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NEW APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NEP2020: A STUDY OF THE INTEGRATED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Abstract: Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) is a flagship initiative under NEP2020 in the field of Teacher education in India. It is a four-year integrated dual major undergraduate programme that allows the students to receive a Bachelor degree in Education (B.Ed.) along with a major bachelor's degree (B.A./B.Sc./B.Com.) in a chosen disciplinary/inter-disciplinary subject at the same time. The programme is designed keeping in consideration the long-standing issues in the field of teacher education for its inadequate importance on disciplinary knowledge and most importantly its lack of integration with pedagogical, practical and professional competencies. In this paper, the investigator made an effort to discuss the main features of integrated teacher education programme along with its key benefits. The study is completely based on Secondary data collected from available books, journals, official documents, websites etc.

Keywords: ITEP, Student-teachers, NEP2020, Teacher Education

INTRODUCTION:**Teacher Education= Subject knowledge+ Pedagogical knowledge+ Teaching skills**

Education is very much important for the preservation of human culture. Unlike other living beings, humans possess a very unique capability of lifelong learning which has become increasingly essential in the modern technologically advanced society. In comparison to earlier times where human beings needed much less of learning for leading their life, today's complex world demands higher level of education with its continuous upgradation for helping individuals adapt in both natural and social environments. Teachers are the key elements of any education system. They hold the responsibility of giving quality education to the children and so considered as the single most important factor in the system of education. A teacher is the one who acts as a torchbearer of a society by bringing one from the darkness to the light of knowledge. In true sense, the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers which in turns the expected outcome of the quality Teacher Education Programme. Teacher education is a training programme which prepares both the pre-service and in-service teachers for teaching. The main objective is to equip all the teachers with right knowledge and essential pedagogical skills which helps them to succeed in their profession. In India, the apex body of teacher education is NCTE which regulates and controls the country's teacher education programme. There are many teacher education programs available in India for preparing the teachers accordingly with the various stages of education such as- D.El.Ed. for Elementary teachers, B.Ed. for Secondary teachers and M.Ed. for higher education teachers. There is a famous saying that 'teachers are born, not made' but in reality, it is evident that 'teachers are made, not born' and this is all because of the Teacher Education programs. The global education landscape has been undergoing profound transformation with the advancement of science and technology. With the growing changes in each and every aspect of life it has been realized that the child should not only learn, but they should learn how to learn. Education should be less content centric rather it should be more about learning how to think critically, solve problems, how to be creative, adaptive and multidisciplinary and how to be innovative in this growing world. For making up the loophole of current education system, there must be a major reform in the whole educational setup to bring equality, equity, integrity and inclusivity into the system from early stage of education to the higher education. Keeping these factors into consideration the Government of India introduced National Education Policy (NEP2020). This policy has replaced the 34-years old National Policy of Education (NPE1986) and becomes the first comprehensive educational policy of 21st century. The policy aims to attend to the many growing developmental needs of the country and proposes for a comprehensive revision and overhauling of all aspects of education. The goal is to build a system of education equipped to meet 21st century aspirations and is aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG4) of 'Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all' while remaining deeply rooted in India's traditions and value systems. As per NEP2020, teachers must be at the center of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The policy seeks to re-establish teachers across all levels of education as the most respected and reputed member of the society honoring their role in shaping generations. The policy highlights, "Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of schoolteachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy" [Para 15.1, NEP2020]. Teacher education in India has been criticized over time for its fragmented and isolated nature. To address these issues NEP2020 introduced 4-year integrated B.Ed. programme i.e. Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) which aimed at improving and reaching the levels of integrity and credibility required in restoring the quality of teaching profession.

Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)

Integrated Teacher Education Programme is a four-year integrated dual major undergraduate programme that allows the students to receive a Bachelor degree in Education (B.Ed.) along with a major bachelor's degree (B.A/ B.Sc./B. Com) in a selected disciplinary/inter-disciplinary subject. The programme is designed keeping in consideration the long-standing issues in teacher education for its inadequate importance on disciplinary knowledge and most importantly its lack of integration with pedagogical, practical and professional competencies. ITEP seeks to prepare prospective teachers for teaching at the new schooling pattern (5+3+3+4) i.e. foundational, preparatory, middle and secondary stages of education suggested by NEP2020. The dedicated and desirable candidates who want to pursue teaching career need to join the course after completing Higher Secondary or its equivalent level of education. As a four-year integrated degree programme, ITEP provides the student-teachers with sufficient time to gain the knowledge, skills and professional competencies required for the teaching profession. By awarding two bachelor's degree, one in a chosen specialised discipline and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) simultaneously the programme not only prepares student-teachers for school teaching but also enables them to pursue higher education in their chosen discipline. The main aim is integration of subject specific knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and internship programme within 4-year undergraduate course. As envisioned in NEP2020, the programme shall be offered in inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary Higher Education institutions (HEIs) and the main authority of the programme shall lie with the Education Department of the concerned institutions. All the stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) need to be converted into multidisciplinary institutions by 2030 for becoming eligible to offer ITEP and this programme is expected to become the minimum qualification required for teaching by 2030.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To discuss the main features of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)
2. To discuss the Key benefits of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)

Methodology:

The investigator conducted the study based on Secondary data collected from available academic journals, official documents, websites etc.

Discussion of the Objectives:

Important features of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP):

The main aim of 4-year integrated teacher education programme is preparing fully dedicated, passionate, motivated, well qualified and professionally well trained and well-equipped educators for teaching at different stages of education. Educators emerging from ITEP are assumed not only to transact knowledge but also to nurture critical thinking, creativity, innovative ideas and characters among students. The following are few points highlighting the important features of ITEP:

1. Broad structure of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). The duration of the programme is four years containing eight semesters of study. It is a dual major holistic undergraduate programme where the students get two degrees simultaneously i.e. one Bachelor degree in Education (B.Ed.) and the other in a chosen disciplinary or interdisciplinary branch of knowledge (B. A/ B.Sc./ B. Com). The programme aims to develop capacities of creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving abilities, communication skills etc. among the prospective teachers for becoming competent teachers.
2. The programme is designed to develop professionally competent and well-qualified teachers capable of addressing the diverse needs of different stages of school education i.e. 5+3+3+4 structure suggested by NEP2020. The student-teachers need to specialize in any one of the given

stages of school education- Foundational stage (3years in Anganwadi or any other preschools and Grades 1&2), Preparatory stage (Grades 3-5), Middle school stage (Grades 6-8) and Secondary stage (Grades 9-12). Each stage of specialization prepares the prospective teachers for teaching at that particular level.

3. The programme offers flexibility to the student-teachers with its multiple entry- exit and re-entry options with proper certifications. The student-teachers if wishes to exit after completion of one year will be awarded with a certificate mentioning the credits earned, if wishes to exit after completion of two years will be awarded with a Diploma mentioning the credits earned, if wishes to exit after completion of three years will be awarded with a Bachelor's Degree in the selected Major subject upon earning at least 120 credits with a minimum 48 credits in the Major subject and finally those student-teachers who successfully complete the four years (eight semesters) of study will be awarded with Dual-major undergraduate degree: BA.B.Ed or B.Sc.B.Ed or B.Com-B.Ed. upon earning at least 160 credits with minimum of 80 credits in Education and 48 credits in the Second major subject.
4. ITEP being a Dual-Major bachelor's programme with a particular school stage specialization, it will provide the student-teachers the award of one of the following Degrees based on their selected academic discipline of study and the stage of school education in which they choose to specialize.

BA.B. Ed (Foundational stage with Major in.....)	BA.B. Ed (Preparatory stage with Major in....)	BA.B. Ed (Middle stage with Major in...)	BA.B. Ed (Secondary stage with Major in...)
B.Sc.B.Ed. (Foundational stage with Major in.....)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Preparatory stage with Major in....)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Middle stage with Major in...)	B.Sc.B.Ed. (Secondary stage with Major in...)
B. Com-B.Ed. (Foundational stage with Major in.....)	B. Com-B.Ed. (Preparatory stage with Major in....)	B. Com-B.Ed. (Middle stage with Major in...)	B. Com-B.Ed. (Secondary stage with Major in...)

