# Exploring the Development and Changes in Teacher Education: A Comparative Study of Education Policy Documents of India and Georgia

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*Despite being used widely in government documents, academic circles, and daily conversations, the word policy is open to varied interpretations. As the debates on education policies are becoming more intense, it is essential to address the increasing duality of the issue. The current study explores and compares the teacher education programs in two developing countries, India and Georgia. An attempt has been made to present a comparative analysis of the recent policy developments in teacher education in the chosen countries. The recent education policy documents of the countries were critically analyzed to explore the trajectory of changes and reforms. The study has explored critical factors, such as recent developments in pedagogy and indication towards curriculum change in detail. The research is set within the following boundaries for each case: economic, demographic, ideological, national, individualistic. The research also addresses the rising issue of lacking trust in political decision-making. Another dilemma the authors faced concerns the attempts to avoid biases while focusing on the policy documents native to their contexts and isolating these from researchers' prejudices, values, and preconceptions. The data analysis techniques include thematic and content analysis. The results suggest a common factor of updating the training program and pedagogy in both countries.[1]*

*Keywords: Education Policy, Comparative Study, Content Analysis, Methodology, Teacher Education*

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## Introduction

Teacher Education comprises of pre-service teachers' training and education as well as the continuous professional development of teachers during their service. The former serves as the foundation of a teacher, whereas the latter is a lifelong process that needs to be changed and updated according to the current trends across the globe. During the COVID-19 pandemic, no matter which model or theories the teachers had studied during their pre-service years, what helped the knowledge imparters during their actual teaching, was their level of familiarity with the current educational tools and techniques in the online/virtual teaching mode. In the Indian scenario, the private schools and universities easily shifted to the online mode due to the availability of infrastructure and other utilities, on the other hand government schools and universities faced numerous challenges. In a patricarchal Indian set-up even the gender intervention played a significant role for accessing education. For online classes computers/laptops are needed with an internet connection and electricity. Less than 50% villages in India does not have a proper supply of 15 hours per day (A. Sneha, P. Vishnu, 2019). "The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed how rooted structural imbalances are between rural and urban, male and female, rich and poor, even in the digital world", Kundu P (2020). Georgia and India, both suffered unequal distribution of resources, primarily based on the unavailability of infrastructure in remote areas and the unpreparedness of rural education systems to shift teaching and administrative processes online.

### *Rationale of the study*

The pandemic created an upside shift in the pedagogy across the world. The knowledge imparters faced numerous challenges, and apart from having the content knowledge, they needed the most sophisticated tools and techniques for the delivery, i.e., the pedagogy. The researchers tried to determine how much space is provided for 'Pedagogical Methods', an essential component of Teacher Education. The pedagogical training the pre-service and in-service teachers received was the knowledge source on which they could rely. The syllabus, which is prescribed during their pre-service training, also needs to be updated with the syllabus of students. The researchers made an attempt to find out the scope and space provided to update curriculum and syllabi in the policy documents. Also, to

explore whether the policy documents act as blueprint during any unforeseen educational challenges or not.

To find answers to these questions, the researchers critically analysed the educational policy documents of their respective countries. They tried to explore whether the government and other responsible bodies for education address such issues in the policy documents while drafting them. The focus is upon the latest policy document, i.e., NEP 2020 in India. In Georgia, the most significant policy reform related to higher education relates to the implementation of Bologna process recommendations. Georgia joined the Bologna process in 2005, and since then, regularly revisited and reformed the higher education structure, with the latest reform dated by 2019, when National Qualifications Framework was renewed, as well as the guidelines and recommendations for quality control procedures and funding distribution revised (MoES, 2016). The trajectory has also been observed, beginning from the first National Education Policy to the latest, palicng the primary focus upon the latest one, i.e., NEP 2020. The objective behind analysing the education policy documents of two developing countries (India and Georgia) was not to draw a comparison but to find out whether teacher education is receiving due attention in various countries or not. The study can be extended by including more countries in the list and observing the practices followed in the developed nations to act as a reference model for the developing nations.

