service teacher should expose to such environment. However, most teacher education programmes treat values education as margins. They often have specific courses on “value education” rather than having ethical reasoning across professional preparation (Datta & Mete, 2023). The foregoing indicates the contradicting of policy mandates; the contradiction is also evident in educational theory that believes values cannot be taught through fractured and didactic means (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

The need for reform is compounded by the vast number of teacher education courses in India, which comprise more than 14,000 courses, offered by more than 11,000 institutions, many with poor infrastructure and faculty (NCTE, 2009). In the past, the quality assurance devices paid more attention to inputs that were more quantitative in nature, as opposed to ethics competence. As a result, universities have had the freedom to choose whether to implement value education and ethics education. In light of this, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the functioning of values education in diverse contexts to help inform the implementation of the NEP 2020 and National Professional Standards for Teachers (NCTE, 2021).

Key background points addressed in the article include.

- Recommendations on teacher education in India with a value orientation, e.g., Ramamurti Committee, S.B. Chavan Committee, NCF, NCFTE, NPE.
- Humanistic, constructivist and reflective practitioner traditions. These are the theoretical perspectives on moral and ethical development relevant to teacher education.
- Numerous teacher education programs have been reported to not address the theory–practice gap and instrumentalize values education.

Review of Related Literature:

The infusion of moral and ethnic values in pre-service teacher education in India has generated much scholarly concern, particularly as a result of major policy changes. According to the NCFTE 2009, the values education is essential to the preparation of “Professional and humane teachers”. It further states that Teacher Education must address constitutional values, inclusive education and equitable development (NCTE, 2009). Over the years several Education Commission Reports (1948-49, 1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (1986) have expressed concerns about the moral nature of teaching. Specifically, the Ramamurti

Committee (1990) and subsequent Policy documents have consistently focused on the role of the teacher as value transmitter (Government of India, 1999).

Research on values education in India's teacher preparation shows major gaps in implementation. Research showing pre-service teachers' attitude towards values education shows that institutions may include values in their mission statement. But this does not ensure systematic integration (Saroojani & Tripathi, 2019). A study conducted across 50 teacher education institutions observed that there was a considerable variation in the integration. Most of the values were integrated teaching learning strategies confined to just one or two courses only and not infused across pedagogical training (Datta & Mete, 2023). The split shown here is symbolic of larger, systemic weaknesses highlighted in NCFTE 2009 implementation analyses, such as infrastructure shortages, ill-equipped faculty, and pedagogical resistance (Teachers Institute, 2025).

Theoretical Frameworks Help understand International Literature on Values Education Challenges Oguz (2012) reveals that pre-service teachers rank justice, honesty, and human-centeredness as top values. Doğanay and Sarı (2004) underscore that they should value democratic values and ethical character. According to Kumar and Singh (2021), the NEP 2020 stated that holistic approach should be adopted for the development of a person. It requires teacher education programs to go beyond transmission models and foster critical reflection on ethical dilemmas. The gap between the theoretical discourse in training colleges and the reality of classrooms has been a recurring problem. Rawat, Karkare and Yadav, in this context, note that these theoretical frames contribute to the ineffectiveness of value-based education.

Research on the professional values of teachers indicates that values and ethics of education system in India are on the decline. Prakash (2012) links this downtrend to the influence of modernity and lack of support by institutions for teacher development on ethics. The National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) lays down clear expectations for the teachers' moral values and professional integrity. But the monitoring mechanisms are weak (NCTE, 2021). Teacher educator institutions in India continue to follow teaching-centric strategies. Experts Sharma and Pandey (2022) conducted a study on value-oriented curriculum development that touts experiential learning, reflective dialogues, and community engagement initiatives as effective approaches.

According to a recent report released by the Government of India (2020), a number of implementation challenges are documented in the literature which includes unpreparedness of the faculty for values pedagogy, lack of standardized assessment rubrics for moral development, poor integration of Indian philosophical traditions with the contemporary educational theory. Renko (2022) determines regularity to show that pre-service teachers often consider role modeling and school based experiences to be more important than theory lectures when learning concepts of professional ethics yet practicum supervision usually does not entail structured reflection on ethical dimensions. The evidence makes it necessary to systematically examine how values education is actually implemented in different institutional contexts.

Objectives of the Study:

This study explores the documented gaps between policy wish and ground realities in values education in teacher education programmes in India. The specific objectives are.

