



RESEARCH PAPER

A critical analysis of the continuing professional development of teachers in India through the lens of NEP 2020

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Abstract

The pursuit of high-quality education is a global priority, and the impact of teachers is fundamental to defining the quality of education systems internationally. Teachers' professional development is integral to enhancing their teaching capabilities, improving student outcomes, and contributing to the broader societal and national development. Continuing professional development (CPD) is essential for fostering lifelong learning, enhancing teachers' competencies, and promoting effective teaching practices. However, in India, CPD has traditionally been equated with in-service teacher education and training (INSET), which often consists of short-term, isolated training events. While CPD is recognized as a lifelong, multifaceted process of growth, previous educational policies have primarily focused on INSET, limiting the scope of professional development opportunities for teachers. A substantial policy shift is evident with the introduction of NEP 2020 by broadening the scope of CPD, emphasizing its importance across all educational levels and recommending strategies for comprehensive and ongoing teacher development. This paper examines the evolution of CPD in Indian educational policy, the limitations of earlier frameworks, and the changes proposed by NEP 2020. By exploring the broader concept of CPD, this study highlights its potential to enhance both individual teachers' professional growth and the overall quality of the education system.

Keywords: NEP 2020, CPD, Competency enhancement, Educational policy

Introduction

The pursuit of quality education is now a universal objective; the teachers serve as the backbone of any effective education system. They affect every element, from teaching and student achievement to school governance and the overall advancement of the nation. To build this competence, maintaining high academic and professional standards for teachers is essential to creating learning environments that fulfill educational aspirations (Ashokkumar, T., Russelraj, T., Rajadurai, A., Abishini, A. H., & Anchani, A. H., 2024). Consequently, a nation's educational outcomes are closely tied to how effectively it supports its teachers' professional

growth, starting from their initial training and extending through their ongoing development.

The proficiency of teachers is a key determinant in shaping a nation that can thrive in a globalized world. Continuing professional development (CPD) acts as an ongoing tool for the enhancement of teachers already in the field. CPD is understood as a dynamic and multifaceted process that includes all activities aimed at improving teachers' skills and knowledge while also cultivating attitudes and beliefs that promote effective teaching practices. CPD is a lifelong journey of growth that starts when a teacher begins their career and continues throughout their professional life (Bolitho, R., and Padded, A., 2013).

A crucial question emerges, however: Can CPD truly empower the education system to embrace its full potential? Is the education system equipped to offer teachers opportunities for holistic and comprehensive professional development at all levels? Before the NEP 2020 came into effect, only the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009) had explicitly focused on this area. Explicitly referred to CPD and suggested measures for its promotion among teachers. In contrast, most educational policy documents since India's independence have primarily viewed CPD through the narrow framework of in-service teacher education and training (INSET). In recent years,

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CPD has often been perceived in a limited manner, with few opportunities and insufficient support for the ongoing professional growth of teachers.

CPD is often mistakenly equated with INSET programs, which are typically brief, isolated, and one-time events. This paper explores the provisions for Teacher development provisions in earlier educational policies. It examines the reforms introduced under NEP 2020 that have redefined teacher professional development. It highlights the changes proposed by NEP 2020 and its specific recommendations for CPD at various educational levels. CPD is a lifelong journey, incorporating both formal and informal learning experiences, spanning from pre-service education to retirement (Das, P., & Barman, P., 2024). It is an inclusive process that covers all the knowledge, skills, and practical experiences necessary to enhance teachers' competencies and shape their broader beliefs and attitudes for effective teaching.

As a result, CPD proves to be valuable not only for individual teachers but also for teacher communities, promoting personal and professional development while playing a role in improving schools and the education system at large. Since India's independence, several policy documents have dealt with teacher professional development. However, these documents have mostly concentrated on INSET activities and have seldom moved beyond the scope of in-service teacher education to fully embrace the broader and more holistic concept of CPD (Kaushi, P., Ahmad, J., & Khan, A., 2021). The term CPD was often used interchangeably with INSET without fully appreciating its broader significance. A short examination of recommendations from key educational policies substantiates this viewpoint.

The Mudaliar Commission(1952-53)

The Mudaliar Commission (1952-53), officially called the Secondary Education Commission, concentrated on enhancing the professional development of teachers. It endorsed knowledge upgrading through reorientation programs and short-term learning sessions, specialized programs, workshops, and opportunities to attend professional conferences. Its recommendations were directed toward secondary school teachers, with teacher training colleges playing a central role in overseeing in-service education (Misra, P. K., & Tyagi, C., 2021). Additionally, the commission recommended setting up extension service departments to assist these colleges in coordinating and managing teachers' professional development activities.

