



Evolution of teacher education and educational policy in India: Contributions of national committees, policy processes, economics of education, and the politics of educational development

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Abstract

Teacher education occupies a central position in the educational development of any nation, acting as the primary mechanism through which educational policies, curricular reforms, and national development goals are translated into classroom practice. In India, the trajectory of teacher education has been profoundly shaped by a series of committees, commissions, and policy frameworks established in response to changing socio-economic, political, and developmental imperatives. This paper critically examines the contributions of major national bodies, including the Secondary Education Commission, Kothari Education Commission, National Policy on Education, National Curriculum Framework, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, and the Justice Verma Committee, in shaping teacher preparation and professional standards. The study further analyzes the relationship between educational policy and national development, emphasizing the determinants of educational policy and the systematic process of policy formulation—ranging from problem diagnosis and option generation to implementation and impact assessment. By integrating the economics of education, the paper contrasts cost–benefit analysis and cost–effectiveness analysis, examines educational finance at micro and macro levels, and evaluates economic returns to higher education through Human Capital Theory and Signaling Theory. Additionally, the paper explores the dynamic relationship between politics and education, discussing liberal, conservative, and critical perspectives of the politics of education. It applies major theoretical approaches—behaviouralism, systems analysis, and rational choice theory—to understand educational decision-making and governance. Education is also examined as a tool for political development and political socialization, highlighting its role in nurturing democratic values, civic competence, and social cohesion. The paper concludes that teacher education reforms in India represent an ongoing policy cycle shaped by economic priorities, political ideologies, and developmental aspirations. Strengthening institutional accountability, aligning teacher education with national goals, and ensuring equitable educational finance are essential for sustainable educational transformation.

Keywords: Teacher education, educational policy, national commissions, economics of education, educational finance, human capital theory, signaling theory, politics of education, national development, policy formulation, curriculum reform, political socialization, cost–benefit analysis, budgeting in education, higher education returns

Introduction

Teacher education constitutes the backbone of an effective and equitable educational system, as it directly shapes the quality of teaching–learning processes and indirectly influences a nation’s socio-economic, cultural, and political development. Teachers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as agents of social change, value formation, and national integration. Consequently, the nature and quality of teacher education determine the success of educational reforms and the realization of broader national goals. In India, teacher education has evolved through a sustained interaction between educational policies, national development priorities, and dominant ideological perspectives on education. Since Independence, the Indian state has relied extensively on committees and commissions to diagnose systemic challenges and propose reforms in teacher preparation. Landmark initiatives such as the Secondary Education Commission and the Kothari Education Commission laid the foundation for professionalizing teaching and aligning teacher education with national development. Subsequent policy frameworks, including the National Policy on Education and the National Curriculum Framework, further emphasized teacher quality, pedagogical innovation, and continuous professional development. Over time, emerging challenges such as massification of education, equity and inclusion, globalization, and the transition to a knowledge-based

economy have necessitated periodic rethinking of teacher education. As a result, teacher education in India reflects an ongoing policy process shaped by economic considerations, political ideologies, and changing societal expectations.

Contributions of Committees and Commissions to Teacher Education

1. Secondary Education Commission (1953)^[4]

The Secondary Education Commission (1953)^[4] emphasized the professional preparation of secondary school teachers and highlighted the importance of pedagogical training, subject mastery, and moral education. It advocated for improved teacher recruitment standards and institutional support systems to enhance teaching quality.

2. Kothari Education Commission (1964–66)^[5]

The Kothari Education Commission provided a comprehensive vision of education as an instrument of national development. Its recommendation of common school systems, professional autonomy for teachers, and integration of teacher education with higher education institutions marked a turning point in policy thinking.

3. National Policy on Education (1986, 1992)^[6]

The National Policy on Education (1986)^[6] recognized teachers as the “cornerstone” of the educational system. It called for strengthening teacher education institutions,

continuous professional development, and the establishment of regulatory bodies such as the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

4. National Commission on Teachers (1999)^[8]

This commission focused on teacher motivation, service conditions, accountability, and ethical commitment, linking teacher quality directly to learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

5. National Curriculum Framework (2005)^[9]

The National Curriculum Framework (2005)^[9] promoted learner-centered pedagogy, constructivist approaches, and reflective teaching practices, thereby redefining teacher roles from instructors to facilitators of learning.

6. National Knowledge Commission (2007)^[17]

The National Knowledge Commission emphasized knowledge-driven development, advocating reforms in teacher education to align with innovation, ICT integration, and global competitiveness.

7. Yashpal Committee Report (2009)^[18]

The Yashpal Committee Report critiqued fragmentation in higher and teacher education, advocating interdisciplinary learning and academic integration.

8. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009)^[10]

The NCFTE 2009^[10] conceptualized teaching as a reflective, socially embedded profession and stressed ethical responsibility, inclusivity, and research orientation in teacher education.

9. Justice Verma Committee Report (2012)^[11]

The Justice Verma Committee Report exposed regulatory failures and commercialization in teacher education, recommending stringent quality assurance, institutional accountability, and transparency.

Relationship Between Educational Policy and National Development

Educational policy is intrinsically linked to national development, as it determines the direction, priorities, and outcomes of a country's educational system. Sound educational policies contribute directly to human capital formation, which enhances workforce productivity, innovation capacity, and economic competitiveness. By defining access, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, educational policy shapes the quality of learning outcomes and the distribution of educational opportunities across social groups. In the Indian context, national development goals such as economic growth, social justice, and democratic consolidation have consistently influenced educational policy formulation. Major policy initiatives, including the Kothari Education Commission and the National Policy on Education, explicitly linked education with national reconstruction and socio-economic transformation. Investment in teacher education occupies a central place within this framework, as teacher quality is a decisive factor in improving educational standards and learning achievements. Educational policy also promotes social mobility by expanding access to quality education for marginalized groups, thereby reducing inequalities and

fostering inclusive development. Moreover, education plays a vital role in strengthening democratic participation by cultivating informed, critical, and responsible citizens. Thus, effective educational policy serves as both a catalyst and a sustaining force for national development, reinforcing economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability through a well-prepared and professionally competent teaching workforce.

Determinants and Process of Educational Policy Formulation

1. Determinants of Educational Policy

- Socio-economic conditions
- Political ideology
- Technological change
- Demographic trends
- Global influences

2. Policy Formulation Process

1. Analysis of existing situation
2. Generation of policy options
3. Evaluation of alternatives
4. Policy decision-making
5. Planning and implementation
6. Policy impact assessment
7. Subsequent policy cycles

Economics of Education

The economics of education examines education as an investment that generates economic and social returns at both individual and societal levels. It provides analytical tools to assess how educational resources are allocated, utilized, and evaluated in relation to development outcomes. Within this framework, cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, and the study of returns to higher education occupy a central place in educational planning and policy-making.

1. Cost-Benefit Analysis vs Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) evaluates education by comparing the total costs incurred with the monetary benefits derived over time. These benefits typically include increased lifetime earnings, higher productivity, reduced unemployment, and broader social gains such as improved health and reduced crime. CBA converts both costs and benefits into monetary terms, enabling policymakers to assess whether investment in education yields a positive net return. In contrast, cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) focuses on achieving specific educational outcomes—such as improved learning levels, reduced dropout rates, or enhanced teacher competence—at the lowest possible cost. Unlike CBA, CEA does not require the monetization of benefits, making it particularly useful in evaluating alternative educational interventions where outcomes are difficult to quantify financially. Policymakers often prefer CEA when prioritizing resource allocation within limited budgets.

2. Economic Returns to Higher Education

Higher education generates both private and social returns. At the individual level, graduates benefit from higher earnings, better employment opportunities, and enhanced social mobility. From a societal perspective, higher education contributes to economic growth by producing

skilled human resources, fostering innovation, and strengthening institutional capacity. It also yields non-monetary returns such as increased civic participation, democratic values, and social cohesion. Investment in higher and teacher education, therefore, is not merely an economic choice but a strategic development decision. By strengthening human capital, higher education plays a crucial role in sustaining long-term economic development and inclusive societal progress.

Human Capital Theory vs. Signaling Theory

The economic interpretation of education is largely explained through Human Capital Theory and Signaling Theory, both of which offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives on the value of educational investment. Human Capital Theory, advanced by scholars such as Becker and Schultz, views education as a productive investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies. According to this perspective, education increases worker productivity, leading to higher earnings, improved employability, and overall economic growth. Investment in teacher education, from this standpoint, is justified as it directly improves instructional quality and learning outcomes, thereby strengthening national human capital. In contrast, Signaling Theory, associated with Spence, argues that education does not necessarily enhance productivity but serves as a signal of innate ability, discipline, and perseverance to employers. Educational credentials function as screening devices in the labor market, helping employers differentiate between individuals of varying abilities. From this viewpoint, teacher education qualifications primarily act as professional certification rather than mechanisms of skill enhancement. Teacher education in practice embodies both theoretical perspectives. It contributes to genuine skill formation through pedagogical training, subject mastery, and professional ethics, reflecting the assumptions of Human Capital Theory. Simultaneously, degrees and certifications in teacher education act as signals of competence, credibility, and professional legitimacy, as emphasized by Signaling Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic role of teacher education.

Educational Finance and Budgeting

Educational finance and budgeting constitute a crucial dimension of educational planning, as they determine the availability, distribution, and effective utilization of resources within the education system. Sound financial planning is essential for ensuring equity, quality, and sustainability in education, particularly in teacher education and higher education sectors.

