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TRANSLATING POLICY INTO PRACTICE: TEACHER
PREPAREDNESS AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS
UNDER NEP 2020

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Keywords

NEP 2020; teacher preparedness; structural reforms; teacher education; UDISE+; NISHTHA; school education; India

Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 represents an important development in Indian school education, incorporating a range of interconnected policy elements, such as curriculum, teacher education and professional development, assessment, digital technology and school governance. This paper's primary research question is, how do teacher readiness and structural reforms advance classroom enactment of NEP 2020's policy vision? This study employs qualitative policy analysis, drawing on secondary data, especially the UDISE+ 2024-25, National Curriculum Framework, NCTE's Integrated Teacher Education Programme and National Professional Standards for Teachers, and Ministry of Education records on NISHTHA, DIKSHA, Samagra Shiksha, NIPUN Bharat and PARAKH. The analysis contends that NEP 2020 is not a curriculum reform alone, but also a capacity-building initiative in which teachers are cast as primary change agents. UDISE+ data show that India has



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	<p>surpassed the one crore teacher milestone in 2024-25 and that the pupil-teacher ratio improved at all school levels, providing a better quantitative foundation for educational reforms. However, the transformation from policy to practice is more complex than simply increasing the number of teachers. It involves practice-oriented pre-service teacher education, context-responsive and practice-oriented in-service teacher education, mentoring, professional development through technology, and supportive school leaders. The author argues that NEP 2020 can meaningfully transform classroom practices only through integrated systems of structural reforms, rather than piecemeal reforms. Teacher readiness and structural reforms emphasize the need for focused, coordinated, and evidence-based policy implementation.</p>
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1. Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 is one of India's most transformative education reforms since the last national policy framework. It was brought in after the Kothari Commission in 1966 and the National Policy in 1986. The restructuring of the education system into the 5+3+3+4 system, the recognition of foundational literacy and numeracy, competency-based learning, and multilingual and experiential learning, as well as reforms to teachers' education and professional development, indicate the policy's ambition. In policy lexicon, these reforms are a connected architecture. In classroom practice, they depend, among other things, on the preparedness of teachers, the strength of the institutions that support teachers and the policy's contextual realities. Teacher preparedness is crucial to the success of NEP 2020, since the policy provides a new role for teachers, changing them from being transmitters of the syllabus to learning designers and mentors, assessors and facilitators of multilingual learning, as well as reflective practitioners. Teachers are expected to use activity-based learning, integrate local and teach-learning resources, support and cater to the needs of an inclusive classroom, identify learning gaps, and use ICT and align their teaching to competency-based assessment. Although these expectations are educationally justified, they necessitate the provision of constant professional support.

The policy-to-practice issue is quite significant in India, due to the scale and variance of the school system. India experiences school management, differing capacities of the states, linguistic nuances, rural-urban disparities, and differing levels of access to infrastructure. A reform pathway must not be construed in a monolithic sense, particular to the context. The challenge is to design a national framework that offers enough flexibility to the local context for teachers to adapt the reform to their pupils and their communities. This study investigates the preparedness of teachers and the structural reforms of NEP 2020, weaving together both



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policy and recent official data. The focus of the study is beyond what NEP 2020 offers to the institutional conditions.

2. Objectives and Methodology

This paper aims to serve four tasks. First, it delineates NEP 2020's major teacher-related provisions. Second, it studies structural reforms targeted at teachers and aimed at improving classroom practices. Third, it examines contemporary national statistics concerning the availability of teachers, the presence of female teachers, and the pupil-teacher ratio. Fourth, it offers feasible suggestions for improving the provisions. These aims are conceptualized under the argument that teachers are not just the recipients of reforms. Rather, they are the primary institutional link between educational policies and student learning. The research employs a qualitative policy-analysis technique, supplemented by descriptive data of a secondary nature. The study analyzes policy papers and official reports to gain an understanding of the reform's blueprint. The primary sources of the study include NEP 2020, the 2022 National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage, the 2023 National Curriculum Framework for School Education, the NCTE documents on ITEP and NPST, the Samagra Shiksha guidelines, NIPUN Bharat, parliamentary replies on DIKSHA and teacher training, and the UDISE+ 2024-25. Quantitative data points are presented to indicate trends on teacher availability and the state of classrooms. Thus, the approach is largely interpretive and not statistical. Data are analyzed to determine their impact on barriers to the implementation of NEP 2020.