Kothari Commission (1966)

The need for in-service training programs for teachers' professional growth was emphasized by the Kothari Commission in 1966. It proposed called for universities,

training bodies, and professional teacher organizations to conduct refresher sessions, seminars and workshops regularly. While its main focus was on improving the skills of schoolteachers, the commission confirmed as well the significant role of teacher educators and also school supervisors as valuable resources for professional development.

The panel suggested that at least once every five years, all instructors participate in two to three months of in-service training. To enable broader participation, it proposed the formation of 'School Complexes,' where a designated school would be responsible for organizing these training programs. Furthermore, it encouraged state governments to take an active role in promoting and supervising on-the-job teacher training within their respective regions. In this way, the commission entrusted the government with the responsibility of supporting Educators' skill enhancement.

Chattopadhyay Commission(1985)

The Chattopadhyay Commission (1985), though often overlooked, carried out a pivotal involvement in designing policies for teacher education. It emphasized how important it is for teachers to continue their professional development. It promoted countrywide INSET growth. The commission recommended that all teachers participate in a three-week in-service training course every five years. In addition, it suggested linking participation in these training programs to career advancement, highlighting the essential role of CPD in fostering professional growth.

National Policy on Education(1986)

With pre-service and in-service training at its heart, the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 India's first comprehensive policy emphasized the ongoing aspect of teacher education (MHRD, 1986). Nevertheless, the policy did not extend its vision to embrace the full scope of CPD, remaining limited to the traditional INSET model.

Although limited in scope, the policy proposed crucial steps to strengthen the education of teachers who are in the profession in India, emphasizing the creation of robust institutional networks. Expanding chances for educators' and instructional leaders' professional development was the aim. Additionally, these programs and the 1992 Plan of Action (POA) were supported by the Acharya Ramamurthi Review Committee, which was established in 1990 (MHRD, 1992). The creation of Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) in each district were noteworthy initiatives aimed at providing opportunities for professional growth for educators and teachers.

The POA 1992 emphasized the vital connection between the motivation of the teacher and the overall standard of education. It resulted in the establishment

of University-based Academic Staff Colleges throughout the nation, focused on offering professional development opportunities for higher education faculty. The NEP also recommended the introduction of specialized orientation programs in pedagogy, along with the organization of updated programs and orientation for existing educators in higher education.

Additionally, it encouraged active participation in seminars, symposia, and workshops to further enhance professional development (MHRD, 1986; MHRD, 1992).

National Curriculum Framework (2005)

This document challenges the widely held notion that teachers' professional growth can be achieved by discrete training sessions, signaling a dramatic change in India's educational policy. It emphasizes the notion that professional growth is a continuous process. The paradigm suggests that rather than being viewed as a one-time event, in-service learning should be considered a continuous activity. Through active involvement and a learning experience that results in knowledge development and change, people may enhance their practices, hone their abilities, and cultivate their attitudes in workshops and the classroom.

The framework encouraged instructors to actively participate in the learning process by evaluating and improving their teaching strategies, emphasizing the value of experiential learning. Nevertheless, it prioritized in-service teacher education above the more general idea of CPD, even if it adopted a progressive and revolutionary approach. According to the concept, school clusters are to be in charge of training currently employed teachers. Furthermore, it proposed spreading out the required days of in-service training throughout the year so teachers could immediately integrate newly learned concepts into their teaching practices and pre-service training programs.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Educators (NCFTE, 2009)

The notion of CPD for teachers was first explicitly included in a policy document, the NCFTE 2009. However, the framework offered a somewhat vague interpretation of CPD, often using it interchangeably with in-service teacher education, a practice carried over from previous policy documents. Nonetheless, several of the learning opportunities outlined in the framework resonate with the core principles of CPD.

The framework called attention to the need for educators to explore a variety of advancements in career opportunities and collaborate with their peers to encourage mutual growth. It highlighted the importance of teachers having control over their development. It recommended that external organizations, including government agencies, teacher training institutions, and higher education bodies, offer structures to support teachers in pursuing the suggested developmental avenues.

Notably, the NCFTE 2009 was the first post-independence policy to require CPD programs for a wide range of educational professionals, including supervisors, teachers, higher education professors, teacher educators, school administrators, and library employees. Additionally, the framework broadened its scope to encompass educators in the public and private sectors, promoting a comprehensive, inclusive approach to professional development throughout the educational system.

