



## NEP 2020: Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Integrated Teacher Education Programs

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### Abstract:

*The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), introduced by the Government of India on July 29, 2020, represents a pivotal shift in the nation's education landscape. Replacing the National Policy on Education 1986 after 34 years, NEP 2020 envisions a thorough transformation of the education sector. Spearheaded by former ISRO Chairman Dr. K Kasturirangan, the policy document is structured into four key parts: Part I (school education), Part II (higher education), Part III (other key areas of focus), and Part IV (implementation strategies). NEP 2020 introduces a range of significant reforms, with a particular emphasis on enhancing teacher education. Among these, the introduction of the Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP) stands out. ITEP is a uniquely designed four-year program that integrates a bachelor's degree with teacher education, offering degrees such as B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed. This holistic approach aims to prepare future educators comprehensively. Offered by interdisciplinary institutions, ITEP sets a new minimum qualification standard for aspiring educators, ensuring a well-rounded foundation for those who wish to contribute to the field of education. This paper examines the challenges and opportunities associated with the Integrated Teacher Education Program as outlined in NEP 2020.*

**Keywords:** *Challenges and Opportunities of ITEP, NEP 2020.*

### Introduction:

The National Education Policy 2020, succeeding the 1986 National Policy on Education, marks a pivotal educational framework for the twenty-first century. Built on the principles of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability, it aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This policy signifies a transformative shift, envisioning a more inclusive, flexible, and interdisciplinary Indian education system. It emphasizes holistic development, global citizenship, and the nurturing of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By addressing the varied needs of today's world and fostering individual potential, NEP 2020 is set to redefine education in India, ensuring that quality learning is accessible to all.

Education is a dynamic journey shaped by various perspectives, with qualified educators responsible for creating meaningful learning experiences. Teacher education is crucial in developing these educators, focusing on values, skills, and practical teaching abilities. However, the rapid expansion of teacher education institutions in India over the past few years has often compromised quality, leading to a decline in teacher preparation and commitment. To address these challenges, NEP 2020 introduces significant reforms to revitalize teacher education.

A key recommendation of NEP 2020 in teacher education is the introduction of the 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). This program marks a transformative shift in India's teacher education landscape, aiming to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation. By seamlessly blending pedagogy, subject expertise, and hands-on teaching experience, the ITEP offers a holistic and integrated approach to teacher education. This program will be delivered in multidisciplinary institutions, where dedicated education departments will collaborate with various academic disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, and science, to provide a holistic training experience. By 2030, all standalone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) must transit into multidisciplinary entities, ensuring only high-quality, integrated programs are allowed. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) will establish National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) to guide these programs, while partnerships with schools will offer practical teaching opportunities. Additionally, HEIs will recruit faculty from diverse backgrounds and focus on interdisciplinary education, with entry into teacher programs based on assessments by the National Testing Agency. Accredited institutions may also offer shorter B.Ed. programs for those with specialized degrees.

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has launched Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) in 57 Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) from the academic session 2023-24 throughout the country. This is a flagship programme of NCTE under NEP 2020. The programme is being offered in pilot mode initially in reputed Central/State Government Universities/Institutions. ITEP will be available for all students who choose teaching as a profession after Secondary, by choice. This integrated course will benefit students since they will save one year by finishing the course in 4 years rather than the customary 5 years required by the present B.Ed. plan. Admission for the same will be carried out by the National Testing Agency (NTA) through the National Common Entrance Test (NCET).

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To discuss the main features of 4year integrated teacher education programme.
2. To identify the challenges in implementing the 4year integrated teacher education programme as recommended by NEP 2020.

### **Methodology:**

This qualitative study adopts documentary analysis as its primary research methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data stems from the NEP 2020 policy document. Secondary data sources encompass a broad range of materials, including research papers, journal articles, edited books, newspaper articles, and information from reputable websites. The gathered data is systematically analyzed and critically reviewed to draw meaningful conclusions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

### **Objective-Wise Analysis:**

#### **Analysis of Objective 1:**

**The main features of 4 years integrated teacher education programme (ITEP):** The four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) aims to develop passionate and well-trained teachers equipped to create developmentally appropriate learning experiences. It ensures prospective teachers receive top-quality education in content, pedagogy, values, and practice. The key design elements of ITEP are:

- i) **Broad Structure of ITEP:** The ITEP is a four-year, dual-major bachelor's program, combining Education with another discipline. It aims to develop social engagement, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and ethical reasoning skills to prepare competent teachers.

ii) **Stage Specific Specialisation:** The reconfigured curricular and pedagogical structure of school education under NEP 2020 follows a 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 design, making it essential for the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) to produce skilled teachers specialized in different stages: Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary. Each specialization equips teachers to design developmentally appropriate teaching-learning practices for their designated stage.