This paper primarily focuses on K-12 education and teacher readiness in India. It addresses higher education only as it pertains to teacher education, for example, relocating teacher education to multi-disciplinary institutes of higher education. This paper is timed to be recent and uses sources published in the last seven years. UDISE+ 2024-25 figures, official data published by the Ministry of Education, are the most recent official data and provide a national picture of trends in teacher strength and pupil teacher ratios.

3. NEP 2020 and the Reform of Teacher Preparedness

NEP 2020 positions teachers at the nucleus of educational change. Recognizing that teachers need not only deep subject knowledge, but also pedagogical skills, values, and professional ethics, and mentoring practice, the policy makes suggestions regarding the restructuring of teacher education. Teacher education, the policy suggests, should be housed in multidisciplinary colleges and universities, and by the year 2030, the minimum qualification for school teachers should be a four-year integrated B.Ed. (Ministry of Education, 2020). This change is significant, as it attempts to shift teacher preparation from a narrow conceptualization of certification to a broad notion of professionalism. A teacher, therefore, prepared through a multidisciplinary route, is expected to have knowledge about child



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development, subject content, pedagogy, assessment, inclusion, technology, Indian knowledge systems, and the sociocultural context. The NCTE curriculum framework views the Integrated Teacher Education Programme as a dual-major program. One major is education, while the other is a disciplinary or interdisciplinary subject (National Council for Teacher Education, 2023a). This program design supports the view of NEP that pedagogy should not be taught as a separate technical skill to be acquired after earning a degree. The preparation of prospective teachers should, therefore, focus on an integration of subject content and pedagogy at all levels.

Teacher readiness outlined in NEP 2020 includes the need for instructor self-improvement. The NEP cites that teachers are required to log 50 hours of self-improvement training annually to include offerings such as formative assessment, foundational literacy and numeracy, and competency and assessment-based learning. Methods such as storytelling, arts-integration, and sports-integration, along with experiential learning are examples listed by the Ministry of Education (2020). This policy recognizes that traditional teacher education programs are unable to make teachers prepare for every future shift in the school curriculum, therefore, additional training to provide teachers with the resources, new outcomes, learning materials, and classroom strategies to meet the needs of all learners and ready to face the shifts in teaching. The National Professional Standards for Teachers create additional structures for teacher readiness. They outline the professional standards that will define teacher appraisal, recognition, education, career development, and training (National Council for Teacher Education, 2023b). The goal is to shift the process for teacher appraisal from seniority to demonstrated professional growth. While such a shift can strengthen accountability, it should be approached with care. When standards are intended to create a compliance framework, they are demoralizing to teaching staff. Used in conjunction with supportive structures, they can be a positive factor in the professional growth of staff.

4. Structural Reforms for Translating Policy into Practice

NEP 2020 elaborates on teachers' readiness concerning structural reforms. The first involves the segmentation of school education into foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary school years. This segmentation isn't simply changing the naming convention. Each level prescribes its own unique pedagogical requirements. For example, learning at the foundational level must be play and activity based, multilingual, and developmentally appropriate. For the preparatory level, learning must still be activity based, and there must be room for discovery. The middle level stresses the deepening of understanding and critical thinking of subjects, while the secondary level offers learning that is flexible and multidisciplinary. The National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (2022) and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2023) embody the segmentation



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of the school education years. The foundational framework focuses on the age group of 3-8 years, and emphasizes learning through play, conversations, stories, art, movement, and the child's context. The school education framework focuses on flexible curricular and pedagogical processes centered on competencies for all the school education years (NCERT, 2022, 2023). These reforms of frameworks influence classroom practice only when teachers comprehend the reasoning and logic of the reforms and are provided with support to implement them. Pedagogy will remain unchanged by newly created learning materials and textbooks if no support to learn the tools is provided to teachers.

The next reform integrates teacher support into various programs such as Samagra Shiksha. Samagra Shiksha sees school education as a continuous process encompassing all sixteen years. It covers teacher education, DIET strengthening, support from SCERT, digital initiatives, foundational literacy and numeracy, and inclusive education and supervision (Ministry of Education, 2021). Its involvement is important because the main resources for implementation are drawn from centrally sponsored schemes and state plans. With Samagra Shiksha, the policy intent is reflected in teacher training, school infrastructure, teaching-learning materials, digital devices, and support in teaching and learning. The third reform is the large-scale capacity building through NISHTHA and DIKSHA. Records of the Ministry of Education show that more than 63 lakh teachers have completed NISHTHA training, which includes teaching modules that integrate technology, digital literacy, and ICT in teaching, learning, and assessment (Ministry of Education, 2025c). Under NIPUN Bharat and the implementation of FLN, more than 12 lakh teachers have received training through NISHTHA-FLN, and DIKSHA provides FLN resources, local language primers, and other digital resources (Ministry of Education, 2025b). Given India's large teaching workforce, this digital infrastructure is a step in the right direction. However, online course completion will not transform practices. Implementation will be of low quality without mentoring, classroom visits, peer interactions, and school-level leadership.