Justice J.S varma Commission(2012)

Following the recommendations of the esteemed Supreme Court, the commission stressed the need for a renewed policy framework and the establishment of a National Action Plan to effectively implement INSET (MHRD, 2012). Despite these calls for change, the notion of CPD for teachers remained largely absent from policy conversations. Only three years after the NCFTE 2009, which had advocated for CPD, policymakers reverted to the more limited scope of INSET, signaling a regression in the goals for advancing teacher development.

In conclusion, an analysis of major policy documents concerning teacher professional development reveals that Past educational policies have primarily concentrated on in-service education, adhering to traditional philosophies and terminology. The Indian educational system still places a high priority on INSET, indicating a lag in implementing more modern approaches for teacher professional development, whereas the global education community has moved past in-service training to adopting CPD and continuing lifelong professional learning (CLPL) (NCERT, 2005).

The NEP 2020 envisions continuous professional development (CPD)

It is promising to observe that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 features a section on "Continuous Professional Development" within the broader "Teachers" section. The inclusion of CPD in NEP 2020 carries two significant implications. Firstly, it highlights the critical importance of continuous professional development in enhancing teachers' careers. Secondly, it marks a departure from the traditional emphasis on in-service education (INSET), signaling a more dynamic and ongoing approach to teacher training. The policy examines different aspects of CPD, highlighting its significance in supporting the continuous professional growth and development of educators.

Competencies to be acquired through CPD

To foster the overall development of students and encourage engaging, meaningful learning experiences in the classroom, teachers must have a diverse set of competencies and skills. Acknowledging this requirement, NEP 2020 suggests a variety of CPD opportunities for teachers, focusing on areas such as the latest teaching methods in basic reading, writing,

and math skills, along with developmental and flexible assessment methods for learning achievements and skill-based education and approaches like hands-on learning and arts-based approaches, sports-based approaches and narrative-driven methods among others (MHRD, 2020, p. 22)

Opportunity for Engaging in CPD

The NEP 2020 outlines specific provisions for teachers at all educational levels, emphasizing their professional development and continuous learning. Educators will have ongoing opportunities for professional growth and to stay updated with the latest innovations in their field. These learning experiences will be available through various platforms, including workshops conducted at community, regional, national, and global levels, along with web-based professional development courses for teachers (MHRD, 2020, p. 22).

It is worth noting that current CPD programs, especially in the education sector, are primarily intended for teachers employed in government and government-supported schools. As a result, educators from these institutions are the primary recipients of such professional development opportunities. The NEP 2020 does not clarify whether similar CPD provisions will be available to teachers in private schools. Consequently, teachers employed in private institutions may have to pursue and finance their professional development independently.

To strengthen teachers' roles as facilitators of learning, it is anticipated that they will motivate learners to participate actively in the material work together with fellow learners and interact meaningfully with their instructors. To achieve this, the policy emphasizes that educators will receive extensive training in learner-focused teaching methods and in developing high-quality online content. They will also be equipped with the skills needed to effectively use digital teaching platforms and create engaging online learning materials.

NEP 2020 envisions leveraging online platforms to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices among teachers. The strategy suggests promoting technology platforms such as SWAYAM and DIKSHA for online teacher training in order to integrate technology into CPD activities. This will allow for the rapid delivery of standardized training programs to a large number of educators. (p. 43, MHRD, 2020).

The policy highlights that mentorship opportunities led by seasoned and informed educators would be available to higher education instructors. Through the provision of knowledgeable advice from mentors with in-depth knowledge of the educational system, this program aims to assist educators in overcoming obstacles in their careers. The concept emphasizes the creation of a National Mission for Mentoring, which will include a wide network of eminent senior and retired academic members. Teachers with

expertise in teaching Indian languages will be part of this pool, willingly providing university and college instructors with professional assistance and mentorship for both short- and long-term periods. (p. 43, MHRD, 2020).

Teacher Expectations for Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

NEP 2020 mandates that all teachers, regardless of their role in higher education institutions or schools, it is essential to actively participate in CPD programs. This requirement mirrors practices in various countries where teachers are obligated to engage in CPD for a set amount of time each year. To further elaborate on this requirement, NEP 2020 specifies that educators are required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of professional training programs. Annually, focusing on their personal and professional growth and guided by their interests. This participation is a requirement for all educators to foster their ongoing development and improve their teaching practices. (MHRD, 2020, p. 22).

An exciting aspect of NEP 2020 is its effort to include both schoolteachers and principals in the scope of CPD. This initiative is based on research that highlights leadership by recognizing its importance in enhancing teaching and learning quality; NEP 2020 emphasizes professional development for school leaders. It mandates that school principals and heads of school clusters complete at least 50 hours of continuous professional development modules each year. These modules will focus on leadership and management, along with subject content and teaching methods (Sharma, N. S., Pratim Roy, S., Annu, M., & Parveen, S., 2024). The development and execution of lesson plans grounded in competency-driven education get particular focus (MHRD, 2020, p. 22). According to National Education Policy 2020, school administrators must regularly participate in web-based professional development programs and seminars centered on administrative and leadership skills in order to support the ongoing development of their managing and leadership skills. The policy also emphasizes how crucial it is for school administrators to share their successful management and leadership techniques with other teachers.