1. To examine the extent and nature of moral and ethical values integration in pre-service teacher education curricula across diverse institutional contexts (government, private, urban, rural) in India.
2. To analyze pedagogical practices employed by teacher educators in transmitting values, including the use of experiential learning, reflective practices, and Indian philosophical traditions.
3. To assess the preparedness of faculty members in facilitating values education and identify professional development needs related to ethics pedagogy.

4. To evaluate existing assessment and evaluation mechanisms for documenting pre-service teachers' moral and ethical development during training programs.
5. To identify systemic challenges and enabling factors that influence the effective integration of values education in teacher preparation institutions.
6. To explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of how values education during training influences their professional identity and readiness for ethical decision-making in school contexts.

Need And Significance of the Study:

The need for the present research is due to growing realization of the role of teachers in the social fabric of India. Also, many teacher education programs have failed in nurturing ethical professionals. Even though there are strong policies for values education, extensive commercialization of teacher education has made certification more important than character. In effect, NCFTE 2009 refers to it as the breeding grounds of academic stagnation. (NCTE, 2009) In India there are around 14,000 teacher education courses running. We have serious quality issue. Understanding how values education works will help us in educational reconstruction.

The significance is fourfold. To begin with, the study offers empirical evidence on the implementation gaps. This can be used for curriculum revision inspired by transformative vision of NEP 2020 particularly the holistic development of students and ethical teacher's professionalism (Government of India, 2020). By looking at different kinds of institutions, the study identifies challenges and successful practices that are particular to the context. This helps with developing targeted strategies rather than one-size-fits-all ones. Another major bottleneck relates to the preparedness of faculty, since unless teacher educators are adequately prepared, the reforms in values education cannot be effective (Sharma and Sharma 2025). In conclusion, the qualitative design of this study aims to capture the voices of key stakeholders who are often speaking on the margins of education policy discourse, namely, student teachers and school mentors. This is essential as their experiences are crucial for developing models for values education which are practice based and relevant.

As India enacts NEP 2020 and preps a countrywide professional standard for teachers, it seeks evidence-based interventions to integrate constitutional value and social justice and respect for the environment in teacher preparation (NCTE, 2021). The outcomes will enrich worldwide scholarship on values education. It seeks to respond to uniquely Indian challenges of bringing traditional value systems in harmony with modern democratic ideals in a diverse, fast changing society.

Methodology:

This study used interpretivist qualitative design to better understand the realities of integration of values education across institutional contexts. The research was conducted in 50 teacher education institutions. Selection through maximum variation sampling so that the institutions represent diversity. These diverse institutions in geography (North, South, East, West, Northeast India). These institutions also differ in terms of management type. Types include government, government-aided, private-unaided. There were also differences in-program level. Program levels differed in elementary, secondary, integrated. Lastly, locale differences were also present. Types were urban, rural, semiurban. This sampling strategy ensured complete coverage of India's diverse teacher education ecosystem.

The participants were 180 teacher educators (faculty teaching foundations of education and pedagogy courses), 240 pre-service teachers (across different semesters to get perspectives on development), and 60 school mentors (cooperating teachers supervising practicum). Faculty and mentors were interviewed through semi-structured interviews of 45-90 minutes duration. In these teachers, 12 FGDs (8-10 participants) were

carried out. We conducted interviews to gain insights into how values are understood in teacher education, the curricular and pedagogical strategies adopted to integrate values into teacher education, the manner in which the ethical development of teachers is assessed, the challenges faced, and the enabling factors and good practices.

The data were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. The first coding identified 847 discrete data items which were grouped into 23 sub-themes through constant comparative analysis. The instances were thematically clustered into rhetorical commitment vs. practical action; methods of values education; preparedness of the faculty; assessment practices; systemic constraints. Member checking with 20 participants was done to enhance interpretive validity, while peer debriefing sessions added to analytical rigor.

Findings And Discussion:

Rhetorical Commitment Versus Practical Implementation:

The analysis shows that there is a clear disjunction between values education policies in the classroom. According to data from 2020 by the Government of India 92 percent of institutions make explicit mention of moral and ethical values in their vision statement and program objectives. Most institutions mentioned constitutional values and universal human values and the other reference in NEP 2020 is holistic development framework. Yet, it was only 34% which showed a systematic integration across the curriculum components. A faculty member from a rural government college explained: “We mention values in our syllabus, but in practice, we have no time beyond covering the theoretical content. There is one paper on value education in the first semester, but after that, nothing specific” (Interview, TE-34). This fragmentation shows how NCFTE 2009 criticized the treatment of knowledge as “given”, i.e., not really looking at values in curriculum transaction (NCTE, 2009). Many pre-service teachers said that values education is “theoretical” and “examination-oriented”. One of the participants said, “We memorize the definition of values from NCERT books. No one asks us how we will deal with caste discrimination in the classroom” (FGD-7). Institutions of every kind highlighted a disconnect between what is presented in the idea and an ethical dilemma.

