



Reconceptualizing The Role Of Teachers In The 21st Century: An Analysis In The Context Of The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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Abstract: The 21st century has brought unprecedented social, technological, and economic transformations that demand a fundamental reconceptualization of the teacher's role in education. This paper examines the evolving responsibilities of teachers in the context of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, situating the discussion within broader global trends of digitalization, globalization, and changing learner needs. Employing a qualitative content analysis methodology, the study draws on both primary sources — including the NEP 2020 policy document and government reports — and secondary scholarly literature to explore how the policy reshapes teacher identity, preparation, and professional practice.

The paper identifies a decisive paradigm shift from teachers as knowledge transmitters to teachers as facilitators, mentors, digital integrators, and lifelong learners. NEP 2020 introduces several structural reforms to drive this transformation, including the introduction of a four-year integrated B.Ed. programme, mandatory Continuous Professional Development of at least 50 hours annually, the establishment of National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), merit-based recruitment, and enhanced teacher autonomy. The policy also emphasizes technology integration, inclusive education, mother tongue pedagogy, competency-based learning, and formative assessment as essential dimensions of the reconceptualized teaching role.

However, the study reveals significant challenges that threaten the policy's implementation, inadequate digital infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, resistance to pedagogical change, increased administrative workloads, a persistent policy-practice gap, and barriers to inclusive education. The paper proposes key transformation strategies — including experiential learning, multilingual pedagogy, community engagement, and reflective practice — to bridge these gaps.

The findings underscore that NEP 2020's vision can only be realized through sustained institutional support, systemic investment in teacher development, and a deeper societal reimagining of the teacher's role as central, dignified, and irreplaceable in shaping human potential.

Index Terms - Teacher Reconceptualization, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, 21st Century Education, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Pedagogical Transformation

"Teaching is a very noble profession that shapes the character, calibre, and future of an individual. If the people remember me as a good teacher, that will be the biggest honour for me". - Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

I. Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in rapid social, economic, and technological transformations that demand an equally dynamic evolution in education (Gautam, 2024; Maurya, Kapse, Shukla & Nishad, 2025). Teachers—historically the primary transmitters of content—now face expanded responsibilities: cultivating critical thinking, fostering digital literacy, enabling interdisciplinary inquiry, and guiding lifelong learning in diverse, multilingual classrooms (Dixit, Saini & Dixit, 2025; Prajapati, 2024). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 positions teachers at the heart of this transformation, proposing comprehensive reforms in teacher preparation, professional development, and institutional governance to meet India's ambitions of inclusive, high-quality education rooted in national ethos and global competencies (Lalzawmliana, Lalthlanawmi & Lalchhanchhuahi, 2023).

NEP 2020 signals paradigm shifts in teacher education, the policy envisages moving teacher preparation into multidisciplinary higher education institutions, establishing a four-year integrated B.Ed. as the minimum qualification by 2030, mandating continuous professional development (at least 50 hours per year), and introducing merit-based tenure and promotion structures to empower teachers professionally (Acharjee, 2025; Chandra & Singh, 2024). Concurrently, the policy emphasizes pedagogical renewal—promoting inquiry-based, discussion-oriented learning, integration of educational technology for personalization (including flipped and hybrid classrooms and AI-enabled tools), and embedding socio-emotional learning and multilingualism into curricula—thereby redefining classroom roles from knowledge dispensers to facilitators, designers, and mentors (Pawar, 2025; Rayees Ahmad Dar & Jan, 2023).

However, the envisioned transformation faces significant challenges. Existing teacher education systems exhibit infrastructural deficits, a gap between theory and practice, prevalence of undertrained teachers, and insufficient emphasis on practical and socio-emotional competencies (Prajapati, 2024; Sharma, 2022). Empirical reviews and policy analyses highlight concerns about capacity, regulation, and implementation readiness across institutions—elements that may impede NEP's progressive goals if not addressed through coherent policy action and sustained investment.

This paper analyses the changing role of teachers within the 21st century, examines NEP 2020's key provisions related to teachers, explores how these provisions reshape teacher responsibilities in practice, and identifies challenges to this transformation. Drawing on recent scholarly analyses and NEP policy documentation, it aims to provide a policy-grounded framework for understanding the implications of NEP 2020 for teacher identity, preparation, and professional growth, and to propose actionable recommendations to bridge policy intent and classroom reality.