- **Foundational Stage (Ages 3-8, Grades 1-2):** Focuses on play-based, multi-level learning, using concrete materials and children’s literature to develop literacy, numeracy, and positive learning habits.
- **Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5):** Builds on foundational skills with interactive classroom learning across languages, mathematics, arts, and physical education, emphasizing experiential learning.
- **Middle Stage (Grades 6-8):** Introduces specialized subjects, encouraging students to engage with abstract concepts and explore relationships between different subjects.
- **Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12):** Offers multidisciplinary study with greater depth, critical thinking, and flexibility in subject choices. Grades 9-10 ensure breadth of study across eight curricular areas, while Grades 11-12 provide options for specialized study in languages, arts, physical education, vocational education, social sciences, humanities, and sciences.

The curriculum structure allows for subject choices at varying levels, enabling students to align their education with their interests and future aspirations, whether in the workforce or higher education.

iii) **Multiple Entry and Exit, and Re-entry Options:** The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) offers flexible entry and exit options with certifications at various stages:

- **After 1 Year (2 Semesters):** A Certificate is awarded with credits earned.
- **After 2 Years (4 Semesters):** A Diploma is awarded with credits earned.
- **After 3 Years (6 Semesters):** A Bachelor’s Degree in the chosen Major is awarded upon earning at least 120 credits, with a minimum of 48 credits in the Major.
- **After 4 Years (8 Semesters):** A dual-major bachelor’s degree (e.g., B.A.B.Ed., B.Sc.B.Ed., B.Com.B.Ed.) is awarded with at least 160 credits, including 80 credits in education and 48 credits in a related discipline.

iv) **Nomenclature of Degree Awarded:** Given that the ITEP is a Dual-Major program with a focus on School Stage specialization, it will result in the award of one of the following degrees, based on the selected discipline and specific stage specialization.

B.A.B.Ed. (Foundational Stage with Major in ...)	B.A.B.Ed. (Preparatory Stage with Major in....)	B.A.B.Ed. (Middle Stage with Major in ....)	B.A.B.Ed. (Secondary Stage with Major in ....)
B.Sc.B.Ed. (Foundational Stage with Major in ...)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Preparatory Stage with Major in....)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Middle Stage with Major in ....)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Secondary Stage with Major in ....)
B.Com.B.Ed (Foundational Stage with Major in ...)	B.Com.B.Ed (Preparatory Stage with Major in....)	B.Com.B.Ed (Middle Stage with Major in ....)	B.Com.B.Ed (Secondary Stage with Major in ....)

- v) **Eligibility/Entry Requirements:** A certificate earned after successfully completing Grade 12 (or an equivalent level of education such as Pre-University, Intermediate, etc.) with at least 50% aggregate marks or an equivalent grade from a recognized Board/University.
- vi) **Vertical Mobility Opportunities:** Student-teachers who complete the four-year ITEP will be eligible to pursue a master's degree in both education and the major discipline they selected during the program.
- vii) **Institutions Eligible to Offer ITEP:** The ITEP will be offered by a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in a multidisciplinary setting. This allows the HEI to provide expertise in both the chosen major and minor disciplines, as well as all education-related courses, including foundations of education, pedagogy, student assessment, curriculum development, school leadership, and various educational perspectives.
- viii) **Network of Schools for Practice:** Institutions offering the ITEP must partner with a network of schools to ensure a strong connection between theory and practice. This collaboration provides student-teachers with school experience through observation and teaching practice, encourages joint action research, and supports the continuous professional development of both HEI faculty and school teachers.
- ix) **Semester System:** The Stage-Specific ITEP will follow a semester system, with two semesters per academic year. Each semester will include 15-16 weeks of teaching, totalling at least 96 working days, excluding exams. A minimum of 40 hours of instructional time is required each week.
- x) **Credit-hours for Courses of Study:** Classroom-based courses will require a minimum of 15 hours of instructional time per credit per semester. Practicum activities, such as seminars, internships, lab work, and community engagement, will need at least 30 hours of student involvement per credit.
- xi) **Choice of Stage Specific Specialisation and Major/Minor Areas of Study:** Student-teachers must select their Stage specialization, along with their major and minor areas of study, when applying to the ITEP.

### Analysis of Objective 2:

Based on the recommendations outlined in the NEP 2020 for integrated teacher education programme, several potential challenges or problems of implementation can be identified:

#### 1. Transition to Multidisciplinary Institutions

- **Infrastructure and Resources:** Converting stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) into multidisciplinary institutions requires substantial investment in infrastructure, faculty, and resources. Many existing TEIs may lack the financial and physical capacity to make this transition smoothly, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- **Faculty and Expertise:** Multidisciplinary education demands faculty with expertise across various disciplines. Recruiting and retaining qualified educators in subjects like psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and arts, alongside traditional education faculty, poses a significant challenge.

#### 2. Conversion of Stand-alone TEIs

- **Geographic and Regional Disparities:** In many regions, particularly in rural or economically backward areas, stand-alone TEIs are the primary sources of teacher education. Converting these

institutions into multidisciplinary entities by 2030 may be unrealistic due to resource constraints, potentially leading to the closure of institutions and reducing access to teacher education.