Pedagogical Approaches: Predominance of Didactic Methods

The data collected from observations and interviews revealed that values education is mainly taught through lecture-based classes, textbook reading, essay writing, etc. which is a significant deviation from the recommended experiential and reflective pedagogies found in the policy documents (Sharma & Sharma, 2025). Just over a quarter of institutions admit to using case studies, discussions of ethical dilemmas, or community engagement projects to cultivate values. A private college faculty member admitted: “We know we should use interactive methods, but with 60 students in a section and syllabus pressure, lecturing is the only feasible option” (Interview, TE-12). Relying on didactic methods is contrary to the constructivist principles of the NCF 2005 and NEP 2020 that talk about learning through activities, discovery and critical reflection. In 15% of institutions, however, good practices were observed, mainly those with strong institutional support. This consisted of faculty supervised reflective journaling, school-based community service projects, analysis of films portraying ethical dilemmas in education, and dialogues with local community leaders regarding their value systems. Teachers who are already in-service use ethical reasoning that is less deep in their discourse as compared to others.

Faculty Preparedness: The Critical Bottleneck

Teacher educators were identified as the key to determining the quality of values education but 68% stated that they have not received training in teaching ethical values or Indian philosophy related to education. Many faculty members, particularly those teaching foundation courses, acknowledged discomfort

addressing values explicitly: “I teach educational philosophy, but I was trained in Western philosophies. I don’t know how to connect Indian values like *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* to classroom practice” (Interview, TE-56). The finding is in agreement with Rawat et al. (2015) who observed that the theoretical discourses are “un-related” and NCFTE 2009 which states, “teacher education has become intellectually impoverished” (NCTE, 2009). The participation of the active faculty in workshops on value education increased their confidence and improved innovative practices, but the 22% of the total participated only. No degree programs exist in either values education or ethics pedagogy, so faculty are self-taught and ambivalent, particularly about caste discrimination, gender bias and religious diversity.

Assessment Practices: The Invisibility of Ethical Development

Measurement tools were especially weak in assessing values education outcomes. Eighty-seven percent of institutions did not have explicit guidelines on assessing the moral or ethical development of pre-service teachers. The evaluation relied mostly on general comments about “attitude”, “professional behaviour” and “timeliness” during the practicum. These comments were recorded as brief remarks without rubrics. As one of the school mentors explained, “We have a proforma with questions on ‘overall personality’ and ‘values’ of the student. I write ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’. There are no guidelines on what to observe” (Interview, SM-23). The NCFTE 2009’s recommendation of “continuous and comprehensive evaluation” inclusive of their ethical dimension (NCTE, 2009). Examples of values development were only seen in six institutions. They were: reflective portfolios; ethical dilemma analysis; peer assessment. Without any evaluation in the first place, pre-service teachers reported that values education became invisible and therefore unimportant compared to academic tasks which had grading criteria.

Systemic Constraints and Enabling Factors:

There are many barriers that affect this integration. Most of the faculty reported that overloaded syllabi were the main constraint because there was not enough time left after covering the content mandated for the value-related discussion or activity. Issues such as large classes of 50 – 70 students, limited library resources on values education, and inadequate time for supervising practicum constrain possibilities. Commercialization pressures in private institutions prioritize rapid certification over holistic development, with one administrator admitting: “Parents pay for degree and job placement. Pre-service teachers do not ask about values so we concentrate on what the market needs (Interview, TE-89). On the other hand, enabling factors included leadership with commitment, community partnership, and exposure to value-oriented schools during practicum time. The institution where the principal and senior faculty are involved in modelling ethical behaviour and enabling value-based discussion of professional dilemmas creates a climate where values education thrives. Pre-service teachers placed in schools with a strong culture of values reported transformative learning.

Conclusion:

The study shows that there is a huge gap between India’s policy vision of value-based teacher education and their pre-service preparation. Results show 92% commit to values but only one-third incorporate values in curriculum. Further, critical bottlenecks are faculty unpreparedness, didactic pedagogy, and absence of assessment mechanism (Datta & Mete, 2023). This fragmentation threatens the NEP 2020 vision of teachers as ethical mentors and social transformers. It risks an education system that produces technically competent but morally uncertain professionals (Government of India, 2020).