II. Need and Significance of the Study

Teachers are the foundation of both our educational system and our society. It is in charge of the training and employment of competent educators. These days, innovative careers like teaching are crucial for moulding the next generation. Teachers' duties must be redefined in light of the 21st century's rapid educational transition brought about by globalization, technology, and shifting student needs. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 transforms educators from knowledge transmitters to mentors and facilitators by emphasizing competency-based education, critical thinking, and holistic development. However, there is a discrepancy between what is expected by policy and how classrooms are actually run. This study is necessary to determine the difficulties in putting NEP 2020 into practice and to look at how teachers are adjusting to these changes.

The study is important because it helps close the gap between policy and practice, supports efficient teacher training, and offers insights into changing teacher competencies. Additionally, it helps to enhance teaching-learning procedures and provides policymakers, educators, and institutions with useful advice on how to properly implement NEP 2020.

III.Objectives of the Study

- 3.1 To analyse the changing role of teachers in the 21st century.
- 3.2 To identify the key provisions of NEP 2020 that pertain to teachers and aim to reshape their responsibilities
- 3.3 To Find out challenges faced by teachers in this transformation.
- 3.4 To explore effective transformation strategies for teachers aligned with NEP 2020's vision

IV.Methodology

The study is based on a wholly qualitative strategy related to content analysis. For the purpose of the study data have been collected from the two sources: primary sources and secondary sources. The data from primary source include NEP 2020 policy document, Government reports and secondary data includes eminent workers like M. Dixit, S. Saini & K. Dixit's Teacher Education in India: An analysis in the context of the National Education Policy, 2020 (2025); P. J. Bhikhubhai's A critical studies of NEP 2020 (2022). Published journal, periodicals are the examples of secondary sources.

V.Discussion of the objectives

5.1 Objective 1: Analyse the changing role of teachers in the 21st century:

The 21st century has transformed education due to globalization, digitalization, and changing learner needs. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes that teachers are the key drivers of educational change. Therefore, their roles have been significantly redefined.

5.1.1 Rapid technological advancement

Technology has changed the way we make and share knowledge. People often use smart classrooms, AI technologies, and online resources. Integrating ICT (information and communication technology) and using digital tools in the classroom have changed education by making it more flexible, engaging, and interactive in both traditional and online settings. These tools, which are often called information and communication technology (ICT) tools, are things like gamified tests, interactive presentations, and software for managing a classroom. They also help students use technology in a responsible way (GOI, 2020).

Impact: Teacher becomes a technology integrator and digital facilitator.

5.1.2 Globalization and knowledge economy

Globally, education is now interconnected (GOI, 2020). To compete in the global employment market, students require certain competencies. Innovation and economic progress are related to knowledge. In this evolving situation, educators need to have gain a grasp of how cultures, economy, politics, and environments are all intertwined on a global scale (Yadav & Jamwal, 2024). It entails acknowledging global concerns like inequality and climate change, as well as cultivating empathy and the ability to negotiate various worldviews and intercultural relationships, promoting cooperation and communication, and preparing pupils for worldwide standards.

Impact: Teacher becomes a global educator.

5.1.3 Information explosion: These days, information is readily accessible via the internet. Teachers are no longer the only source of information for students. Teachers must assist pupils in identifying trustworthy sources, foster critical thinking abilities, and impart knowledge analysis and application skills (Suri & Sharma, 2026; Singh, 2025).

Impact: Teacher becomes a guide and knowledge creator.

5.1.4 Need for lifelong learning

Learning is no longer confined to the classroom. In today's world, ongoing skill development is essential. By encouraging ability like metacognition (thinking about thinking), perseverance through difficult assignments, and regular daily study, educators can promote self-learning. Journaling, making modest personal objectives, reading outside of the curriculum, using self-reflection to assess progress, encouraging curiosity and independent thought, and routinely updating one's own knowledge are all important habits (GOI, 2020).

Impact: Teacher becomes a lifelong learner and motivator.

5.1.5 Digital learning and online platforms

The use of blended learning, e-learning tools, and online education is growing. Digital education is aided by platforms such as DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing). Instructors must manage virtual classrooms, provide digital content, and conduct online classes (Dalai & Biswakalyani, 2024; Deb, 2013).

