



Deteriorating Quality of Teachers in Indian Schools: Impact on Students' Academic Growth and Practical Frameworks for Reform

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Abstract

The standard of school education in India faces a deep-rooted structural crisis stemming from the declining quality of teaching professionals. Despite quantitative expansions in enrolment across primary and secondary sectors, learning outcomes remain stagnant. This paper examines the systemic factors driving the deterioration of teacher quality in India—ranging from commercialized teacher education to weak meritocratic filters and low institutional accountability. It analyses the direct adverse impacts of sub-par teaching on student cognitive development and long-term academic growth. Finally, the study proposes actionable, practical frameworks aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to revitalize the teaching profession and restore student learning trajectories.

Keywords: Teacher Quality, Indian School Education, Pedagogical Competence, Academic Growth, Educational Policy, Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Introduction

India's educational ecosystem represents one of the largest schooling networks globally, serving over 250 million students. While public and private investments have successfully bridged geographical access barriers, the focus has shifted to a much more complex crisis: the quality of education.

At the heart of this challenge lies the diminishing competency, motivation, and professional preparation of the teaching workforce.

Decades of systemic neglect, structural corruption in teacher certification, and archaic pedagogical methods have diluted the efficacy of the classroom experience. As primary facilitators of learning, teachers hold the single highest institutional variance in student achievement. When teacher quality declines, the socio-economic dividends of the entire nation are fundamentally compromised.

The Current Landscape: Roots of Deteriorating Teacher Quality

The decline in teacher quality across both public and private schools in India is not an overnight phenomenon; it is driven by deeply entrenched structural inefficiencies.



- **Commercialization of Teacher Training Institutes:** The unchecked growth of private, stand-alone Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) colleges has transformed teacher education into a commercial commodity. The Justice Verma Commission (2012) notably highlighted that a vast majority of these stand-alone institutions operate as mere "degree mills" lacking adequate physical infrastructure or full-time, qualified faculty (Singh & Shakir, 2019).
- **Deficiencies in Meritocratic Filters:** The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), designed as a baseline check for pedagogical and subject competence, routinely records dismal pass rates (often hovering below 10–15% nationwide). This indicates that the foundational filtering mechanism is dealing with a highly under-prepared candidate pool.
- **Pedagogical Obsolescence:** Classroom instruction remains largely didactic, focused on rote memorization rather than active, competency-based learning. Aspiring teachers are rarely trained in modern digital methodologies, inclusive education, or foundational child psychology.
- **Administrative Overburdening:** In the public sector, teachers are frequently deployed for non-educational administrative duties—such as census tracking, election duties, and mid-day meal management—which drastically dilutes their core teaching time and professional morale.

Impact on Students' Academic Growth

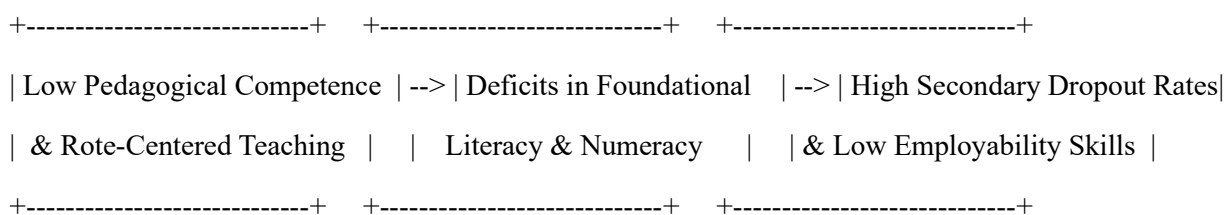
The direct casualty of weak instructional capacity is the student. The implications of sub-par teaching ripple through a child's entire cognitive and academic trajectory:

Accumulative Learning Deficits

When teachers lack conceptual clarity, students fail to master foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN). According to consecutive Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER), a significant percentage of Grade 5 students struggle to read Grade 2 level texts or perform basic division. These deficits accumulate annually, rendering higher-order learning in secondary school almost impossible.

Disproportionate Harm to Vulnerable Demographics

Affluent families often compensate for poor school instruction by investing in private tutoring. However, first-generation learners and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds rely entirely on the school system (Kochar, 2002). Poor teacher quality exacerbates educational inequity, trapping marginalized students in cycles of underperformance.



Practical Approaches to Resolve the Issue

Reversing this trajectory requires shifting from temporary fixes to comprehensive, systemic structural overhauls. The following practical interventions offer an integrated roadmap for reform:

A. Restructuring Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The isolated nature of teacher training must be dismantled. In alignment with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, teacher education should be progressively integrated into multidisciplinary higher education institutions (Chauhan, 2023).

- **Transition to 4-Year Integrated Programs:** Phasing out stand-alone, short-term B.Ed. courses in favor of comprehensive 4-year integrated degrees combines deep subject-matter expertise with rigorous pedagogical training.



- **Mandatory, Structured Practicums:** Emulating global best practices, teacher candidates should complete a minimum of one full semester of clinical practice/internship under mentored school conditions before graduation.

B. Standardizing Professional Benchmarks

The establishment of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) provides a transparent framework for career progression, tying promotions to verified competence rather than seniority alone.

Career Stage	Expected Competency Focus	Assessment Method
Pranjal (Beginner)	Foundational pedagogy, classroom management, subject literacy	TET scores, practical teaching demonstration
Pravin (Proficient)	Differentiated learning, data-driven assessments, inclusion	Peer reviews, portfolio analysis, student outcomes
Pradnyan (Expert)	Curriculum design, action research, institutional leadership	Academic publications, systemic contributions

C. Revamping Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Traditional, top-down, one-size-fits-all training workshops have proven highly ineffective. CPD must be reimaged to be self-driven, localized, and continuous.

- **Blended Micro-Credentials:** Leveraging digital platforms like DIKSHA, teachers should be encouraged to complete bite-sized, verified modules in subjects like digital literacy, formative assessment, and socio-emotional learning.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Establishing school-cluster networks allows teachers to regularly meet, share lesson plans, discuss student learning deficits, and conduct collaborative peer reviews.

Conclusion

Resolving the teacher quality crisis in India is the vital precondition for unlocking the nation's human capital potential. While policies like the NEP 2020 offer a visionary blueprint, success hinges entirely on the stringency of implementation. By cleaning up the teacher education ecosystem, enforcing strict professional standards, and insulating teachers from non-pedagogical tasks, India can transform its classrooms from spaces of passive compliance into dynamic hubs of cognitive growth.

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