



Preparing Teacher Educators For Pedagogy Of ITEP Content–Pedagogy Course “World Around Us” At The Preparatory Stage

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Abstract

The four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) introduced under the National Education Policy 2020 represents a paradigm shift in teacher education by integrating disciplinary knowledge with pedagogy and practice to prepare professionally competent teachers for different school stages. Within this framework, the Content cum Pedagogy course on *World Around Us (TWAU)* at the preparatory stage is an important course that integrates environmental, social, cultural, and scientific understandings through experiential and multidisciplinary learning. The preparatory stage emphasises activity-based, discovery-oriented, and contextually grounded learning processes, requiring teachers to design developmentally appropriate and inquiry-driven classroom experiences. This paper systematically analyses the professional preparedness and needs of teacher educators for the effective teaching of the ITEP Content–Pedagogy course on TWAU at the preparatory stage. Drawing upon policy guidelines, curriculum frameworks, and research insights on teacher education, the paper identifies the required competencies, knowledge domains and pedagogical orientations among teacher educators for effective teacher preparation and proposes a conceptual framework highlighting three interrelated dimensions—deeper curricular understanding, pedagogical expertise, and professional preparation of teacher educators. The paper contributes by integrating research insights with curriculum expectations and strengthening teacher education discourse by providing a roadmap for preparing competent teachers and teacher educators.

Keywords: ITEP, Teacher Educator Preparation, World Around Us, Content–Pedagogy Integration, Preparatory Stage, Experiential Learning, Multidisciplinary Learning

Introduction

This is a well-known fact that teacher education in India is undergoing major reforms and aims at improving teacher quality and school education in innovative ways. In this context, the National Education Policy 2020 has proposed many structural, curricular and pedagogical reforms to address longstanding challenges in teacher preparation by emphasising multidisciplinary education, integrated learning, and competency-based teacher preparation. One of the most important reforms is the introduction of the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), which seeks to integrate disciplinary knowledge, pedagogy, and practical training into a comprehensive professional programme.

Within ITEP, stage-specific teacher preparation is a key feature that has been designed to bring teacher education in alignment with the developmental needs and curriculum expectations of school education (5+3+3+4). Teacher educators play a crucial role in interpreting the policy and curriculum framework and providing the focussed and holistic learning experiences to the prospective teachers. Therefore, the effectiveness of a program depends substantially on the professional competence of teacher educators responsible for teaching various courses.

In the ITEP program with preparatory stage specialization, a content cum pedagogy course of 'World Around Us' has been designed to equip pre-service teachers with knowledge, skills, values and dispositions to effectively teach the newly introduced subject 'The World Around Us' at the preparatory stage of school education. Therefore, it becomes crucial to systematically analyse the professional preparedness and needs of teacher educators for the effective teaching of the ITEP Content–Pedagogy course on TWAU at the preparatory stage.

The World Around Us (TWAU) Course at the Preparatory Stage

The *World Around Us (TWAU)* course at the preparatory stage is a new curricular area of study which is aligned with the vision of NEP 2020 and reflects the broader curricular restructuring of school education into a 5+3+3+4 design that emphasizes developmentally appropriate learning experiences across stages. It aims to integrate environmental and social learning by enabling learners to explore their immediate surroundings and develop awareness of human-environment relationships. The emphasis is on holistic, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning approaches that encourage curiosity, observation, and critical thinking among young learners.

The policy promotes experiential, inquiry-based, and activity-oriented learning that is holistic, enjoyable, and rooted in real-life contexts by encouraging hands-on activities, storytelling, and arts-integrated approaches to enhance conceptual understanding. The TWAU course embodies these principles by enabling children to develop scientific and social awareness through active engagement with their environment and community. It derives its conceptual foundation from the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCFFS-2022) and National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE-2023), which advocate integrated, play-based, multidisciplinary, and thematic learning rooted in children's lived experiences. Together, these frameworks emphasize inquiry-driven engagement with learners' immediate contexts—family, community, nature, and local culture—encouraging observation, reflection, environmental sensitivity, and social responsibility while nurturing their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Following this vision, the TWAU course adopts an integrated and progressive curricular approach that brings together environmental studies, social sciences, and foundational scientific inquiry to offer learners a coherent understanding of their world. It promotes close observation of natural phenomena, awareness of local ecosystems, appreciation of cultural diversity, and recognition of the interdependence between humans and nature, while nurturing curiosity and encouraging children to ask meaningful questions about their surroundings. Through experiential and inquiry-based pedagogy aligned with NEP 2020 and subsequent curriculum frameworks, the course moves beyond rote learning towards contextually grounded and analytical engagement, promoting problem-solving abilities, environmental sensitivity, social awareness, and holistic development, and thereby preparing learners at the preparatory stage to become informed and responsible citizens.