The policy further recommends that higher education faculty should participate in CPD activities akin to those for school educators and leaders. NEP 2020 recognizes current CPD practices for university teachers, encompassing induction programs, skill enhancement courses, and training sessions conducted by Human Resource Development Centres at universities, along with opportunities available on online platforms like SWAYAM. The policy emphasizes that these efforts will be significantly enhanced. College and university instructors will maintain their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) through continuing training initiatives and current institutional frameworks. To

better meet the needs for improved teaching and learning, these programs will be expanded and improved, with the ultimate goal of guaranteeing high-quality education (MHRD, 2020, p. 43).

Rewards for Engaging in CPD Activities

The present condition of the Indian education system, especially in Arunachal Pradesh, reveals a concerning situation where the efforts of outstanding teachers are largely unrecognized. Teachers who show dedication and those who are negligent are treated equally, receiving the same pay, advancement opportunities, and professional growth prospects. Moreover, there exists a lack of systems or incentives to encourage or reward teachers who are actively involved in CPD and consistently perform exceptionally in the classroom.

To tackle this challenge, NEP 2020 recognizes the necessity for reform and outlines strategies to inspire educators. The guideline introduces a two-step approach, with the first step focusing on creating a framework of professional criteria for educators. In this context, the policy mentions, By 2022, a unified framework of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) would be established. These standards will outline the requirements for educators at different stages of the careers of their professional journey, specifying the competencies needed for each level. Additionally, they will incorporate performance appraisal standards that will be carried out periodically at each stage. The directive proposes those who fulfill these criteria show dedication to their field of work and consistently engage in CPD shall be recognized by their peers. To emphasize this point, the policy highlights that the NPST will play a crucial role in shaping pre-service teacher education programs, guiding their structure and content. States may adopt these standards to regulate different elements of educators' career development, such as Job security, career growth, salary increase advancements and other types of acknowledgment. Instead of being determined by seniority or years of service, advancements and pay raises will be determined exclusively by performance evaluations in line with these standards.

From these suggestions, it is clear that National Education Policy 2020 approaches ongoing professional growth and development more comprehensively and inclusively than earlier policies. Unlike earlier policy papers, NEP 2020 supports CPD and moves away from focusing solely on INSET. Two primary recommendations emphasize this change: first, the policy calls on educators to take responsibility for their own professional development, and second, it proposes improving and growing the present CPD offerings (Sharma, G., Mittal, R., & Zayan., 2023). Furthermore, the policy expects all teachers, across both school and higher education sectors, to actively participate in and benefit from CPD initiatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the trajectory of teacher professional development in India has been intricate and evolving, with earlier policy frameworks primarily concentrating on INSET. While these policies have made significant progress in improving teacher education, they have often overlooked the broader and more dynamic concept of CPD. The NEP 2020 marks a significant shift in this regard, emphasizing CPD as an ongoing and holistic process that supports the lifelong learning and growth of educators. By expanding the scope of CPD and integrating it across all levels of education, NEP 2020 introduces a comprehensive approach to teacher development that not only enhances individual teaching competencies but also strengthens the entire educational framework. The policy's focussed on self-directed professional growth, the incorporation of online learning platforms, and the creation of national teaching standards for educators will open doors to more structured and inclusive development opportunities. These reforms aim to provide teaching faculty with the essential resources to create a meaningful, competency-based learning environment, ultimately fostering the progress of the nation's education system. An appropriate saying goes, only a lamp that is lit can light another lamp a reflection of the significant role teachers play in society. Truly meaningful education can only be provided by individuals who are committed, educated in their field, able to relate to their students, and talented in teaching. But accomplishing this is no easy feat. Throughout their careers, educators must continue to study in order to assist their students' overall growth. One well-known strategy for teachers to maintain their professional competence and motivation is to take part in CPD events. Regretfully, both school and higher education are included in CPD under India's educational structure. In general, levels have been seen and used in a restricted way. It is envisaged that the NEP 2020 initiatives would offer a chance to reconsider current CPD practices and rules. This will promote a more inclusive and sustainable approach to teacher development by giving educators in a wider range of educational sectors (like school and higher education) and institution types (like government, government-aided, and self-financed) access to more extensive CPD opportunities.

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