Impact: Teacher becomes an Online Educator.

5.1.6 Inclusive and equitable education

Every student, regardless of background, should have access to education. Prioritize students with special needs, gender equality, and diversity. Make sure everyone participates equally, address individual learning differences, and use inclusive teaching strategies (GOI, 2020).

Impact: Teacher becomes an Inclusive Educator.

5.1.7 Competency-based curriculum

Focus shifts from memorization to skill development. Emphasis on problem-solving, creativity, and application (Lalzarmliana, Lalthlanawmi & Lalchhanchhuahi, 2023). Teachers must have to design activity-based learning, assess skills instead of rote knowledge, encourage practical understanding.

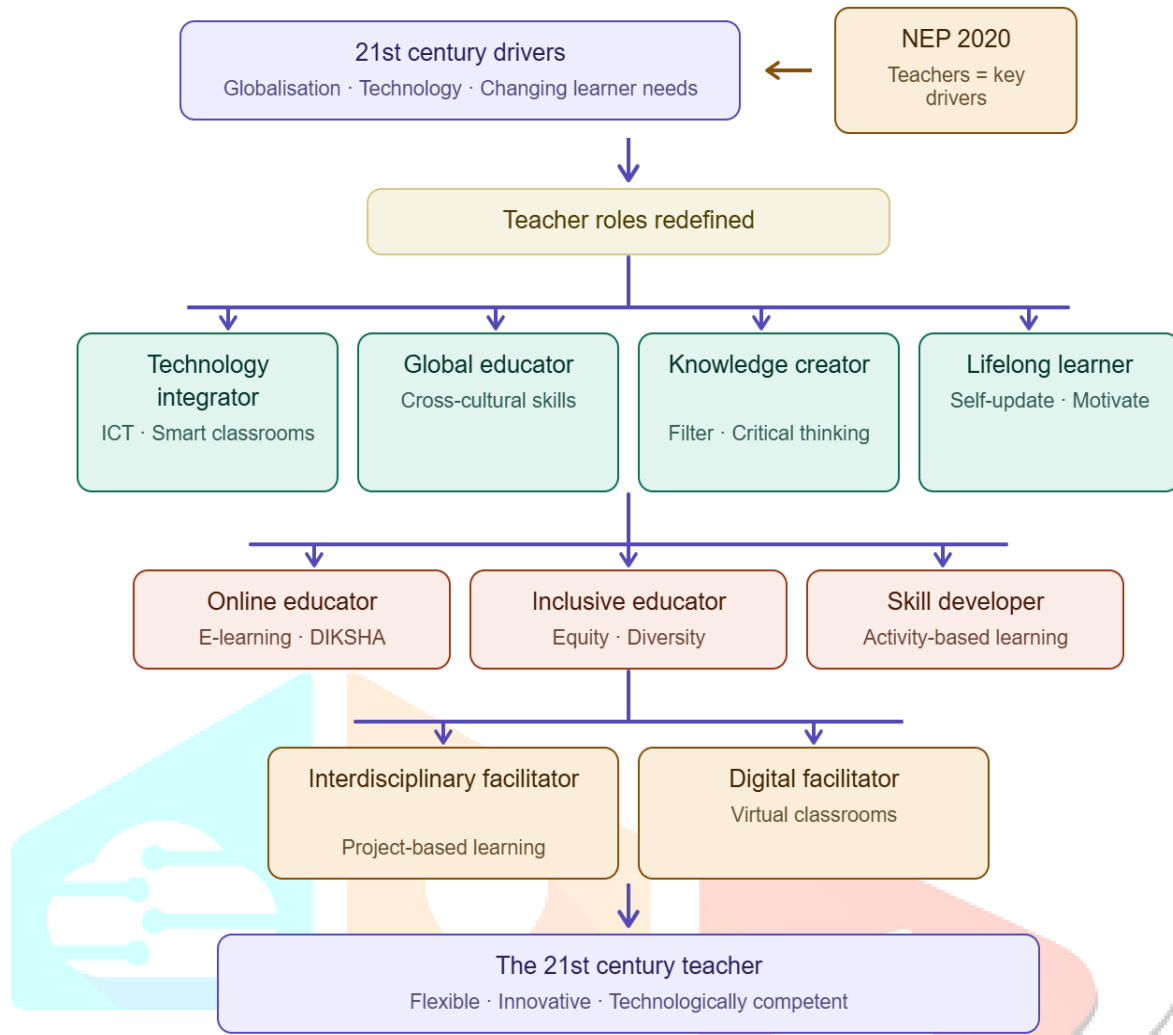
Impact: Teacher becomes a skill developer.