5. For admission to 4-year Integrated programme, candidates must have completed Grade 12 or its equivalent level of education with minimum of 50% marks in aggregate or its equivalent grade from a recognized board or university and the students must go through a National Common Entrance Test (NCET) conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).
6. The student-teachers after completing the 4-year ITEP will be directly eligible to pursue Higher studies (Master's Degree) in both Education as well as the Major Subject they have selected during the Programme.
7. ITEP shall be offered by Multidisciplinary Higher Education Institutions. This will make the HEIs able to provide expertise in both the chosen Major and Minor subjects (disciplinary/inter-disciplinary) as well as all the other Education related courses like- foundation of education, Ability Enhancement and other value-based courses, psychological, philosophical, sociological and historical perspectives of education etc.
8. ITEP institutions must partner with a group of schools for ensuring proper Theory-Practice connections of the programme. This partnership would provide the prospective teachers with school experience through practice teaching and observation. By encouraging collaborative Action Research between schools and HEIs, it helps in continuous professional development of both the faculty of HEIs and teachers of the schools.

9. ITEP follows semester-based structure with a total of eight semester where two semesters conducted in each academic year. Each semester requires 15-16 weeks of teaching-learning activities which excludes the end-semester examination, at least 96 working days excluding the exam days with a minimum 40 hours of instructional time.
10. Courses deliver through classroom teaching requires at least 15 hours of instruction time per credit in a semester whereas, practicum-based activities including seminars, workshops, lab works, field-based activities and other practical activities requires at least 30 hours of students' engagement per credit in a semester.
11. The student-teachers need to select their Stage Specialization along with the Major and Minor course of study during the time of Application to the Programme.

Key Benefits of Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP):

Integrated teacher education is a flagship initiative under NEP2020 designed to transform the traditional pattern of teacher education in India. The programme seeks to prepare professionally skilled, dedicated, passionate and multidisciplinary teachers for teaching at different stages of school education. The following are some key points highlighting benefits of ITEP:

1. ITEP saves time and energy of the students who want to pursue teaching career by enabling them to complete two major degrees (B.A/ B.Sc./B. Com along with B.Ed.) simultaneously in a span of 4-years instead of the traditional 5-years requirements i.e. 3-years graduation and 2-years B.Ed.
2. The programme by conducting in a multidisciplinary environment helps the trainees to get insight into various subjects beyond their areas of specialization which widens their knowledge and makes them capable of teaching in different settings.
3. The programme combines both subject specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge which ensures a deeper understanding of the contents as well as teaching skills.
4. The student-teachers after successful completion of 4-years will be directly able to pursue Higher Education (Master's Degree) in both Education and the Major subject studied during the course.
5. As the student-teachers need to get enrolled after Grade 12, this will give them enough time to develop a strong and dedicated mindset for teaching profession.
6. ITEP includes various school-based activities, internship programme which provide the trainees scope of actual classroom teaching experiences.
7. ITEP seeks to prepare teachers grounded in Indian values, languages, ethos and traditions including tribal traditions while also being well acquainted with latest advancement in education and pedagogy.

CONCLUSION:

Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) is one of the most transformative initiatives proposed under National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. By integrating disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and hands-on experiences into a four-year programme, it aims to prepare professionally skilled and passionate teachers keeping in consideration the 21st century requirements. Integrated Teacher Education Programme is a four-year integrated dual- major bachelors' programme that allows the students to receive a Bachelor degree in Education (B.Ed.) along with a Major bachelor's degree (B.A/ B.Sc./B. Com) in a chosen disciplinary/inter-disciplinary subject. After going through the important characteristics and benefits of the programme, it may be said that ITEP is the most safe and secure programme for the students who want to pursue teaching career. By awarding two bachelor's degree, one in a chosen specialised discipline and the other in Education (B.Ed.) simultaneously, the programme not only prepares student-teachers for school teaching but also enables them to pursue higher education (Masters') in both the major subjects. Though ITEP seems to offer significant opportunities

for strengthening teacher education, however the success of the programme largely depends upon its effective implementation.

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