

# The Evolving Role of the Teacher in NEP 2020: An Architect of India's Educational Transformation

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## Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 heralds a transformative vision for Indian education, positioning teachers not only as facilitators of learning but as the linchpin in reimagining the school ecosystem. This paper explores the evolving role of teachers under NEP 2020, grounded in the policy's holistic, multidisciplinary and child-centric philosophy. Drawing upon specific references from NEP chapters and sections, it highlights the teacher's role as an educator, mentor, community mobilizer, and lifelong learner. The integration of values from the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and examples of desired teacher attributes are interwoven to offer a culturally rooted, future-ready outlook. This expanded analysis delves into the pedagogical shifts, ethical considerations, and professional development imperatives that define the "Architect of Radiance" – the NEP-aligned teacher. Furthermore, it addresses the inherent challenges and immense opportunities that accompany this pivotal transformation, underscoring the indispensable nature of the teacher in realizing NEP's aspirations for an equitable, vibrant, and knowledge-based society.

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, Teacher Role, Educational Transformation, Holistic Education, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Experiential Learning, Professional Development, India

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## 1. Introduction: The Dawn of a New Educational Era

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 [MHRD, 2020] marks a paradigm shift from rote learning to competency-based and experiential learning. It envisions a comprehensive transformation of India's education system, aiming to align it with the demands of the 21st century and foster an equitable, vibrant knowledge society. Among its most crucial stakeholders are teachers, who are recognized as "the heart of the learning process" (NEP 2020, Para 5.1). The policy explicitly states that "the high quality, professional development, and motivation of teachers is the most important factor for the provision of quality education" (NEP 2020, Para 5.1). This underscores a profound re-evaluation of the teacher's position, elevating them from mere instructors to empowered architects of the nation's future.

This paper delves into the multidimensional role of teachers as envisioned by NEP 2020. It explores the pedagogical shifts, the emphasis on holistic development, the imperative for inclusivity and multilingualism, and the critical role in assessment reforms. Furthermore, it highlights the teacher's continuous professional growth and their integral position within the broader school and community ecosystem. A unique aspect of this analysis is the integration of insights from the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), demonstrating how ancient wisdom can enrich modern pedagogical practices, offering a culturally rooted yet future-ready outlook for the Indian teacher.

## 2. NEP 2020 Vision: The Central Role of Teachers

The NEP 2020 lays considerable emphasis on teacher empowerment, training, autonomy, and dignity. It recognizes that for the policy's vision to materialize, teachers must be at the forefront of change. They are entrusted to lead the transformation of classroom practices by:

- **Facilitating experiential and joyful learning:** The policy explicitly states that pedagogy must evolve to be "experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and of course, enjoyable" (NEP 2020, Para 4.6). Teachers are the key designers of such engaging learning environments.

- **Enabling multidisciplinary learning environments:** Breaking down rigid subject boundaries is a core tenet. Teachers are expected to foster connections across “arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams” (NEP 2020, Para 4.9).
- **Fostering foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN):** Achieving universal FLN by 2025 is the “highest priority” of the policy (NEP 2020, Para 2.1). Teachers, especially at the foundational stage, are directly responsible for ensuring every child achieves these basic learning requirements.
- **Supporting social, emotional, and ethical development of students:** Beyond cognitive skills, the policy aims to develop “social, ethical and emotional capacities and dispositions” (NEP 2020, Para 4.4 and 4.5). Teachers are crucial in nurturing these non-cognitive aspects.

The policy demands teachers move beyond content delivery to become co-creators of learning spaces, designers of engaging pedagogy, and agents of school-wide reform. This shift positions them as architects of a vibrant and equitable educational future.