- **Regulatory and Accreditation Challenges:** The conversion process involves meeting regulatory standards for multidisciplinary institutions, which may be a complex and time-consuming process. Ensuring these institutions meet the required standards for multidisciplinary education and receive appropriate accreditation could delay implementation.

### 3. Quality Assurance Mechanisms

- **Developing Clear Criteria:** Establishing transparent and comprehensive criteria for what constitutes a “well-established” and “high-quality” program is essential but challenging.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Institutions meeting initial standards must be monitored for ongoing compliance and encouraged towards continuous improvement, requiring sustained oversight efforts.

### 4. Standardized Testing and Assessment:

- Implementing subject-specific and aptitude assessments for entry into pre-service teacher preparation programs, while accounting for the linguistic and cultural diversity across India, presents significant logistical challenges. Ensuring equitable access to standardized testing, especially in remote or marginalized areas, demands meticulous planning, adequate infrastructure, and sufficient resources.

### 5. Challenges of Stage-Specific Specialization in ITEP Implementation:

- Stage-specific specialization under the ITEP presents significant challenges. Students who complete ITEP for a specific stage may find their career options limited, as they would not be eligible to teach at other stages of education. Additionally, expecting a 12th-grade student to make an informed decision about which stage to specialize in could be overwhelming, given their limited exposure to teaching and education at that point. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity regarding whether the existing 1-year and 2-year B.Ed. courses will be stage-specific. If they remain general, students may prefer these shorter programs, as they offer greater flexibility in teaching across various stages of school education, potentially undermining the appeal of ITEP.

### 6. Challenges of Implementing Multiple Entry, Exit, and Re-entry Options:

- **Consistency in Learning Outcomes:** Ensuring that students who exit and re-enter at different stages maintain consistent learning outcomes may be difficult. Varying levels of knowledge and experience could lead to gaps in teacher preparation and educational standards.
- **Certification Credibility:** The value and recognition of intermediate certifications (such as a one-year certificate or a two-year diploma) could face challenges in terms of credibility. Employers may prefer candidates with complete four-year degrees, limiting the job prospects for those exiting early.
- **Logistical and Administrative Complexity:** Managing multiple entry, exit, and re-entry points within the program would require a well-coordinated administrative system. Tracking credits, maintaining records, and ensuring students meet all requirements could create significant operational burdens for institutions.
- **Resource Allocation:** Institutions offering the ITEP may face challenges in allocating resources, such as faculty and infrastructure, to support students at various stages of entry and exit. This could stretch the capacity of institutions, particularly in remote or under-resourced areas.

- **Financial Implications for Students:** For students who may re-enter after an extended break, the financial burden of resuming education or continuing to accumulate credits might pose challenges, especially for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Quality Assurance:** Ensuring that students who exit the program early receive a sufficiently robust education, particularly in pedagogy, may be challenging. Early exits might compromise the depth of training required to become effective teachers.

### 7. Clarification of Eligibility Criteria for Assistant Professor in Educational Studies:

- In the NCTE (Norms and Standards for ITEP Program), Regulations, 2014, Gazette Notification No. 509, dated 22.10.2021 published on 26.10.2021, The educational qualifications for the post of Assistant Professor in Educational Studies for ITEP specify that candidates must hold a Postgraduate degree in Education (M.Ed) with a minimum of 55% marks, along with NET/SLET qualification. Additionally, a Postgraduate degree in Philosophy, Psychology, or Sociology is considered desirable. However, there may be some confusion among government officials regarding whether this requirement pertains solely to an M.Ed degree, an M.A. in Education, an M.A. in Education combined with a B.Ed, or an M.A. in Education along with an M.Ed.

### 8. Implementation Timeline:

- **Achieving the 2030 Goals:** The NEP 2020 sets ambitious goals to be achieved by 2030, including the widespread implementation of the four-year integrated B.Ed. program and the transformation of all standalone TEIs into multidisciplinary institutions. However, the timeline for achieving these goals is tight, given the scale of reforms required. Institutions may face difficulties in meeting the deadlines due to the magnitude of changes, potential resistance to reform, and the time needed to build capacity at various levels.

### Conclusion:

The National Education Policy 2020's introduction of the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) represents a significant reform aimed at transforming teacher education in India. With its holistic approach to developing well-rounded educators through a blend of pedagogy, subject expertise, and practical experience, ITEP addresses longstanding concerns about the quality of teacher preparation. However, implementing this ambitious program presents several challenges. To overcome these challenges, clear guidelines, sufficient resources, and robust support systems must be established. The success of ITEP will depend on the effective collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and regulatory bodies like the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). If executed successfully, ITEP has the potential to revolutionize teacher education, ensuring that the future educators of India are not only well-trained but also capable of addressing the evolving needs of the education system.

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