Nature and Scope of TWAU

The TWAU (The World Around Us) curriculum integrates themes of the natural environment, social and cultural practices, community and citizenship, scientific understanding, and sustainable living within a contextually grounded and experiential framework. By promoting observation, exploration, inquiry, project-based engagement, and field-based learning, it connects classroom knowledge with local realities

and children's lived experiences. Its pedagogical design aligns with the holistic vision of *Panchkoshiya Vikas*, rooted in the Indian knowledge tradition, which emphasizes five dimensions of development—Annamaya kosh (physical), Pranamaya kosh (vital and emotional), Manomaya kosh (mental), Vijnanamaya kosh (intellectual), and Anandamaya kosh (inner harmony). Through active engagement with nature and the community, TWAU develops environmental responsibility and physical awareness. It encourages children to work together and reflect on their experiences. This builds emotional and social sensitivity. It also promotes analytical exploration, which strengthens critical thinking skills. By connecting learning with culture and lived experiences, it nurtures joy and a sense of interconnectedness. Such an integrated approach requires teachers to function as facilitators of learning rather than mere transmitters of information, thereby highlighting the need for teacher education programmes to prepare future teachers to effectively implement innovative, inquiry-driven pedagogies.

ITEP Content cum Pedagogy Course on World Around Us at Preparatory Stage

The Content-cum-Pedagogy course on *World Around Us (WAU)* at the Preparatory Stage in the ITEP programme emphasizes an integrated, multidisciplinary, and learner-centred approach to environmental and social learning. In the program, all the Content cum Pedagogy courses have been offered from semester 3 to semester 6. Semester 3 has a 4 credit course the "Basics of Pedagogy at Preparatory Stage", which focuses on understanding and addressing the developmental needs of learners in grades 3-5. It emphasizes joyful, inclusive, and learner-centric teaching through various pedagogical approaches like constructivist, collaborative, and inquiry-based methods, alongside strategies such as storytelling, games, and art integration to make learning engaging and multidisciplinary. Practicum activities include case studies, culturally responsive pedagogy, inclusive classroom strategies, and integrating physical education and art into learning.

After this basic course, Content cum Pedagogy The World Around Us I, II and III are offered in semester 4, 5 and 6 respectively. A central theme emerging from the course is the holistic understanding of the natural, social, cultural, and human dimensions of the environment. The course aims to equip student teachers with conceptual clarity about the nature, scope, and educational significance of WAU as a composite discipline that connects science, social sciences, and environmental education. It also stresses the historical evolution of the subject and its role in addressing contemporary educational and environmental challenges while fostering responsible and critical attitudes among learners.

Another major theme is the emphasis on innovative and experiential pedagogies. The course highlights approaches such as constructivist, experiential, interdisciplinary, and art-integrated learning, along with strategies like inquiry-based, project-based, collaborative, and STEM/STEAM learning. These pedagogical approaches aim to develop higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and analytical abilities among learners. The course also promotes active learning strategies such as field observations, hands-on activities, and community-based learning, thereby encouraging learners to engage meaningfully with their surroundings and develop environmental sensitivity.

The course further highlights the importance of teaching-learning resources and pedagogical content knowledge. It highlights the use of diverse learning materials, including print, digital, community resources, and emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. The integration of resource rooms, field visits, and activity-based learning environments reflects the focus on contextual and experiential learning. Additionally, the course places strong emphasis on outcome-based planning, textbook analysis, and the development of effective lesson plans aligned with learners' developmental needs.

Assessment and reflective practice form another key theme. The course advocates comprehensive assessment strategies, including formative, summative, peer, self, and performance-based evaluation. It also encourages portfolio development and action research to strengthen reflective teaching practices. Overall, the course prepares student teachers to function as facilitators who promote critical thinking,

social responsibility, environmental awareness, and inclusive learning experiences among preparatory stage learners.

Competencies, Knowledge Domains, and Pedagogical Orientations Required among Teacher Educators

Teacher educators play a critical role in shaping the competence and professional identity of future teachers. Their work includes understanding curriculum, practicing effective pedagogy, mentoring student teachers, and promoting research-informed practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In the context of the four-year ITEP, teacher educators must integrate content with pedagogy, facilitate reflective and experiential learning, support field engagement, and encourage action research and innovation. They should also serve as professional role models whose practices influence how student teachers teach in schools.