### *Methodology*

The study relies primarily on secondary data. The education Policy documents of Georgia and India are taken by the researchers. These documents were analysed critically to locate the space and importance allotted to 'Teacher Education in the education policy documents of the selected developing nations. The term 'Teacher Education' has been used to refer to 'Higher Education' only, excluding school education. In Georgia, teacher education is a semi-regulated profession that can be pursued as the first stage of higher education (towards bachelor's degree, as a part of 240ECTS-program) or a separate teacher training degree program (60ECTS). There are separate professional courses for elementary education teachers, middle school teachers, and senior secondary teachers in India. The focus of the study is only on Higher Education.

The policy documents were accessed from the official governing bodies of both countries. While comparing the documents, the researchers faced several challenges.

### Methodological dilemmas

The methodological dilemmas the authors encountered while conducting this study can be categorised into four main themes:

- the duality of the policy-making in terms of context-dependency
- the 'prisms' through which the policy implementation is viewed
- the classification of the policies
- perspectives in mind when applying the policy-making model to a specific context

The duality of policy-making takes its roots in the way a policy is made. In contrast, it is highly contextualised, and policy implementation is context-dependent; a policy travels globally and has a profound impact remote from its originals location (Yang, 2007). The way the policies are views is also dependents on a number of factors, entitled 'prisms' for the purposes of this research, such as – economic, demographic, ideological, nation-state vs globalised, individualist, etc. (based on Yang, 2007). Another important aspect is the tendency to trust less in the policy-making process, thus separate it from the actual context and practical implementation on institutional/individual levels.

There are several ways to classify policies according to the target implementation strategies and their relations to society. Taylor et al. (1997) suggest classifying policies as distribute vs re-distributive, symbolic vs material, rational vs incremental, substantial vs procedural, regulatory vs deregulatory, top-down vs bottom-up. However, for the current study the less-detailed, holistic approach was implemented following the Yang (2007) classification of public vs private policies aiming at societal integration and consensus (Dahrendorf, 1959). The researchers attempted to identify whether a rational perspective was implemented in the policy-making processes in the studied countries; the rational perspective, defined as the traditional model of policy development and analysis, to select the best course of action in decision-making (Dewey, 1927; Simon, 1965). As opposed to the 'conflict perspective' that emphasised authority as the determining factor of systematic social conflicts based on varied values and unequal access to power (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 5).

In addition to the policy-making biases discussed above, the researchers are also bound to overcome purely methodological biases taking their roots in the context and origins of the study and applied research methods and personal research biases.

## Discussion

When the education policy documents were analysed critically, one common theme which emerged was — lack of a serious attitude towards Teacher Education. When the trajectory of the Indian Education Policy documents is reviewed, the space and importance provided to teacher education is extremely poor. The first Education policy in 1968 focused upon Academic Freedom of Research (NPE, 1968). National Policy on Education, 1986 in part IX mentions Teacher and Teacher Education for the first time. The 1986 Policy added a few new dimensions such as, 'Focus on teacher autonomy', and 'Continuous Professional Development of teachers' (NPE, 1986). In a 32-pages document, the space teacher education received is only two pages. One more important aspect added in this 1986 policy document was—special attention towards specially gifted learners. The following Education policy came into existence in 1992 and most of the content was taken directly (without any changes) from the 1986 policy. One important aspect added to it was—the 'Provision of Staff Development Programs at Regional and National level', which was a new initiative (NPE, 1992).

Further research can be carried out on the implementation of this programme. The sub-text of Indian Education Policy document (latest one) surprisingly expresses the practice of 'bad Educational Institutions' followed in India. Provision of stringent action towards substandard and dysfunctional teacher education intuitions is mentioned under section 15.2 (NEP 2020, p. 42). Reading between the lines tells the reader that substandard teacher education institutions do exist in the country. There is no discussion on how and why such institutions came into practice. The statement is a grave remark on the whole education set-up. What about those student teachers who passed out from these institutions? What about those students whom they are teaching and would be teaching in the future? Such serious issues must be addressed, analysed, and solved to maintain a higher standard of education in the country. When compared with previous education policy documents the space 'teacher education' received in NEP 2020 is better than the previous education policies. When compared with school education, some attention is given to the pedagogical aspect of student teachers, but when it comes to teacher education, the focus is on research only. By not receiving enough training on pedagogy, the teaching-learning process becomes monotonous because teachers focus more on the content than delivery. A few

provisions must be added in the policy documents to make the teaching-learning process an interesting process rather than a monotonous job.

