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Prof. Pralhad R Joshi

Department of Education,
Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth,
Tirupati

Institutional Framework of Teacher Education in India: Structure, Functions, and Developmental Perspectives

Prof. Pralhad R Joshi

Abstract

Teacher education in India has evolved through a structured network of national and state-level institutions designed to ensure quality, coordination, innovation, and research-based development. This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the institutional framework responsible for the growth of teacher education in India. It examines the historical evolution of training institutions, the establishment of regulatory and academic bodies, and the coordinated functioning of organizations such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), and Centres of Advanced Study in Education (CASE). Additionally, it discusses state-level agencies including State Boards of Teacher Education (SBTE), University Departments of Education (UDE), and Centres of Continuing Teacher Education (CCTE). The study highlights their objectives, major functions, contributions, and continuing challenges in strengthening teacher education across India.

Introduction

Teacher education forms the backbone of any educational system. No nation can aspire to academic excellence without professionally trained, research-oriented, and socially responsible teachers. In India, the development of teacher education has been a gradual but deliberate process shaped by historical needs, educational commissions, and policy reforms. The foundation of formal teacher training in India dates back to the early nineteenth century. The first training institution for primary teachers was established in 1802 at Serampore. In 1828, a separate institution for training women teachers was opened in Calcutta. Before independence, teacher training institutions were broadly categorized into three types: Normal Schools for primary teachers, Secondary Training Schools for secondary teachers, and Training Colleges for higher secondary teachers. Post-independence, systematic expansion took place with the introduction of postgraduate programs such as M.Ed., M.Phil., and Ph.D. in Education.

With increasing complexity in educational administration and the need for quality assurance, India established a network of national and state-level agencies dedicated to the development of teacher education. These institutions not only regulate and monitor standards but also promote research, curriculum reform, professional ethics, and continuous development of teachers.

National-Level Agencies of Teacher Education University Grants Commission (UGC)

The University Grants Commission was formally established on 28 December 1953 and became a statutory body in 1956. Headquartered in New Delhi, the UGC plays a central

Correspondence:

Prof. Pralhad R Joshi

Department of Education,
Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth,
Tirupati

role in coordinating, determining, and maintaining standards of higher education, including teacher education programs in universities. The major functions of UGC include financial assistance to universities and colleges, advising central and state governments on university development, supporting research and innovation, and funding new universities during their initial years. It also provides fellowships such as Junior Research Fellowships (JRF), Senior Research Fellowships (SRF), and Teacher Fellowships to promote advanced research in education. The UGC constituted a Teacher Education Committee to enhance research activities and academic quality in education departments. It encourages seminars, workshops, environmental education initiatives, and interdisciplinary research. Through grants and academic monitoring, UGC ensures that teacher education programs align with national development goals.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

Established in 1961, NCERT functions as an apex academic body for school education and teacher training in India. Its headquarters is located in New Delhi, with Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, and Mysuru. NCERT's core responsibilities include conducting research in elementary and secondary education, developing curriculum frameworks, preparing instructional materials, organizing in-service training programs, and conducting national talent search examinations. It plays a crucial role in designing competency-based teacher education curricula and handbooks for school experience programs. The organization emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches, internship-based training, development of self-learning materials, and innovation in pedagogy. Through its Department of Teacher Education, NCERT conducts orientation courses, workshops, annual conferences, and research studies to improve teaching-learning processes across the country.

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)

The National Council for Teacher Education was established in 1973 and later granted statutory status in 1995. It serves as the regulatory authority for teacher education institutions in India. NCTE is responsible for setting norms and standards for courses such as D.El.Ed., B.Ed., M.Ed., and integrated teacher education programs. It grants recognition to institutions, prescribes minimum qualifications for teacher educators, and ensures quality assurance through periodic inspections and evaluations. The Council has also played a key role in developing professional codes of ethics for teachers, restructuring teacher education curricula, promoting four-year integrated

programs, and organizing national seminars. By fostering coordination between central and state governments, NCTE ensures systematic growth of teacher education.

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

Established in 1969, ICSSR promotes research in social sciences, including educational research. As teacher education intersects with psychology, sociology, and philosophy, ICSSR provides grants for interdisciplinary research projects, fellowships for scholars, and financial assistance to institutions. ICSSR supports training in research methodology, publication of research findings, organization of seminars and workshops, and promotion of new research areas. Its contribution strengthens the theoretical and empirical foundations of teacher education in India.

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)

NIEPA is a premier institution dedicated to educational planning and administration. It provides advanced training to educational administrators, policymakers, and planners at national and state levels. The institute conducts research in educational management, organizes training programs, publishes books and journals, and advises governments on planning strategies. In the context of teacher education, NIEPA ensures that administrative frameworks support quality improvement, resource allocation, and systematic monitoring.

Centres of Advanced Study in Education (CASE)

Centres of Advanced Study in Education were established in selected universities with UGC support to promote high-level research in teacher education. One of the earliest centers was established at M.S. University of Baroda under the guidance of M.B. Buch. These centers focus on advanced research, doctoral programs, publication of research reports, offering fellowships, and collaboration with NCERT and NCTE. They serve as hubs for innovation, experimentation, and academic leadership in teacher education.

State-Level Agencies of Teacher Education

State Boards of Teacher Education (SBTE)

Following the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964–66), many states established State Boards of Teacher Education. These boards supervise teacher training institutions, prescribe curricula, determine admission standards, conduct inspections, and recommend recognition of institutions. They ensure qualitative and quantitative expansion of teacher education, coordinate with universities, and design policies suited to regional needs. Their role is critical in maintaining uniform standards within states.

University Departments of Education (UDE)

University Departments of Education offer undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in education. The first such department was established at the University of Calcutta in 1917. These departments conduct research, develop innovative teaching methods, establish language laboratories, promote interdisciplinary courses, and provide extension services. They contribute significantly to the academic and research dimensions of teacher education.

Centres of Continuing Teacher Education (CCTE)

With rapid curricular reforms and technological changes, in-service teacher education has become essential. Centres of Continuing Teacher Education organize refresher courses, workshops, orientation programs, and summer institutes for practicing teachers. They disseminate new pedagogical approaches, address classroom challenges, introduce innovative teaching strategies, and promote professional growth. Distance education and correspondence courses also supplement continuous development efforts.

Conclusion

The development of teacher education in India reflects a coordinated effort between national and state-level institutions. From early training schools to advanced research centers, the institutional framework has expanded in scope and complexity. Organizations such as UGC, NCERT, NCTE, ICSSR, NIEPA, and CASE provide academic leadership, regulatory oversight, research support, and financial assistance. State-level agencies ensure contextual implementation and quality monitoring. Despite significant achievements, challenges such as regional disparities, need for research integration, technological adaptation, and quality assurance persist. Strengthening collaboration among agencies, promoting evidence-based policy, and emphasizing continuous professional development remain essential for the future of teacher education in India.

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