### 3. Key Attributes of the NEP-Aligned Teacher

Based on NEP directives and deeply rooted in the Indian knowledge ethos, the following teacher attributes emerge as central to the “Architect of Radiance” profile:

#### Teacher Qualities Aligned with IKS:

Quality/Attribute	Root in Indian Thought	Relevance in NEP 2020
<b>Guru Bhava</b> (Mentorship spirit)	Guru-Shishya Parampara	Teacher as mentor, not monitor
<b>Satya and Ahimsa</b>	Gandhian and Jain philosophy	Ethical grounding of learners
<b>Self-discipline</b> (Tapas)	Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutras	Role-model behavior
<b>Jnana-Yajna</b> (Teaching as sacred)	Vedas and Gita	Lifelong learning mindset

<b>Anukampa (Compassion)</b>	Buddhist and Jain literature	Socio-emotional learning
<b>Shraddha (Faith in learner)</b>	Upanishads - श्रद्धावानं लभते ज्ञानम् (Śraddhāvān labhate jñānam)	High expectations and trust

### a) Guru-Sishya Ethos and Nurturing Wisdom

The NEP acknowledges the profound Indian tradition of revering the teacher as a Guru, not merely an instructor. This ethos emphasizes a deep, personal, and trust-based relationship between the teacher and student, where the teacher guides not just intellectually but also morally and spiritually. As in ancient gurukuls, teachers must embody values of **compassion (karuna)**, **discipline (niyam)**, **self-awareness (swadhyaya)** and **wisdom (gyan)**. This aligns with NEP’s call for education to “develop not only cognitive skills... but also, social and ethical capacities and dispositions” (NEP 2020, Para 4.4).

- **Example:** A teacher who begins class with a short mindfulness practice or a traditional Indian story emphasizing a moral value (like honesty or perseverance) reflects this integration, blending ancient wisdom with modern pedagogy to foster holistic development. They act as a guide for life, not just for academics.

### b) Competency and Pedagogical Innovation

NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on continuous professional development (CPD) and pedagogical expertise. Teachers must have a deep command over their subject knowledge, innovative assessment strategies, and child psychology, while constantly upgrading their skills. NEP states that “teachers will be required to participate in at least 50 hours of CPD opportunities every year” (NEP 2020, Para 5.15) and emphasizes “competency-based education” (NEP 2020, Para 5.16).

- **Example:** A mathematics teacher, instead of just using textbooks, integrates storytelling or local traditional games (like ‘Pachisi’ for probability or ‘Chaupar’ for strategic thinking) to teach number sense and problem-solving. This illustrates contextual and innovative pedagogy, making learning relevant and enjoyable.

### c) Multilingualism and Cultural Sensitivity

NEP 2020 advocates strongly for multilingual education, recognizing its cognitive benefits and its role in preserving India's rich linguistic diversity (NEP 2020, Para 4.127). Teachers must appreciate this diversity and leverage it as a tool to make education inclusive and culturally responsive. The policy encourages the use of mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction.

- **Example:** A teacher encouraging children to share local idioms, proverbs, or folk songs from their native languages during language or social studies classes. This not only fosters pride in one's linguistic heritage but also enhances cognitive development and cross-cultural understanding, embodying the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' (One India, Great India).

### d) Digital Literacy and Tech-Integration

With a significant emphasis on technology in education (NEP 2020, Chapter 24), teachers are required to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools effectively and equitably into their teaching-learning processes. This includes using digital platforms for content delivery, assessment, and professional development.

- **Example:** A teacher using digital storytelling apps or virtual reality tools for history projects, while simultaneously ensuring that students with limited digital access have offline alternatives (e.g., printed materials, peer-to-peer learning, community resource centers). This balances innovation with inclusion, ensuring technology serves all learners.

## 4. Teacher as a Facilitator of Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education

NEP 2020 is profoundly aligned with the Indian knowledge system's view of education as the pursuit of holistic human development (NEP 2020, Para 4.27). This means moving beyond rigid subject silos to integrate arts, sports, sciences, languages and life skills into a cohesive learning experience. Teachers are the orchestrators of this integration.

### Teacher Practices:

- **Co-designing projects that blend science and mythology:** For instance,

understanding principles of aerodynamics or gravity by exploring ancient Indian texts like the *Vaimanika Shastra* or stories of celestial vehicles. This connects modern scientific inquiry with traditional narratives.