5.1.8 Interdisciplinary learning

Subjects are interconnected (e.g., Science + Technology + Mathematics). Encourages holistic understanding. Teachers need to encourage project-based learning, integrate several disciplines, and relate knowledge to practical scenarios (Sharma, 2022).

Impact: Teacher becomes an Interdisciplinary Facilitator.

Education now focuses on competencies rather than rote learning (GOI, 2020). As a result, teachers must adapt to new roles and responsibilities. These trends demand that teachers become flexible, innovative, and technologically competent.



Source: From Author's

Traditional vs Modern Role of Teachers:

Traditional Role

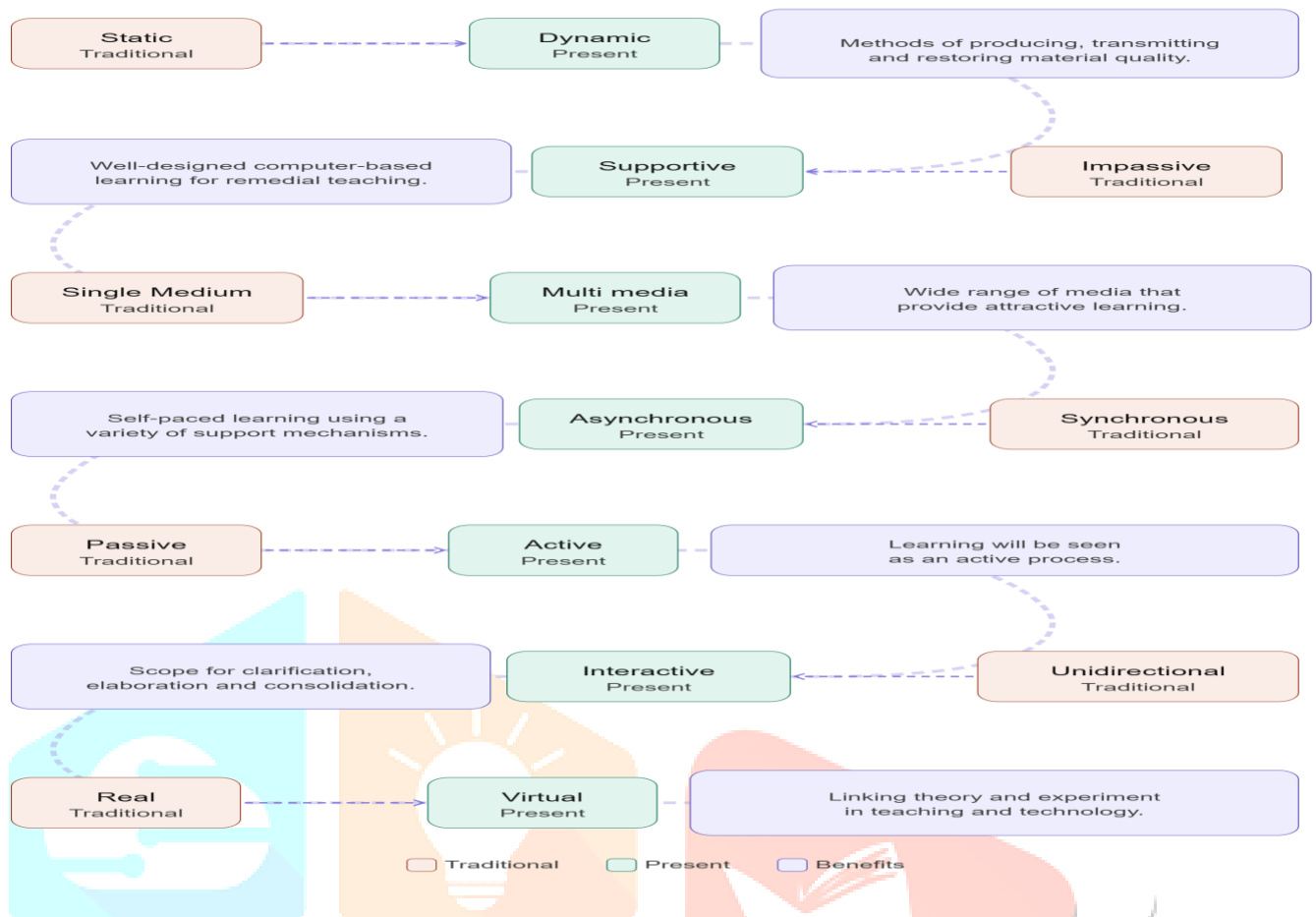
- Knowledge transmitter
- Authority figure
- Focus on rote learning
- Teacher - centred classroom
- Limited professional growth