Changing how students are assessed is the fourth important structural reform. PARAKH and these types of assessments are set to alter the education system from rote learning to focusing on learning outcomes. The 2026 NIPUN Bharat parliamentary report described changes brought to Grade 3 learning and FLN testing in the 2021 NAS and the 2024 PARAKH NSRs. These changes also included teacher training, and the introduction of digital FLN resources, multilingual primers, and school readiness interventions, among others (Ministry of Education, 2026). Reforming assessments is important for teacher preparedness because teachers will teach the way the system places value. If assessments place value on reasoning, reading comprehension, numeracy, expression, and application, teachers need training in assessing learning gaps and designing learning interventions.



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5. Data Analysis: Teacher Availability and Classroom Conditions

Recent UDISE+ data are essential for quantitatively assessing the shift from policy to practice. The evaluation of teacher preparedness extends beyond the training policy. It is also about the availability and deployment of teachers, class size, and the capacity of schools to provide personalized support. According to the UDISE+ 2024-25 data from the Ministry of Education, there is an increase in the number of teachers, as well as an improvement in the pupil–teacher ratio. While these indicators do not evaluate the quality of teaching, they help to understand whether the education system is creating conditions to enable teachers to work more effectively.

Table 1. Teacher Workforce and Female Teacher Representation in India

Academic year	Total teachers	Teachers (lakh)	Female teachers (%)
2022-23	9,483,294	94.83	52.3
2023-24	9,807,600	98.08	53.3
2024-25	10,122,420	101.22	54.2

Source: Ministry of Education, UDISE+ 2024-25 release (2025).

Interpretation of Table 1: The table captures the incremental rise in teaching staff from the academic year 2022-23 having 94,83,294 teachers, to 2024-25 with 1,01,22,420 teachers. According to the UDISE+ reporting series, India crossed the one-crore teacher threshold for the first time. This rise is also important for the implementation of the NEP 2020 as provisions of curricular reform, the enhancement of FLN, and the establishment of competency-based, as well as inclusive teaching, will require the adequate availability of teaching staff. There was also an increase in the representation of female teachers from 52.3 percent to 54.2 percent during the same time span. This is significant for the representation of women in the profession and can contribute to a more inclusive, socially responsive, and safe school. Nevertheless, the table should not be considered an indicator of reaching the necessary stage of readiness. Along with the increased strength of teachers, there is a need for subject-wise teacher deployment, training and professional autonomy in line with the teaching of that particular stage, and the provision of mentoring.



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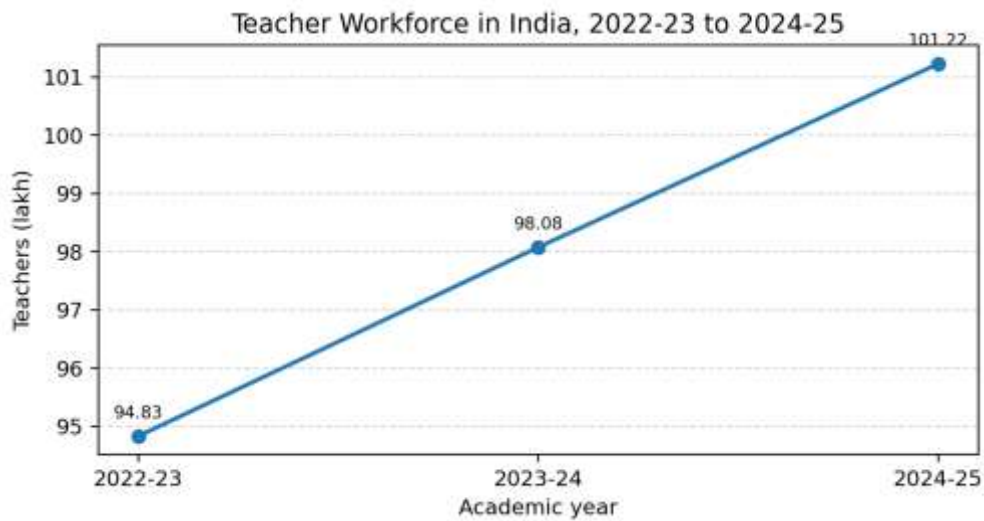