- **Linking yoga and traditional Indian physical practices with physical education and mental well-being:** Teachers can incorporate simple yoga asanas and pranayama techniques into daily school routines, emphasizing their benefits for concentration, stress reduction and physical health, aligning with the holistic health principles of Ayurveda.
- **Using local knowledge and crafts to teach environmental science:** A teacher might engage students in studying traditional water harvesting methods (e.g., *baolis* or *johads*) in their region, or learn about sustainable practices through local artisan crafts, integrating science, social studies, and vocational skills.
- **Integrating ethical dilemmas into literature or history classes:** Discussing the moral choices of historical figures or characters in Indian epics (like the Mahabharata or Ramayana) to develop critical thinking and ethical reasoning.

## 5. Role of Teacher in Assessment Reforms

The NEP (Para 4.34) emphasizes a fundamental shift towards **assessment for learning** over rote-based, summative evaluation. Teachers are crucial in implementing this change, using formative, peer-based and competency-driven assessments to inform instruction and provide meaningful feedback.

### Key shifts include:

- **Moving from marks to descriptive feedback:** Teachers will provide qualitative feedback that highlights student strengths and offers specific, actionable suggestions for improvement, rather than just assigning a numerical score. This aligns with the IKS emphasis on continuous self-improvement and learning as a journey.
- **Designing performance-based tasks:** Instead of traditional written exams, teachers will create authentic tasks like role plays, debates, presentations and portfolios that allow students to demonstrate their understanding and skills in practical contexts.

- **Using student self-assessment and peer-assessment tools for reflection:** Empowering students to evaluate their own learning and provide constructive feedback to peers fosters self-awareness, critical thinking and collaboration.
- **Example:** Instead of a pen-paper test on urban planning, a teacher may ask students to create a detailed model of a sustainable village plan, integrating math (budgeting, measurements), environmental science (waste management, water conservation) and civics (community participation models). The assessment would focus on the process, collaboration, creativity and the application of knowledge, not just the final product.

## 6. Teachers as Mentors and Community Leaders

NEP 2020 (Para 12.3) highlights the teacher's expanded role in building trust-based relationships with students and the broader school community. Teachers must act as mentors, facilitators and counsellors, extending their influence beyond the classroom walls. This role is deeply rooted in the Indian ethos of community and collective well-being.

### Teacher Actions:

- **Hosting parent-teacher dialogue circles:** Moving beyond formal parent-teacher meetings to create informal, collaborative spaces where parents and teachers can co-develop learning goals and discuss strategies for holistic child development. This embodies the IKS principle of shared responsibility in nurturing the young.
- **Organizing community literacy drives with students:** Teachers can lead initiatives where students engage with local communities to promote literacy, digital awareness, or health practices. This instills a sense of 'seva bhav' (service-mindedness) and 'sarvodaya' (upliftment of all), core tenets of IKS.
- **Acting as life skill facilitators, especially in adolescent education:** Addressing critical life skills such as communication, decision-making, emotional management, and financial literacy, often through interactive workshops or mentorship programs.

- **Connecting students with local artisans and community experts:** Teachers can invite local craftspeople, farmers, or traditional healers to share their knowledge and skills, providing students with real-world learning experiences and fostering respect for indigenous knowledge systems.

These responsibilities echo the ‘sarvodaya’ and ‘seva bhav’ ethos of IKS, emphasizing the teacher’s role in contributing to the holistic well-being and upliftment of society.

## 7. Professional Development and Institutional Support

NEP 2020 recognizes that for teachers to fulfill their evolving roles, they need structured career progression, incentives, and significant autonomy (Para 5.17–5.19). The policy outlines several key proposals to support this:

- **Creation of School Complexes:** These are envisioned as clusters of schools that can share teachers, resources, and expertise, particularly for specialized subjects like arts, sports, and vocational education (NEP 2020, Para 7.6). This fosters a collaborative professional environment for teachers.
- **Establishment of NPST (National Professional Standards for Teachers):** These standards will define the expectations for teacher performance and guide their career progression, ensuring continuous professional growth and accountability (NEP 2020, Para 5.20).
- **Mandatory 50 hours of CPD annually:** This ensures teachers continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge in areas like new pedagogies, assessment methods, and technology integration  
(NEP 2020, Para 5.15).
- **Merit-based promotions and incentives:** The policy proposes a robust system for rewarding and recognizing high-performing teachers, encouraging excellence and dedication.
- **Teacher autonomy:** Providing teachers with greater freedom in designing their lessons and choosing pedagogical approaches, fostering innovation and ownership.