Modern Role

- Facilitator of learning
- Mentor and guide
- Focus on critical thinking
- Learner- centred classroom
- Continuous professional development

This transformation reflects a paradigm shift in educational philosophy (GOI, 2020).

Development of New Learning Paradigm-



Source: Sarkar (2021)

5.2 Objective:2 The key provisions of NEP 2020 that pertain to teachers and aim to reshape their responsibilities:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes teachers as the *most important pillar of the education system*. It introduces several reforms to improve teacher quality, training, autonomy, and professional standards. Those are:

5.2.1 Teacher Education Reform

Introduction of a 4-year Integrated B.Ed. Programme, Minimum qualification for teaching by 2030, Focus on multidisciplinary education and ensures strong subject knowledge + pedagogy (Sharma, 2022).

5.2.2 National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)

Development of clear standards for teacher performance, defines competencies and roles, guides recruitment, promotion, and evaluation also promoting professionalism and accountability (Kumari, 2024; GOI, 2020).

5.2.3 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Mandatory 50 hours of training per year it includes: Workshops, Online courses, Peer learning to helps teachers stay updated with new methods (Meena, 2023; GOI, 2020).

5.2.4 Teacher Recruitment and Deployment

NEP 2020 focuses on merit-based and transparent recruitment, posting teachers close to their local areas, Enlargement of teacher vacancies, improves efficiency and stability of the teachers (Kasra, 2025).

5.2.5 Teacher Autonomy and Empowerment

In teaching profession if you want to enhance your skill you need freedom to choose teaching methods, flexibility in curriculum delivery, encouragement for innovation to builds confidence and creativity into the teachers (Markkandeyan, Iseni, Joshi & Dadhich, 2025).

5.2.6 Reduction of Non-Teaching Work

Teachers will focus mainly on teaching and non-academic duties should be minimized for improvement of teaching quality. It is essential to boost classroom engagement, as teacher spend their maximum time on administrative tasks, surveys, and duties like cooking meals or election duty. The draft NEP and court rulings, such as in Haryana (2025), recommend limiting these tasks to improve education quality.

5.2.7 Career Management and Progression (CMP)

Clear career growth pathways, promotions based on performance, recognition of excellence, motivates teachers professionally these are the main things which may develop CMP into the teachers (GOI, 2020).

5.2.8 Improved Working Conditions

For better school infrastructure, Safe and supportive environment and availability of teaching-learning materials will helps to enhances teacher effectiveness for teachers (Maurya, Kapse, Shukla & Nishad, 2025).

5.2.9 Use of Technology in Teaching

We live in a technological era. As a teacher if you want to cope with the present changing scenario you must have to train yourself. Training in digital tools and ICT, use of platforms like DIKSHA and promotion of online and blended learning Prepares teachers for modern classrooms (GOI, 2020).

