

Professor of Practice in Transforming Teacher Education under NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of the concept of Professor of Practice (PoP) in higher education marks a significant reform in the Indian education system under the framework of the National Education Policy 2020. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical expertise by engaging experienced professionals from various fields in academic institutions. In the context of teacher education, the role of Professor of Practice has emerged as an important strategy for strengthening practice-oriented learning, professional competency, and experiential pedagogy. This paper examines the significance of Professor of Practice in transforming teacher education programmes in India. It highlights the emergence of the concept under the regulations of the University Grants Commission and discusses its relevance in enhancing the quality of teacher preparation. The study explores the scope of PoP in promoting school-college collaboration, strengthening internships and practicum experiences, integrating skill-based pedagogy, and providing professional mentoring to pre-service teachers. The paper further analyzes the potential challenges associated with implementation, including lack of clear operational guidelines, resistance from traditional academic structures, funding concerns, and issues related to quality assurance. The study also emphasizes the future prospects of PoP in developing competency-based teacher education and improving classroom readiness among future teachers. The paper is conceptual in nature and is based on descriptive and analytical methods, policy document analysis, and review of related literature. The study concludes that the effective implementation of Professor of Practice can play a transformative role in achieving the objectives of NEP 2020 and strengthening teacher education in India.

Keywords: *Professor of Practice, Teacher Education, NEP 2020, Experiential Learning, Skill-Based Education, School Internship, Professional Expertise, Competency-Based Education, ITEP, Teacher Preparation.*

Introduction

Teacher education plays a vital role in shaping the quality of school education and preparing competent teachers for the future. In recent years, the Indian education system has witnessed significant reforms aimed at improving the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes. One such reform introduced under the National Education Policy 2020 is the concept of Professor of Practice (PoP). This initiative seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical professional experience by inviting experts from different professional fields into higher educational institutions. The concept of Professor of Practice has emerged through the guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission to strengthen industry-academia collaboration and enhance experiential learning. Under these regulations, professionals with rich practical experience, though not necessarily

possessing traditional academic qualifications such as a Ph.D., can contribute significantly to teaching, mentoring, training, and curriculum enrichment. In teacher education institutions, the inclusion of experienced school principals, counsellors, educational administrators, ed-tech professionals, master trainers, and practicing educators can provide valuable practical insights to pre-service teachers.

The need for practice-oriented teacher education has become increasingly important in the contemporary educational context. Traditional teacher education programmes have often been criticized for emphasizing theoretical knowledge while providing limited exposure to actual classroom realities. The introduction of Professor of Practice can help overcome this limitation by integrating real-life educational experiences, classroom management strategies, innovative pedagogical techniques, and technology-enabled teaching practices into teacher preparation programmes. The implementation of PoP aligns closely with the vision of NEP 2020, which emphasizes holistic, multidisciplinary, competency-based, and experiential learning. The policy advocates the preparation of reflective, skilled, and professionally competent teachers who can effectively address the changing needs of learners and society. Therefore, the concept of Professor of Practice has the potential to transform teacher education institutions by making them more practice-oriented, collaborative, and professionally relevant.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of Professor of Practice in teacher education.
- To examine the scope of PoP in teacher education institutions.
- To analyze the potential benefits and challenges of implementation.
- To explore future prospects of PoP in improving teacher preparation.

Meaning of Professor of Practice (PoP)

Professor of Practice refers to experienced professionals who are appointed in educational institutions to contribute practical knowledge and professional expertise in teaching and training. Unlike conventional faculty appointments that primarily focus on academic qualifications and research publications, PoP positions recognize practical experience and professional achievements as valuable resources for higher education. The primary purpose of introducing PoP is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. These professionals bring field-based experience, innovative practices, problem-solving skills, and contemporary professional knowledge into academic institutions. In teacher education, Professors of Practice may include experienced school principals, teacher educators, educational consultants, counsellors, curriculum developers, ed-tech experts, and accomplished teachers who possess deep understanding of classroom realities and educational practices.

The inclusion of such professionals can enrich teacher education programmes by providing practical exposure, mentorship, experiential learning opportunities, and skill-oriented training to future teachers.

Emergence under University Grants Commission Regulations

The University Grants Commission introduced guidelines for engaging Professors of Practice in higher educational institutions to strengthen the connection between academia and professional practice. The initiative emerged as part of broader educational reforms intended to promote innovation, employability, and experiential learning in higher education. According to UGC guidelines, distinguished experts with significant professional achievements and practical experience may be appointed as Professors of Practice for teaching, mentoring, training, curriculum design, and research collaboration. These appointments aim to bring real-world expertise into educational institutions and provide students with opportunities to learn from practitioners. The policy recognizes that practical expertise is equally important as academic research in professional education. In the context of teacher education, this initiative encourages collaboration between teacher education institutions and experienced practitioners from schools and educational organizations.