Figure 1. Teacher Workforce Trend in India, 2022-23 to 2024-25

Interpretation of Figure 1: The consistent rise in growth observed in the national teacher workforce is illustrated in the chart. The increase in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 cohorts illustrates the policy goal of promoting increased direct engagement of students with teachers. Greater availability of teachers makes it easier to implement active and competency-based teaching. The chart also highlights the next challenge. The growth in numbers needs to be translated into professional capacity. Teachers require time, resources, and support at the level of the school to practice NEP-aligned techniques within the classroom on a day-to-day basis.

Table 2. Pupil-Teacher Ratio by School Stage

School stage	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Foundational	11	10	10
Preparatory	14	13	13
Middle	18	18	17
Secondary	23	21	21

Source: Ministry of Education, UDISE+ 2024-25 release (2025).

Interpretation of Table 2: Across all stages the pupil-teacher ratio remained below the NEP benchmark of 30:1. In 2024-25, the foundational stage remained at 10, the preparatory stage remained at 13, the middle stage improved from 18 to 17, and the secondary stage improved from 23 to 21 in 2022-23. Positive averages for teacher-student interaction were reported. The importance of teacher-student interaction is highest in the foundational and preparatory stages due to the types of support offered at this stage. This includes support for oral language, play, early numeracy and the need for individual attention from the teacher. The



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highest pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is in the secondary stage, which likely indicates the need for more specialized teachers, more subjects, and more higher grade levels.

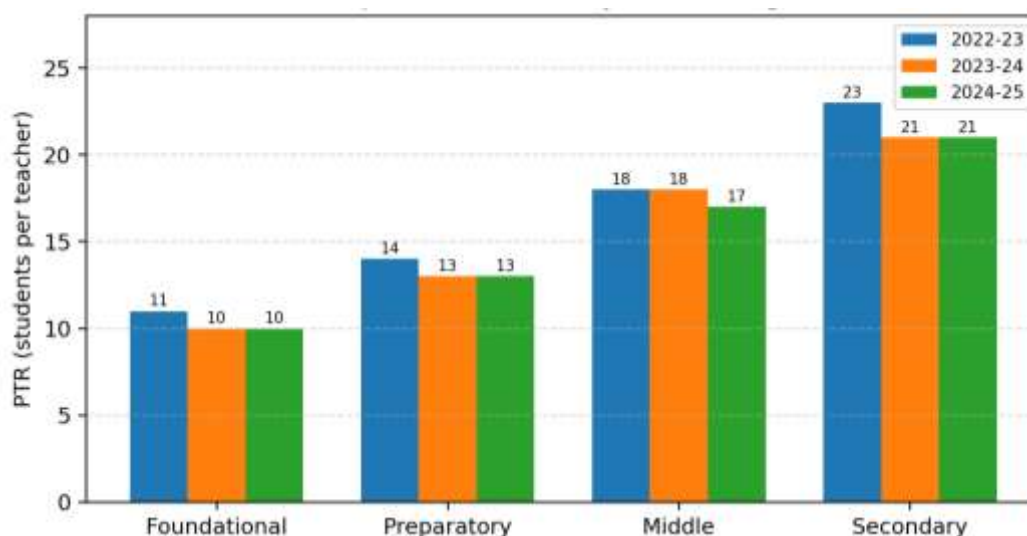


Figure 2. Pupil-Teacher Ratio Across Stages, 2022-23 to 2024-25

Interpretation of Figure 2: According to the PTR pattern, the strength of this pattern is at the found at the base and of the secondary tier, relatively. This pattern indicates the challenge of providing specific subject teachers at higher grades, especially in fragmented/small schools or where the secondary sections are not located in the immediate vicinity. For NEP 2020, this implies that teacher preparedness will be linked to rational deployment, school complexes, sharing subject teachers, and enhanced academic leadership. Better PTR will create enabling conditions, but classroom transformation will depend on the quality of teacher training and the support extended to teachers.