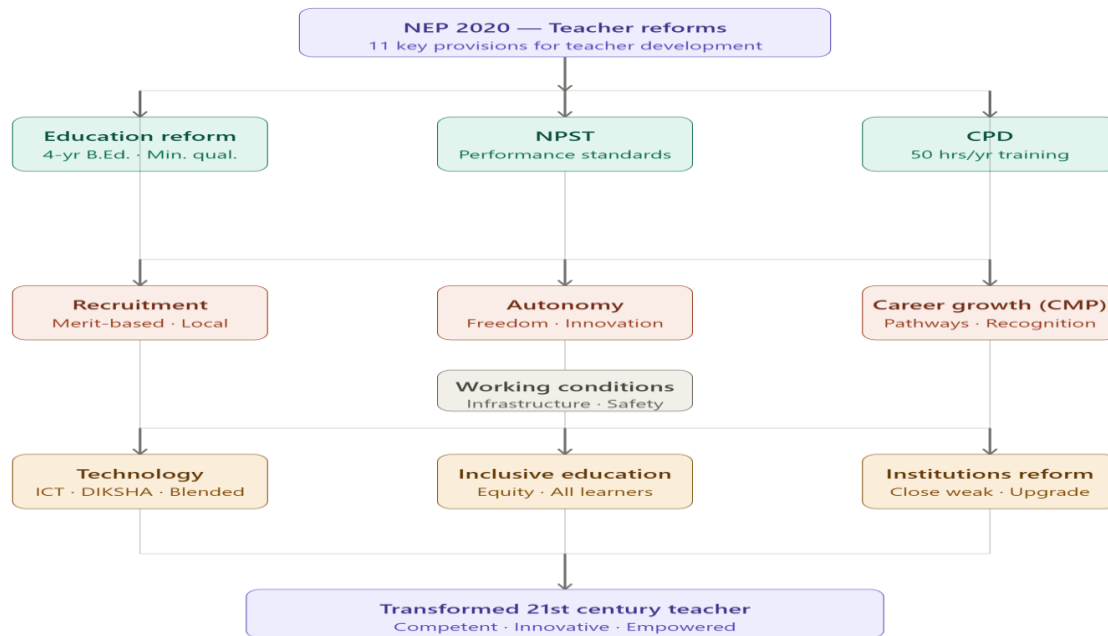
5.2.10 Focus on Inclusive Education

There is a quotation that 'Segregation is against the law of nature'. That means that as a teacher you should remember that everyone is equal in terms of their diversity (Mondal, 2024; Pawar, 2025). For this training teachers to handle diverse learners, support for children with disabilities and also emphasis on equity and inclusion and have to ensures education for all.

5.2.11 Teacher Training Institutions Reform

For teachers' professional development it is very much indeed Clouser of low-quality institutions, Integration into multidisciplinary universities and also improved quality of teacher education for the betterment of overall teacher standards (Prajapati, 2024; Chandra & Singh, 2024).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a comprehensive framework for teacher development, focusing on quality education, professional growth, and empowerment. These provisions aim to transform teachers into competent, innovative, and responsible educators for the 21st century.



Source: From Author's

5.3 Objective 3: Challenges faced by teachers in this transformation:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brings major changes in teaching roles. However, teachers face several challenges while adapting to these new responsibilities.

5.3.1 Lack of Adequate Training

Many teachers are not properly trained in modern pedagogy and how to use Digital tools, also faces some difficulty in adopting new teaching methods. For that reason, they are facing some difficulties (Dalai & Biswakalyani, 2024).

5.3.2 Digital Divide and Infrastructure Issues

Lack of internet access, Smart classrooms and Digital divide teaches are facing some major problem. Maily in rural and remote areas are more affected (Meena, 2023).

5.3.3 Resistance to Change

Teachers are used to traditional methods, they have fear of applying new technology and approaches also lack of motivation to change that traditional method (Deb, 2013). For this reason, they are afraid to adopt new method.

5.3.4 Increased Workload

Additional responsibilities like - Continuous assessment, Documentation, Training programs are increasing workload among teachers and also leads to stress and burnout. It creates a significant imbalance that leads to widespread burnout and diminished well-being (Mondal, 2024; Pawar, 2025).

5.3.5 Lack of Institutional Support

Limited guidance from administration, insufficient teaching resources and poor implementation strategies are affecting teaching profession. It hinders progress across sectors, including water management, education and entrepreneurship (Kumari, 2024). It manifests through red tape, inaccessible infrastructure, and lack of training, resulting in lower morale and stalled innovation.

5.3.6 Policy-Practice Gap

NEP ideas are strong but, implementation is uneven. Schools differ in resources and readiness for this implementation gap. It occurs when there is a significant disconnect between written rules, laws, or strategies and how they are actually carried out in the real world (GOI, 2020).

5.3.7 Difficulty in Implementing Inclusive Education

Handling diverse learners is a challenging task. Lack of special training for: Children with disabilities and Different learning levels in inclusive education stems from a complex interplay between systemic, professional, and social barriers. A significant policy – practice gap remains due to inadequate teacher preparedness and support, rigid curriculum & assessment systems and poor collaboration and policy implementation (Sharma, 2022; GOI, 2020).