Connection with National Education Policy 2020

The concept of Professor of Practice strongly aligns with the objectives and recommendations of the National Education Policy 2020. NEP 2020 emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, competency-based education, experiential pedagogy, and professional development of teachers. The policy advocates the integration of practical learning experiences into educational programmes to improve the quality and relevance of education. Teacher education under NEP 2020 aims to prepare reflective practitioners who possess strong pedagogical skills, professional competence, ethical values, and technological

proficiency. The inclusion of Professors of Practice can contribute significantly toward achieving these goals by exposing pre-service teachers to real classroom situations, innovative teaching methods, and practical educational challenges.

Furthermore, NEP 2020 promotes strong partnerships between educational institutions, schools, communities, and professional organizations. The PoP initiative supports this vision by encouraging collaboration between teacher education colleges and practicing educational professionals.

Need for Practice-Oriented Teacher Education

In the modern educational environment, teachers are expected to perform multiple roles such as facilitators, mentors, innovators, counsellors, and technology-integrated educators. However, traditional teacher education programmes often remain theory-oriented and fail to provide sufficient practical exposure. Practice-oriented teacher education is necessary to help future teachers:

- Develop classroom management skills
- Understand learner diversity
- Apply pedagogical theories in real situations
- Integrate technology effectively
- Solve classroom problems creatively
- Enhance communication and professional competencies

Areas of Scope in Teacher Education

- **Bridging Theory and Classroom Practice:** Professors of Practice can help connect theoretical concepts with practical classroom experiences. They can demonstrate how educational theories are applied in actual teaching-learning situations.
- **School-College Collaboration:** PoP can strengthen collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools by facilitating joint programmes, workshops, school visits, and practical training activities.
- **Internship and Practicum Strengthening:** Experienced practitioners can guide student teachers during internships and teaching practice, helping them develop professional confidence and classroom competencies.
- **Skill-Based Pedagogy:** PoP can promote skill-oriented teaching approaches such as communication skills, classroom interaction, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.
- **Digital and Experiential Learning:** Educational technology experts can train future teachers in digital pedagogy, online teaching tools, blended learning, and technology integration.
- **Inclusion of Experienced Professionals:** The involvement of school principals, counsellors, master trainers, curriculum developers, and ed-tech experts can enrich teacher education programmes with diverse professional experiences.
- **Professional Mentoring for Pre-Service Teachers:** PoP can act as mentors who guide student teachers regarding professional ethics, classroom challenges, career development, and innovative teaching practices.

Challenges

- **Lack of Clear Implementation Framework:** Many institutions still lack proper operational guidelines regarding appointment procedures, roles, responsibilities, and evaluation mechanisms for PoP.
- **Resistance from Traditional Academic Structures:** Traditional academic systems may resist the inclusion of professionals without conventional academic qualifications.
- **Funding and Recruitment Issues:** Financial constraints and recruitment policies may create obstacles in appointing experienced professionals.
- **Quality Assurance Concerns:** Ensuring the quality, competency, and effectiveness of Professors of Practice remains an important challenge.

- **Coordination between Schools and Institutions:** Effective collaboration between teacher education colleges and schools requires strong coordination and institutional support.

Future Prospects

The future of Professor of Practice in teacher education appears highly promising. The initiative can contribute significantly toward improving the quality and relevance of teacher preparation programmes.

- **Stronger School Linkage:** Teacher education institutions can develop stronger partnerships with schools and educational organizations.
- **Practice-Oriented B.Ed. and ITEP Programmes:** The implementation of PoP can strengthen practical components in B.Ed. and ITEP programmes.
- **Better Employability and Classroom Readiness:** Future teachers can become more professionally competent and classroom-ready through practical exposure and mentoring.
- **Promotion of Multidisciplinary and Competency-Based Education:** PoP can support the development of competency-based and multidisciplinary teacher education programmes.
- **Contribution toward Holistic Teacher Preparation:** The initiative can help achieve the vision of holistic and experiential teacher education proposed in NEP 2020.

Suggested Methodology

The present paper is conceptual in nature and follows a descriptive and analytical approach. The study is based on:

- Policy document analysis
- Review of related literature
- Examination of UGC guidelines and NEP 2020 recommendations
- Analytical interpretation of the role and significance of Professor of Practice in teacher education

Recent Areas for Inclusion

- Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)
- Competency-based teacher education
- Experiential pedagogy
- Collaboration with practicing educators
- Technology integration in teacher preparation
- Digital pedagogy and blended learning
- Professional learning communities

Conclusion

The introduction of Professor of Practice represents an important reform in Indian higher education and teacher education. It reflects the growing recognition that practical experience and professional expertise are essential components of effective teacher preparation. The initiative aligns closely with the vision of National Education Policy 2020 and has the potential to transform teacher education into a more experiential, competency-based, and practice-oriented process. Although certain implementation challenges exist, effective policy support, institutional collaboration, and proper quality assurance mechanisms can ensure the successful integration of Professors of Practice in teacher education institutions. The initiative can significantly contribute toward preparing professionally competent, reflective, innovative, and classroom-ready teachers capable of meeting the demands of twenty-first-century education.

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