Preparing teacher educators to teach the ITEP Content–Pedagogy course on *World Around Us (WAU)* at the preparatory stage requires alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, NCFFS 2022 and NCFSE 2023, which emphasise holistic, multidisciplinary, and experiential learning. The pedagogy of this new subject needs educators to possess strong conceptual clarity, pedagogical expertise, and reflective capabilities along with an in-depth, interdisciplinary subject knowledge. The subject integrates environmental studies, social sciences, and foundational scientific inquiry. Therefore, teacher educators must understand its philosophical and curricular foundations that highlight the interrelationship between human beings, society, culture, and the environment. They should also be aware of policy-driven reforms that promote contextual and developmentally appropriate learning. A strong Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is also essential among teacher educators. They should be able to guide student teachers in converting subject knowledge into meaningful classroom experiences. This includes modelling constructivist, inquiry-based, art-integrated, project-based, and experiential approaches. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory highlights that learning occurs through concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. Therefore, teacher educators must demonstrate how field visits, community engagement, and hands-on activities strengthen understanding and critical thinking.

The curriculum understanding is vital for Teacher educators. They must be familiar with curriculum goals, learning outcomes, textbooks, and assessment practices of the preparatory stage. They should help student teachers design outcome-based lesson plans, integrate digital tools, and create contextualised learning experiences suitable for young learners. The teacher educators must also integrate ICT, community resources, and experiential learning opportunities to enhance their classroom engagement. They also require a comprehensive understanding of the assessment process that supports continuous and outcome-based evaluation. This includes training student teachers in formative assessment methods such as projects, portfolios, observation, and performance-based tasks. Reflective teaching and action research should also be encouraged so that future teachers can critically examine and improve their practice.

Overall, teacher educators must embody professional and ethical values. They should promote inclusive, child-centred, culturally responsive, and environmentally sustainable perspectives in education. By modelling reflective, research-oriented, and innovative teaching practices, they create collaborative learning environments that nurture professional autonomy and social responsibility. An effective preparation of teacher educators for the ITEP WAU course demands multidimensional competencies including strong subject knowledge, pedagogical innovation, curriculum understanding, assessment expertise, and reflective professional practice. Grounded in national policy and research-based perspectives, such preparation enables teacher educators to guide prospective teachers in promoting environmental awareness, social responsibility, and holistic development among preparatory stage learners.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

Preparing teacher educators for effective implementation of teacher education programmes requires a comprehensive conceptual framework integrating curricular understanding, pedagogical expertise, and professional dispositions. Contemporary policy frameworks and theoretical perspectives emphasise that teacher educators play a critical role in shaping future teachers' knowledge, skills, and values. The National Education Policy 2020 highlights the need for high-quality teacher preparation grounded in multidisciplinary knowledge, innovative pedagogy, and professional ethics. The policy emphasises that teacher education must move beyond transmission of content knowledge to develop reflective, competent, and socially responsive educators capable of addressing diverse learning needs.

1. Curricular understanding: It refers to teacher educators' ability to comprehensively understand policy aligned, national curriculum frameworks, subject structures, and developmental, stage specific learning needs of school students. Drawing upon the recommendations of the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, teacher educators in the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) must reconceptualise the pedagogy of the content-cum-pedagogy course *The World Around Us* at the Preparatory Stage as an interdisciplinary, inquiry-driven and contextually grounded domain rather than a textbook-bound subject. Curricular understanding should enable prospective teachers to design learning experiences that begin with children's lived realities—home, school, neighbourhood, local ecology—and progressively expand toward broader social and environmental systems, integrating foundational literacy and numeracy within environmental and social explorations. Teacher educators must therefore model activity-based, experiential and discussion-oriented pedagogies; emphasise observation, documentation, questioning and reflective dialogue; and cultivate ecological sensitivity, ethical awareness and care for the environment. The course should foreground planning for thematic integration, use of local resources, multilingual discourse, formative assessment through projects and portfolios, and the development of children's conceptual understanding through guided exploration rather than didactic transmission. Importantly, ITEP faculty should prepare student-teachers to view content and pedagogy as inseparable—where disciplinary ideas about society, nature and sustainability are constructed through play, projects, field visits, community interaction and problem-solving—thereby aligning teacher preparation with the curricular vision of holistic, experiential and competency-based learning articulated in NCF-FS 2022 and NCF-SE 2023.