6. Discussion: Gaps Between Policy Intent and Classroom Implementation

From the data, the teacher workforce has expanded, but teaching preparedness is still an issue. An adequate workforce alleviates some pressure, but readiness to teach is something different. Most teachers have been prepared under earlier expectations, which centred around finishing the textbook and preparing students for the exams. NEP 2020 proposes a number of changes, including teaching strategies that emphasise the learner, different ways of assessing that don't centre around exams, critical and creative thinking, and teaching that incorporates the arts and sports. It also promotes teaching that is multilingual and inclusive. All these changes require a thorough understanding of teaching that goes beyond a short course or orientation. For these changes to be sustainable, the system needs to move away from isolated workshops to multiple professional development cycles that are spaced at regular intervals.



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One of the biggest policy challenges is the standard of ongoing professional development. Digital training has the potential to reach teachers in rural and remote areas and provide standardised resources, but offers little beyond a tick-the-box exercise.

Institutional capacity is another important factor for implementation. There should be institutional provision for curriculum adaptation, mentoring, assessment, and development of local resources, and for supportive roles in assessment and monitoring at the level of Samagra Shiksha. Samagra Shiksha provides a framework to strengthen these institutions, but the actual implementation is different in each state. The school complex model can address shared resources and teacher collaboration as long as it is designed for transporting teachers, community engagement, and providing optimal access for children in the remote and disadvantaged areas. Preparedness also includes equity. This includes preparation of teachers to handle multilingual class settings, and classroom situation with social and gender diversity, disability and inclusiveness, and with socio-emotional teaching and learning. The NIPUN Bharat Parliamentary response recognizes the involvement of local language primers, multilingual resources, and training for teachers to operate in language-diverse contexts (Ministry of Education, 2026). These examples show that policy must be translated in the local context. Even though the national policy framework is uniform, support for teachers in a multilingual urban context, a tribal district, or a low-resource rural area must be differentiated. Teacher preparedness reflects the local contexts, thus must be understood as differentiated capacity, not a standardized checklist.

7. Recommendations

The first recommendation is for on-going professional development for teachers that is focused within their schools and is centered around demonstration lessons, class observations, peer talk, mentoring, and feedback about how the lessons learned in the training were applied in their classes. CPD hours should be awarded for active participation and not merely attendance.

The second recommendation is for SCERTs and DIETs to be strengthened as academic support institutions. They will assist in the support and development of the local curriculum, the mentoring and development of teachers, assessment literacy, development of local language resources, and classroom research.

The third recommendation is for ITEP to be used as a practice-oriented, richer program. Student teachers will experience schools for longer periods of time, will be taught to observe at different developmental and teaching stages, practice developing teaching resources and community outreach, and learn about teaching diverse classrooms.



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The fourth recommendation is for NPST to be used as a developmental framework. Standards for teachers should be linked to mentoring, rewards and teaching resources, and equitable career pathways. They should not become solely an aspect of a bureaucracy.

The fifth recommendation is to connect the deployment of teachers to the structural transformation. A justified national PTR must be operationalized with an equitable deployment of teachers on a subject and age-related basis at both the district and block levels.

The sixth recommendation is to deepen digital preparedness. DIKSHA, PM eVidya, and all other platforms should have teaching resources in multiple languages and be ready for varied levels of learning. Teacher development should focus on using the digital resources for classroom teaching.

8. Conclusion

The implementation of NEP 2020 relies heavily on the transformation of educational practice and the reform of educational institutions. The recent UDISE+ data has shown an increase in the number of teachers, the number of female teachers, and improvements in pupil-teacher ratios. While these data reflect necessary foundations for educational reform, the more relevant question is whether teachers are adequately prepared, supported, and trusted to execute emerging pedagogical frameworks, assessment techniques, multilingual resources, and other inclusivity tools. The author of this paper sees the preparation of teachers as the single most critical element of the NEP 2020. Numerous structural innovations (e.g. ITEP, NPST, NCF-SE, NCF-FS, Samagra Shiksha, NISHTHA, DIKSHA, NIPUN Bharat, PARAKH, and school complexes) can only serve the envisioned transformation when these innovations function as a cohesive and integrated system. NEP 2020 integrates a practice and evidence-based orientation with a significant emphasis on local scholarship and teacher agency as priorities.

Moving policy to practice requires the recognition of the professional and institutional nature of the process. While the availability of teachers is significant, the right support for teachers is equally important. NEP 2020 holds the promise of substantive classroom reform when all teachers have the right preparation, mentoring, recognition, and the right working conditions. With this approach, the policy can move beyond the formal implementation of policy to where it is a reality for the students in the country.

9. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.



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10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

11. PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

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