1. Micro and Macro Perspectives

From a micro-level perspective, educational finance focuses on resource allocation at the institutional and household levels. Institutional financing includes expenditure on infrastructure, teacher salaries, training programs, learning resources, and administrative costs. Household-level financing refers to private spending on education such as tuition fees, learning materials, and related costs, which directly affects access and equity, especially for economically disadvantaged groups. At the macro-level, educational finance examines national budgeting and public expenditure on education. It involves government allocation of funds across different levels of education, assessment of

public investment priorities, and evaluation of education's contribution to national development. Adequate public spending reflects the state's commitment to human capital formation and social development.

2. Concept of Budgeting

Educational budgeting is a systematic process of planning, allocating, and monitoring financial resources in accordance with educational policy goals. It reflects governmental priorities, governance efficiency, and accountability mechanisms. Effective budgeting ensures optimal utilization of resources, minimizes wastage, and aligns financial decisions with educational objectives. Consequently, educational budgeting plays a decisive role in translating policy intentions into meaningful educational outcomes.

Relationship between Politics and Education

Education is inherently political, as it is shaped by power relations, ideological orientations, and governance structures within society. Decisions regarding curriculum, language of instruction, access, funding, and regulation reflect political priorities and value systems. Consequently, education functions not only as a social institution but also as a political instrument influencing citizenship, social order, and national identity.

1. Perspectives of Politics of Education

From a liberal perspective, education is viewed as a means of ensuring equal opportunity and individual advancement. It emphasizes meritocracy, access, and the role of education in promoting social mobility. The conservative perspective regards education as a mechanism for cultural transmission, focusing on the preservation of traditions, moral values, and social continuity. In contrast, the critical perspective interprets education as a site of power, domination, and inequality, arguing that schooling often reproduces existing social hierarchies related to class, caste, gender, and ethnicity. This perspective highlights the role of education in both reinforcing and challenging social injustice.

2. Approaches to Understanding Politics

Behaviouralism analyzes political processes through observable actions and decision-making behavior of individuals and institutions. Systems analysis views education as a subsystem of the political system, shaped by inputs, outputs, and feedback mechanisms. Rational choice theory explains educational decision-making in terms of cost-benefit calculations and individual preferences, offering insights into policy choices and institutional behavior.

Education for Political Development and Socialization

Education plays a fundamental role in political development and political socialization by shaping citizens' attitudes, values, and behaviors toward the political system. Through formal and informal learning processes, education cultivates political awareness, civic competence, and a sense of responsibility essential for the functioning of a democratic society. Schools, colleges, and universities serve as key institutions where individuals acquire knowledge about constitutional principles, governance structures, rights, and duties. In democratic societies such as India, education contributes to political development by promoting democratic values including equality, liberty, justice, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Civics education,

history, and social sciences encourage critical thinking, informed participation, and respect for the rule of law. Teacher education, in particular, plays a crucial role in transmitting these values, as teachers act as mediators between political ideals and societal practice. Political socialization through education also enhances nation-building by fostering national integration, social cohesion, and collective identity. Educational institutions provide a space for dialogue, debate, and democratic engagement, helping learners develop participatory skills and political efficacy. Moreover, education empowers marginalized groups by enhancing awareness of rights and enabling political participation. Thus, education functions not merely as a means of skill acquisition but as a powerful instrument for political development. By nurturing informed, responsible, and active citizens, education strengthens democratic governance and contributes to the long-term stability and progress of the nation.

Conclusion

The evolution of teacher education in India reflects a dynamic and continuous interplay between educational policy frameworks, economic considerations, and political ideologies. Since Independence, teacher education has been shaped by a series of committees, commissions, and policy initiatives that sought to respond to changing national priorities such as social equity, economic development, democratization, and global competitiveness. These interventions have progressively redefined the role of teachers from mere transmitters of knowledge to reflective professionals, nation-builders, and agents of social transformation. Economic perspectives, particularly those drawn from the economics of education, have highlighted the importance of investing in teacher education as a means of strengthening human capital, improving learning outcomes, and enhancing productivity. Simultaneously, political perspectives have underscored the influence of ideology, governance structures, and power relations in shaping educational priorities, access, and regulation. The interaction between these dimensions explains both the achievements and persistent challenges within the teacher education system, including issues of quality, equity, commercialization, and accountability. Sustained and meaningful reform in teacher education requires adequate and equitable financing, robust institutional frameworks, and transparent regulatory mechanisms. Equally important is the commitment to ethical governance that prioritizes professional integrity and public interest over market-driven considerations. Strengthening teacher education, therefore, remains central to achieving broader national development goals, as quality teachers are indispensable for building an inclusive, democratic, and knowledge-driven society.

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