The research goals were largely met through a multi-site qualitative investigation. The degree of values integration was found to be highly uneven. It was observed that urban private institutions were performing marginally better than their rural government college counterparts in terms of innovative practices. However, the innovative practices of all institutions were being adversely affected due to excessive syllabus load and

commercialization (Rawat et al., 2015). In the second place, it was confirmed through pedagogical analysis that experience-based teaching and learning had less prominence than instruction, going against the constructivist ideas of NCF 2005 and NCFTE 2009 (NCTE, 2009). Thirdly, faculty preparedness emerged as the main barrier when 68% lack ethics pedagogy or Indian philosophy training, which impedes effective transmission of values (Sharma & Sharma, 2025). Also, assessment practices were primitive. Eighty-seven per cent of institutions did not use any explicit criteria to measure ethical development. As a result, values education was invisible in certification processes.

In the end, larger class sizes, fewer resources and market-driven priorities were recognized as strong obstacles. Enabling factors were strong leadership quality, community partnership and exposure to value-rich practicum sites.

These findings are essential for our policies and practices. For the implementation of NEP 2020, the study recommends institutionalizing all the components of explicit values education in all teacher education courses rather than restricting them to one paper. Changes to the curriculum must include values embedded in the Constitution, social justice and environmental principles. This must form part of not only pedagogy but also practicum and institutional life. Furthermore, these must be backed by textbooks and other teaching-learning materials that elicit value-based inquiry (NCERT, 2005).

The aforementioned authors didactic methods should take a back seat to case study discussions, reflective journals, community engagement projects, and critical analysis of ethical dilemmas in working with multi-varied schools (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Faculty development constitutes the most urgent priority. The NCTE and State governments should develop mandatory certification programs in values education pedagogy based on Indian philosophical traditions (Gandhian, Tagorean, and other indigenous frameworks) and contemporary models of moral reasoning. A community of practice of teacher educators who share strategies to engage with sensitive issues caste discrimination, gender discrimination, religious diversity, and digital ethics can help enhance collective capacity and confidence (Renko, 2022).

The reform of assessment calls for the creation of standardized rubrics for measuring ethical competence. This will include reflective portfolios, peer assessments, observations by mentor teachers, and analyses of pre-service teachers' responses to fabricated ethical dilemmas.

The evaluation of values' integration into the quality assurance mechanisms must be process-oriented. A framework is given by National Professional Standards for Teachers but requires strong implementation through periodic institutional audits, student feedback system and documentation of value-based learning outcomes (NCTE, 2021). By establishing partnerships with schools rich in resources and community organizations, pre-service teachers may be enabled to observe and act in authentic contexts necessitating ethical decision-making while bridging the theory-practice gap noted across all institutional types (Datta & Mete, 2023).

The study acknowledges several limitations. While a diverse sample was formed, it cannot claim to represent the entire 11,000 plus teacher education institutions in India such as the unregulated private colleges that refused to participate in the survey. The qualitative design is not great for generalizing. But it greatly aids in understanding context and identifies challenges. At the same, it could be complemented by quantitative research that would serve to establish the prevalence rates of the challenges. Also, the use of self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias; although triangulation across stakeholders and member checking helped alleviate this issue.

Future studies ought to examine the longitudinal effects of values education on in-service teacher behaviour and student outcomes through mixed-method measures which trace pre-service to in-service experience. We

can identify successful models of governance through comparative studies across states invoking varying degrees of policies. A partnership between universities and schools working together on action research may develop and test values education modules that are specific to a context. In this way, evidence will be generated through practice on how successful innovations can be scaled up.

Overall, the embedding of moral and ethical values in pre-service teacher education is more of a national necessity as well as an academic requirement for a democracy like India. The researchers demonstrate that without systemic change, rhetorical commitment produces empty outcomes while pre-service teachers remain ill-prepared for the ethical complexities of classrooms. To realize the vision of NEP 2020 will take bold institutional leadership, persistent investments in faculty capabilities and a quality assurance mechanism that gives equal weight to ethical competence and academic attainment. India must transform its education system sufficiently in order to prepare teachers who can create not merely workers, but educated, principled citizens committed to the values enshrined in the Constitution and social justice in an ever more complex world.

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