With the introduction of the first national curriculum in Georgia in 2005, the policy implemented learning outcomes and the credit-based distribution of instruction hours for all subjects and grades. The reform was revisited in 2018 to renew the goals and shift towards a more holistic approach towards learning based on developing student competencies and soft skills. In addition, the 2018 reform updated the learning outcomes based on stage-levels rather than grade-levels which enabled teachers to adapt instructional methodology more effectively and improved flexibility in teaching overall. However, concerns were raised about the preparedness of the teachers to implement such advanced practices in their pedagogy (OECD, 2019).

Another issue on raise in Georgia pertains to the limited access to higher education and unequal distribution of resources within rural and remote communities, as opposed to wealthier urban populations. These concerns have been especially vivid during the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid transfer to full-time remote education for an extended period of time.

## Conclusion

The common themes that emerged while analysing the policy documents of both the countries were the lack of focus and attention towards teacher education and the non-seriousness of the state. Although comparing two different countries with entirely different socio-cultural backgrounds initially seemed a challenging task, the researchers were able to find common issues. No matter how varied the cultures both countries have, the uneven distribution of resources and infrastructure was common. The educational institutions in the rural and remote areas are the one who suffers the most, especially during the pandemic. Educational technology, its inclusion in teacher education and training is a crucial component of the teaching-learning process, and during the COVID-19 situation, every country across the globe realised it. However, the policy documents do not consist of any special provision or blueprint for pre-service teachers, which equips them with such unpredictable situations. The study recommends that the education stakeholders pay more attention to the designing and planning of teacher education, making it more innovative and making the pre-service teachers future-ready.

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## A tanárképzés fejlődésének és változásának feltárása: India és Grúzia oktatáspolitikai dokumentumainak összehasonlító vizsgálata

A „policy" kifejezést széles körben használják kormányzati dokumentumokban, tudományos körökben és a mindennapokban egyaránt, ami sokféle értelmezésre ad lehetőséget. Mivel az oktatáspolitikáról szóló viták egyre intenzívebbek, elengedhetetlen, hogy foglalkozzunk ezzel a témával. Jelen tanulmány két fejlődő ország, India és Grúzia tanárképzési programjait vizsgálja és hasonlítja össze. Az elemzésben a közelmúltban a tanárképzésben végbement szakpolitikai fejleményekről számolunk be, és kísérletet teszünk ezek összehasonlítására. Az oktatáspolitikai dokumentumok kritikai elemzése során a változások és a reformok feltárására törekedtünk. A tanulmányban részletesen feltártuk azokat a kritikus tényezőket, amelyek a tantervváltás irányába mutattak. Az esetek feltárása a következő keretek között valósult meg: gazdasági, demográfiai, ideológiai, nemzeti és individuális. A kutatás foglalkozik a politikai döntéshozatalba vetett bizalom hiányának növekvő problémájával is. A szerzőknek a saját érintettségükből fakadó kihívással is szembe kellett nézniük tudatosan törekedve saját szubjektivitásuk, kutatói előítéleteik, érték- és prekoncepcióik elkerülésére nemzeti szakpolitikai dokumentumaik és a kontextus elemzése közben. Az adatelemzés tematikus és a tartalomelemzéssel valósult meg. Az eredmények a képzési program és a pedagógia kérdések aktualizálásának kapcsolatára utalnak mindkét országban.

Kulcsszavak: *oktatáspolitika, összehasonlító elemzés, tartalomelemzés, módszertan, tanárképzés*