

Transforming Teacher Education for Viksit Bharat: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

Transforming teacher education is central to India's ambition of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. This article situates contemporary policy reform (especially the National Education Policy 2020) in a sociological frame: it reads teacher education through theories of social reproduction, cultural capital, professionalization, and critical pedagogy to show how reforms can either reproduce inequalities or become instruments of social transformation. I map major policy levers, identify sociological tensions (equity vs. standardization; agency vs. structure; globalization vs. local knowledge), and offer evidence-informed recommendations to align teacher preparation with the twin goals of educational justice and national development.

Introduction

1. Why teacher education matters for Viksit Bharat

Teachers are the proximate agents of change in schooling — they shape learning processes, transmit cultures and values, and mediate the relationship between policy design and classroom realities. India's Viksit Bharat 2047 agenda emphasize building human capital, lifelong learning, and workforce readiness; achieving these goals depends on a well-prepared, reflective, and socially-aware teaching force. Recent policy shifts—most notably the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020—place teacher education at the heart of reform, proposing structural, curricular, and professional changes to the sector.

1. Policy background: NEP 2020 and the teacher-education agenda

NEP 2020 recasts teacher education as a four-year integrated professional degree (for new entrants), calls for continuous professional development, new regulatory arrangements, and stronger links between universities and local schooling contexts. The policy frames teachers as “nation-builders” and emphasizes both disciplinary content and pedagogical skills, alongside digital readiness and inclusive practices. Analysts and early reviews of implementation stress both the transformative potential and the practical challenges of implementing these reforms across diverse Indian contexts.

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2. A sociological lens: key theories and what they reveal

2.1 Social reproduction and cultural capital (Pierre Bourdieu)

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, habitus, and field show how schools often reproduce social inequalities: children who bring the dominant cultural competencies are more likely to be recognized, rewarded, and advanced. Teacher expectations and classroom practices thus become important mechanisms of reproduction. From this perspective, teacher education must equip teachers to recognize diverse cultural assets and to design compensatory pedagogy rather than simply replicating middle-class norms.

2.2 Functionalism and moral regulation (Émile Durkheim)

Durkheim's view emphasizes education's role in social solidarity and moral regulation. Teacher training programs that foreground civic education, ethics, and shared values can strengthen social cohesion—important when national visions (like Viksit Bharat) seek consensus on developmental goals. However, an overemphasis on conformity risks sidelining critical thinking and dissent.

2.3 Critical pedagogy and agency (Paulo Freire)

Freire foregrounds teacher and student agency and the need for dialogic, problem-posing pedagogy that empowers learners. Adopting a critical pedagogical orientation in teacher education can help teachers analyse power relations, curriculum biases, and the socio-economic roots of educational inequity. This approach aligns teacher preparation with social emancipation rather than mere skills transmission. (See broader literature on critical pedagogy.)

3. Sociological tensions in current reforms

3.1 Equity vs. Standardization

NEP's move to professionalize and standardize teacher preparation (e.g., a 4-year integrated degree, licensure/continuous professional development) improves baseline quality but risks excluding non-traditional pathways and local knowledge if implemented rigidly. Standardized curricula can suppress context-responsive teaching needed in multilingual, rural, and marginalized communities.

3.2 Global competencies vs. local cultural capital

Preparing teachers for 21st-century skills (creativity, critical thinking, digital fluency) is essential for national competitiveness; yet teachers must also validate and build on students' local cultural resources. A sociology-informed teacher education reconciles these by teaching teachers how to translate global competencies into local pedagogies.

3.3 Professionalization vs. Precarity

While NEP and commentators press for teacher professionalism, many systemic issues persist—uneven institutional capacity, teacher shortages, contractual/guest teacher arrangements, political interventions in staffing, and poor working conditions—that undermine long-term professional growth. Sociologically, training without structural reform of working conditions limits the efficacy of teacher education. News and field reports continue to highlight such workforce issues.