2. Pedagogical expertise: It focuses on teacher educators' ability to model effective teaching-learning strategies and facilitate pedagogical content knowledge development among student teachers. The concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was introduced by Lee Shulman, who argued that effective teaching requires not only mastery of subject matter and general pedagogical skills but a special form of professional understanding that integrates content and pedagogy in ways that make subject matter comprehensible to learners (Shulman, 1986, 1987). Therefore, teacher educators must demonstrate learner-centred approaches such as inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and technology-integrated instruction. Policy frameworks emphasise activity-based and discovery-oriented pedagogies that support conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills. Pedagogical expertise also involves guiding student teachers in designing lesson plans, integrating teaching-learning resources, and implementing outcome-based assessment strategies. Moreover, teacher educators must promote reflective teaching practices by encouraging action research and critical analysis of classroom experiences, thereby strengthening professional competence.

3. Professional dispositions: It encompasses attitudes, values, and ethical orientations essential for effective teacher education. Theoretical perspectives on teacher professionalism emphasise reflective practice, collaboration, inclusivity, and commitment to social justice. Research by Linda Darling-Hammond highlights that effective teacher preparation requires educators who demonstrate professional responsibility, empathy, and commitment to continuous learning. (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2017). Therefore, teacher educators must cultivate dispositions that promote environmental sensitivity, cultural inclusiveness, and respect for learner diversity. They must also model professional ethics, democratic classroom practices, and collaborative learning cultures that encourage student teachers to develop socially responsible teaching practices.

For effective transaction of the Content-cum-Pedagogy course on *The World Around Us* at the Preparatory Stage within the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), teacher educators must cultivate a comprehensive framework integrating curricular understanding, pedagogical expertise and professional dispositions in alignment with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 and the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022. They should enable prospective teachers to understand the historical development of TWAU, its nature, scope, objectives and values, and its evolving place in the Indian school curriculum in light of major Committees, Commissions and national policies, while also critically examining its interdisciplinary linkages with language, mathematics, arts and environmental studies. Such curricular understanding provides the knowledge base for pedagogical decision-making; pedagogical expertise—expressed through inquiry-based learning, observation, projects, field engagement, multilingual dialogue and reflective assessment practices—ensures effective translation of curriculum into meaningful classroom experiences; and professional dispositions foster ethical responsibility, environmental sensitivity, empathy and commitment to continuous learning. Teacher educators must model adaptive teaching strategies, guide the use of the Holistic Progress Card framework adopted by CBSE/NCERT for competency-based assessment, and create awareness about environmental conservation through community-linked activities. Institutional strengthening is equally essential: the National Council of Educational Research and Training should organise sustained Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) for teacher educators through formal MoUs with Teacher Education Institutions to ensure shared curricular vision and pedagogical coherence, alongside orientation to the ITEP bridge programme for entrants from diverse academic backgrounds. Integrating these interrelated dimensions prepares teacher educators to support prospective teachers in implementing innovative, interdisciplinary and contextually responsive pedagogies in *The World Around Us*, thereby ensuring that teacher education programmes develop reflective practitioners capable of fostering holistic and meaningful learning at the preparatory stage.

Concluding Remarks

Effective implementation of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) demands structural and epistemic alignment between the school curriculum, the teacher education curriculum and the professional capacities of teacher educators, as envisioned in the National Education Policy 2020 and articulated through the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 and the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022. Policy coherence requires that teacher educators not merely transmit course content but embody the curricular philosophy of interdisciplinary integration, experiential learning, competency-based progression and ethical engagement with society and environment. Within this reform landscape, the Content-cum-Pedagogy course on *The World Around Us* at the Preparatory Stage assumes strategic significance, as it operationalises holistic and contextual learning through the integration of social and natural sciences, environmental awareness and value formation. Consequently, preparing teacher educators for this course necessitates rigorous development across three interdependent domains: robust curricular understanding grounded in historical, philosophical and policy perspectives; pedagogical expertise capable of translating interdisciplinary aims into inquiry-driven, context-responsive practice; and professional dispositions that reflect responsibility,

reflexivity and commitment to sustainability and equity. The conceptual framework discussed here emphasises that these dimensions are mutually constitutive and collectively determine the quality of teacher preparation. Systematic faculty development, institutional collaboration and sustained policy support are therefore imperative to ensure that teacher educators are equipped to mentor prospective teachers as reflective practitioners capable of realising the transformative intent of ITEP in contemporary Indian education.

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