5.3.8 Assessment Challenges

Transition from rote exams to competency-based assessment teachers have faces lack experience in new evaluation methods. In this changing scenario the challenges are often more pronounced in rural or economically disadvantaged areas where resources are scarce (Maurya, Kapse, Shukla, & Nishad, 2025).

5.3.9 Limited Professional Development Opportunities

CPD programs are not always Regular or Practical and quality of training varies. For these teachers are lacking in professional development that hampering in their profession (GOI, 2020).

5.3.10 Language and Communication Barriers

Language is the medium to convey your feeling or thoughts to another person. Multilingual classrooms create challenges; teachers may not be trained in multilingual teaching for this they are faces many problems into the classroom (GOI, 2020).

5.4 Objective 4: Effective transformation strategies for teachers aligned with NEP 2020's vision:

NEP 2020 envisions a fundamental shift in what it means to be a teacher — moving from a transmitter of information to a guide, mentor, and co-learner. Here are the key transformation strategies:

5.4.1 Shift to competency-based teaching

Instead of covering syllabus, teachers should focus on building foundational competencies — literacy, numeracy, critical thinking — and design lessons around what students can *do*, not just what they know (GOI, 2020).

5.4.2 Continuous professional development (CPD)

NEP 2020 mandates at least 50 hours of CPD annually. Teachers should engage with NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers' Holistic Advancement), peer learning groups, and online platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM to keep skills current (GOI, 2020).

5.4.3 Technology integration

Moving beyond the blackboard, teachers can use DIKSHA for curated digital content, blended learning models, and simple tools like QR-coded textbooks or offline apps in low-connectivity areas (GOI, 2020).

5.4.4 Experiential and inquiry-based learning

NEP 2020 explicitly promotes learning through art, storytelling, roleplay, projects, and hands-on experiments. Teachers need to redesign lessons so students discover knowledge rather than receive it passively (Chandra & Singh, 2024).

5.4.5 Holistic and formative assessment

Replacing exam-centric evaluation with portfolios, peer assessment, observation records, and the 360° report card model covering cognitive, social, physical, and emotional dimensions (Sarkar, 2021).

5.4.6 Mother tongue and multilingual pedagogy

Teachers in the early grades should be comfortable teaching in the child's home language, building a bridge before introducing other languages — a significant mindset shift for many (GOI, 2020; Kumari, 2024).

5.4.7 Inclusive and differentiated instruction

Classrooms are diverse; teachers must learn to identify varied learning needs and adapt content, pace, and method accordingly — including for children with disabilities (Garai, 2024; Gupta, 2024).