4. What sociological research suggests teacher education should do

Drawing from theory and empirical policy literature, teacher education for Viksit Bharat should:

1. Centre equity and anti-reproduction pedagogy. Train teachers to identify and counteract mechanisms of social reproduction (tracking, biased assessment, deficit labelling), and value multiple forms of cultural capital.
2. Balance universal standards with contextual flexibility. Keep national quality benchmarks while fostering locally adapted curricula, multilingual pedagogy, and community-linked practicum sites.
3. Embed 21st-century competencies within social-relevance. Combine critical digital literacy and problem-solving with curricula that address local development needs and social justice.
4. Professionalize through continuous, school-linked CPD. Move beyond one-time certificates—build ongoing school-based professional learning communities, peer coaching, and mentoring models.
5. Prepare teachers as community-engaged public intellectuals. Strengthen training in civic education, community research, and participatory action so teachers can collaborate with families and local institutions toward development goals.

6. Practical implementation pathways (policy + institutional actions)

6.1 Curriculum redesign in teacher-education institutions (TEIs)

Integrate modules: sociology of education, critical pedagogy, inclusive assessment, multilingual education, and community engagement practicum.

Require extended school internships in diverse settings (rural, urban low-income, tribal) with supervised reflective practice.

(NEP 2020 already endorses longer practicum and integration of theory–practice.)

6.2 Regulatory and institutional reforms

Strengthen institutional networks between universities, DIETs, and schools; incentivize TEIs to adopt contextual research projects.

Create licensure systems that combine knowledge tests with demonstrated classroom practice and reflective portfolios.

6.3 Professional learning ecosystems

Fund district-level teacher learning hubs, peer communities of practice, and distance/blended CPD using open educational resources.

Use teacher-led action research as a performance and development mechanism, not merely compliance.

6.4 Addressing structural constraints

Stabilize workforce by reducing reliance on short-term guest teachers and improving career pathways, pay parity, and school leadership training.

Ensure material supports—classroom resources, digital infrastructure, and manageable pupil–teacher ratios—match pedagogical reform ambitions. (News and field studies show workforce problems remain a constraint.)

7. Measuring success: sociologically-informed indicators, beyond test scores, success indicators should include:

Reduction in within-school and between-school inequities (attendance, progression, learning gains across disadvantaged groups).

Teacher practices: frequency of inclusive pedagogy, use of formative assessment, evidence of culturally responsive teaching.

Community engagement metrics: parent–school collaboration, local referral initiatives, and teacher-led development projects.

Professional growth: participation in sustained CPD, reflective portfolios, and induction retention rates. These indicators align measurement with social justice and development goals.

8. Risks, limitations, and political economy

Policy–practice gap: Good policy design can fail in implementation without resources and accountability structures. Several early reviews of NEP teacher-education provisions caution about uneven rollout.



Commodification risk: Rapid upscaling of teacher-preparation programs without quality assurance could commercialize teacher education, diluting outcomes.

Sociopolitical resistance: Changes to hiring, promotion, and curriculum can provoke contestation among existing teacher labour groups and political actors; change must be participative and phased. News reports of teacher protests and state-level tensions illustrate this risk.

9. Recommendations (actionable, phased)

Short term (1–3 years)

1. Revise TEI curricula to include mandatory courses in sociology of education, inclusive pedagogy, and community practicum.
2. Launch district teacher-learning hubs and pilot mentorship programs in diverse districts.

Medium term (3–7 years)

3. Implement licensure that combines classroom demonstration and reflective portfolios.
4. Provide targeted funding to rural/tribal TEI–school partnerships to ensure practicum diversity.

Long term (7–25 years, toward 2047)

5. Embed teacher education within broader social policy: integrate teacher workforce planning with rural development, health, and digital infrastructure so schooling contributes directly to Viksit Bharat outcomes.

Conclusion

Transforming teacher education is neither a purely technical challenge nor simply a curricular exercise—it is a sociological project. If teacher education reform absorbs insights from social theory (about reproduction, agency, culture, and power), policy makers can design systems that equip teachers to both raise learning outcomes and to reduce structural inequality. Achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047 requires teacher preparation that is professionally rigorous, contextually attuned, and ethically committed to social justice.

Selected references and sources

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- Pressbooks / academic chapters on sociology of education — summaries of Durkheim, Bourdieu, Freire and social reproduction theory.
- Recent policy critiques and reviews of teacher education reform and NEP implementation (articles and working papers).
- Analyses and vision documents connecting Viksit Bharat 2047 and education strategy.
- Current reporting on teacher workforce issues and implementation challenges (illustrative news pieces).

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