- **Example:** A teacher attending a module on indigenous pedagogies (e.g., traditional storytelling techniques or local environmental practices), then co-leading a peer-learning session in their school to share these insights. This exemplifies the NEP vision of continuous learning and collaborative growth, enriching the teaching community with diverse knowledge.

## 8. Celebration and Recognition of Teacher Contributions

The NEP encourages school-based joyful implementation and recognition of good practices (NEP 2020, Para 5.17). Teachers are not only the implementers but also the leaders in fostering a culture of celebration and recognition of learning, involving students, parents, and communities. This moves beyond traditional academic awards to acknowledge holistic growth and effort.

### Activities teachers can lead or participate in:

- **NEP implementation fairs:** Showcasing student-led projects that demonstrate experiential learning, multidisciplinary integration, or the application of 21st-century skills. Teachers guide students in preparing and presenting their work.
- **Recognition ceremonies for NEP-aligned practices:** Honoring teachers who excel in multilingual teaching, inclusive education, innovative pedagogy, or community engagement. This validates their efforts and inspires others.
- **“Teacher as Changemaker” showcases:** Platforms where educators share their innovations, successful pedagogical experiments, and challenges overcome in implementing NEP principles. This fosters a culture of sharing and continuous improvement.
- **Celebrating students’ holistic progress:** Leading school-wide events that acknowledge diverse talents, efforts, and achievements beyond academic scores, using the Holistic Progress Card as a basis for celebration.

## 9. Action-Oriented Implementation in Schools

To truly realize the NEP teacher vision, schools must create enabling environments

that support and empower teachers. This requires a concerted effort from all levels of the educational hierarchy.

- **School Leadership should support teacher autonomy and experimentation:** Principals and school heads must foster a culture of trust, providing teachers with the freedom to innovate and experiment with new pedagogical approaches without fear of failure. They should act as instructional leaders, not just administrators.
- **Teacher circles and PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) must be fostered for shared growth:** Schools should allocate dedicated time and resources for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, discuss challenges and collectively develop solutions. This builds a strong professional community.
- **Stakeholder synergy between parents, students and administrators must be built:** Creating open communication channels and collaborative platforms ensures that all stakeholders are aligned with the NEP vision and actively contribute to its implementation. Regular workshops for parents on NEP principles are crucial.
- **Investment in infrastructure and resources:** Ensuring teachers have access to necessary digital tools, well-equipped labs, libraries and flexible learning spaces is vital for implementing experiential and tech-integrated learning.

## 10. Conclusion: Teacher as the Torchbearer of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 envisions education as a powerful means for developing human potential in its entirety and the teacher stands as the most crucial catalyst in this transformative journey. The policy fundamentally redefines the teacher's role, expanding it far beyond traditional instruction to encompass that of a dynamic facilitator, a compassionate nurturer, a champion of inclusivity, an insightful assessment reformer, a perpetual lifelong learner, and a collaborative leader within the community. The "Architect of Radiance" is envisioned as a highly skilled, empathetic, and ethically grounded professional capable of cultivating "The Radiant Explorer" – a holistic, curious, critical, and resilient learner.

The integration of values and practices from the Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

further enriches this evolving role, providing a culturally resonant foundation for modern pedagogical approaches. By blending ancient wisdom with contemporary educational best practices, teachers are empowered to create learning environments that are not only academically rigorous but also deeply rooted in Indian ethos.

While the journey of implementing NEP 2020 will undoubtedly present significant challenges in terms of capacity building, resource allocation, and overcoming inertia, the policy simultaneously opens up unprecedented opportunities for teachers to redefine their profession, enhance their impact, and contribute fundamentally to nation-building. Realizing NEP's ambitious vision will require sustained investment in teacher training, robust support systems, and a societal recognition of the indispensable value of the teaching profession. Ultimately, the success of NEP 2020 rests on the shoulders of these dedicated "Architects of Radiance," who are poised to illuminate the path for India's future generations and truly embody the spirit of *Rashtra Nirman* (nation-building) through education.

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