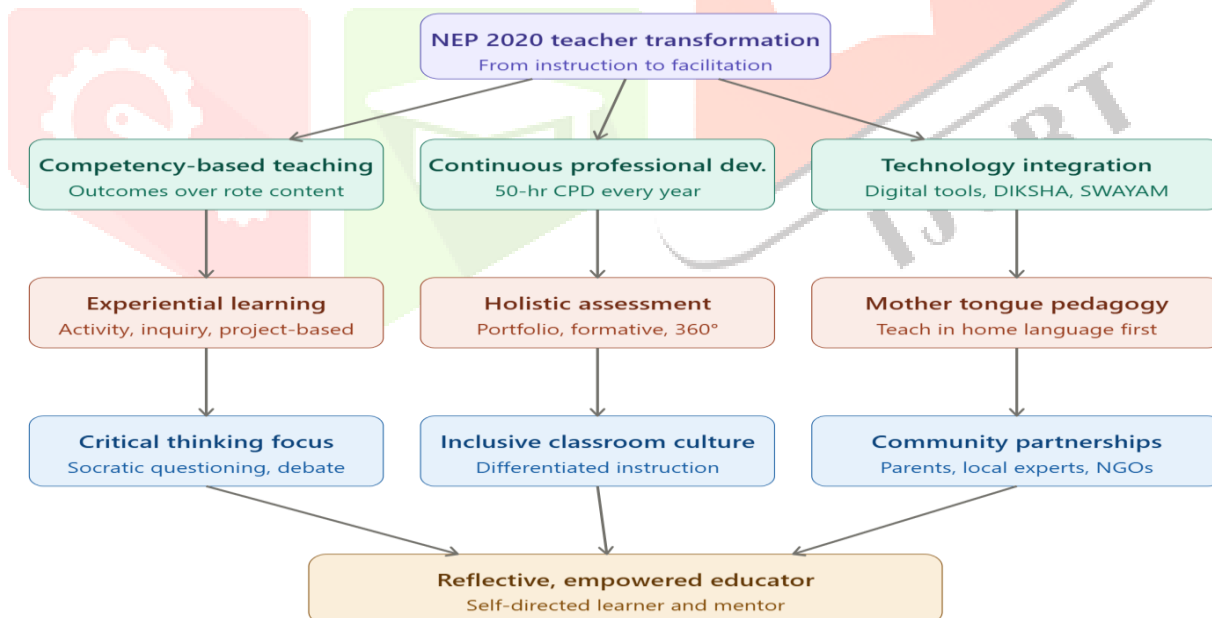
5.4.8 Community and parent engagement

Schools are not islands. Teachers should actively connect with parents, local practitioners, and community knowledge-holders to make learning contextually relevant (GOI, 2020).

5.4.9 Critical thinking over rote learning

Shifting from "what is the answer" to "why" and "what if" — using Socratic questioning, debate, and open-ended problems as everyday tools (GOI, 2020; Sharma, 2022; Garai, 2024).

The underlying mindset shift NEP 2020 demands is that teachers become reflective practitioners — regularly examining their own practice, seeking feedback, and continuously evolving. Teacher transformation is less a training event and more an ongoing professional identity.



Source: From author's

VI. Conclusion:

In the unfolding narrative of India's educational transformation, the teacher stands not at the periphery but at the very heart of change. The National Education Policy 2020 does not merely revise curricula or restructure institutions — it reimagines the very soul of teaching. And at the center of that reimagination is a profoundly human question: Who is a teacher, really?

For too long, the teacher has been cast as a conveyor of content — a figure whose worth was measured in syllabi completed and examinations passed (GOI, 2020). NEP 2020 disrupts this reductive understanding. It calls upon the teacher to become something far more complex and far more beautiful. A mentor who nurtures curiosity, a guide who walks alongside rather than ahead, a lifelong learner who models the very love of knowledge they wish to ignite in others (Markkandeyan, Iseni, Joshi & Dadhich, 2025).

To reconceptualize the role of teachers in the 21st century is not simply a policy exercise. It is an act of deep respect — for the profession, for the child, and for the society that both serve (Gautam, 2024). It requires us to acknowledge that a teacher carries in their hands something irreplaceable - the power to shape how a young mind sees the world. No algorithm, no platform, no artificial intelligence can replicate that human touch — the moment a teacher notices a struggling child and finds, instinctively, the right words.

NEP 2020 recognizes this irreplaceability. By emphasizing holistic development, competency-based learning, mother tongue instruction, and continuous professional growth, the policy does not burden the teacher — it dignifies them. It says your role is not to deliver lessons; your role is to change lives (GOI, 2020).

Yet policy alone cannot complete this transformation. The real reconceptualization must happen within — in the way teachers see themselves, in the way schools support them, and in the way, society honors them. A teacher who feels seen, valued, and empowered will inevitably pass that sense of dignity on to every student who walks through their door.

As India steps into an era of rapid technological, ecological, and social change, the 21st-century teacher must be more than a professional — they must be a humanizer in a world increasingly drawn toward the mechanical (Markkandeyan, Iseni, Joshi & Dadhich, 2025). They must protect wonder in an age of information overload. They must teach children not just how to find answers, but how to ask better questions.

In this light, NEP 2020 is not merely an education policy. It is an invitation — to every teacher in every classroom, in every corner of this vast country — to rise, to reflect, and to reconnect with the deepest purpose of their calling. The transformation of education begins not in policy documents, but in that quiet, powerful moment when a teacher and a student look at each other and both believe: something meaningful is possible here.

The reconceptualization of teachers' roles under NEP 2020 reflects global educational trends. Teachers are no longer passive transmitters of knowledge but active facilitators of learning. However, the success of this transformation depends on: Teacher readiness, Institutional support, Effective implementation Without these, the policy's vision may remain unfulfilled. That belief is the foundation of everything. Thus, we can say the Teacher as a Living Bridge.

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