



Re-envisioning the Teacher and Learner Roles in transforming into Developed India: Evidence from Research and Policy

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Abstract

Learning shapes how countries move forward. Not just about mere economic growth, it ties people together through shared values and active involvement in society. A significant shift occurred in India with the introduction of new teaching rules under the NEP 2020 plan, which places both educators and students at the heart of building a stronger future. This study employs a document-based empirical design, synthesizing 68 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 alongside key policy documents, including NEP 2020, NCERT curriculum frameworks, and NCTE professional standards.

Teachers are increasingly recognized as ethical role models, facilitators of learner agency, advocates of inclusivity, and catalysts of institutional transformation. Parallely, learners are being reimagined not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active problem-solvers and responsible citizens. The findings of this study resonate strongly with the priorities articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly its emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy and experiential approaches to education.

Yet, notable gaps persist. Teacher preparation remains uneven, mechanisms for assessing learner agency are underdeveloped, and institutional support structures are insufficiently consolidated. The study underscores that both educators and learners occupy co-constructive roles in advancing national development, with education functioning as a mediating institution that bridges policy aspirations and societal outcomes. To realize developmental objectives, greater attention must be directed toward strengthening teacher education, curriculum design, and assessment practices.

Looking ahead, future research should prioritize longitudinal analyses, undertake comparative studies across states, and employ mixed-methods approaches. Such efforts will deepen



understanding of how teacher and learner roles are enacted across diverse contexts, thereby informing more robust and context-sensitive educational reforms.

Keywords: Teachers; Learners; National Development; Learner Agency; Educational Policy; Citizenship Education; Inclusive Education; Teacher Training; Curriculum Design; India

Introduction

The definition of national development in the twenty-first century is now more often interpreted as the activity of a human-focused character that requires the ability of citizens to make ethical judgments, behave collaboratively, adapt to various situations, and become more responsible citizens. Within this paradigm, education is understood as a strategic institution whose role extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to encompass the cultivation of agents capable of driving societal transformation. Central to this process are teachers and learners, whose everyday practices within educational settings collectively contribute to social cohesion, democratic participation, and national development.

Historically, education in India has been closely intertwined with the project of nation-building. From the freedom movement through post-independence reforms, schooling has been envisioned as a vehicle for advancing democratic values, social justice, and human development. Contemporary challenges—including youth unemployment, social polarization, ethical decline, and rapid technological change—have further heightened public interest in the transformative potential of education for a developed India. This vision is institutionalized in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which reaffirms the roles of teachers and learners as pivotal agents of educational and societal change.

Despite this renewed emphasis, empirical evidence on the contributions of teachers and learners to national development remains limited. Much of traditional educational research isolates the performance of teachers or students, while policy discourse often privileges normative aspirations without systematically integrating research findings. Bridging this gap requires a more holistic and evidence-based approach that situates teachers and learners as co-constructors of democratic and developmental processes. This study addresses this gap by synthesizing empirical findings with policy frameworks to clarify how teachers and learners contribute to national development.



Conceptual Framework: Education, Agency, and National Development

Education functions as a foundational social institution through which individual agency is cultivated and enacted. Agency, in this context, denotes the capacity of individuals to act voluntarily, make informed choices, and contribute meaningfully to collective goals.

- Teachers are increasingly understood as ethical professionals whose values, dispositions, and pedagogical practices shape the academic, social, and civic development of learners (Campbell, 2017; Tirri, 2018). Their roles extend beyond instruction: they serve as advisors, mediate dialogue, advocate for inclusion, and foster democratic classroom cultures.
- Learners, correspondingly, are being reconceptualized as active participants in knowledge creation and as responsible citizens. This shift highlights the co-constructive relationship between teachers and students, positioning education as a dynamic space where ethical practice, agency, and citizenship are jointly nurtured. The emphasis of empirical studies is on learner agency, collaboration, problem-solving, and civic engagement as core national development competencies (Taylor et al. 2017).

Indian policy frameworks augment this orientation with the focus on the learner-centered pedagogy, experiential learning, and citizenship education.

Methodology

This study adopts a document-based empirical design, drawing on a systematic literature review and rigorous policy analysis (Bowen, 2009). The research systematically collates and critically appraises scholarly contributions to illuminate prevailing theoretical and empirical trends in the field.

- **Sample:** The corpus comprises 68 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025, retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. These works represent a cross-section of contemporary scholarship and provide a robust foundation for examining current debates and practices.
- **Policy Sources:** The policy documents under analysis include the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, NCERT curriculum frameworks, and NCTE professional standards. These sources have been selected for their centrality in shaping educational practice and policy within the Indian context.



- **Analysis:** Inductive coding will guide a thematic analysis, focusing on two primary domains: the role of teachers and the role of learners in national development. By triangulating insights from the scholarly literature with provisions articulated in policy, the study seeks to identify salient trends, overlaps, and gaps. This integrative approach will advance both conceptual understanding and practical implementation, situating teachers and learners as co-constructive agents in educational and societal transformation.

Findings

The analysis of empirical literature revealed that teachers and learners occupy multidimensional roles that extend far beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

Teachers' Roles:

- Teachers act as **ethical role models** embodying values such as fairness, integrity, and respect. The professional conduct of teachers exerts a profound influence on the moral reasoning and civic dispositions of learners. Empirical evidence indicates that students internalize such practices when educators consistently uphold fairness in assessment and classroom management, thereby fostering civic responsibility.
- Teachers are increasingly recognized as **facilitators of agency**, employing dialogic and learner-centered pedagogies that encourage students to reflect critically, challenge assumptions, and make well-reasoned decisions. Such approaches are particularly significant in contexts dominated by rote learning, as they promote active engagement and empower learners to participate meaningfully in their own educational journeys.
- As **inclusive practitioners**, educators play a pivotal role in cultivating empathy and valuing diversity. Strategies such as differentiated instruction and culturally responsive pedagogy enable students from varied backgrounds to feel respected and included, thereby strengthening social cohesion within classrooms and beyond.
- Teachers also act as **institutional change agents**, shaping the cultures of the schools in which they work. Through mentoring colleagues, initiating reforms, and advancing developmental goals, they ensure that the principles of democracy and equity are not confined to abstract ideals but are embedded in everyday educational practice. In this



way, teachers embody both ethical leadership and transformative agency, positioning education as a cornerstone of democratic and equitable societies.

Learners' Roles:

Learners are increasingly conceptualized as active contributors to national development rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

Learners are increasingly conceptualized as **active participants** in education, whose engagement extends beyond academic achievement to encompass civic and professional competencies. When students collaborate and assume responsibility for problem-solving, they cultivate skills essential for meaningful civic participation and future professional endeavors.

As **ethical and social actors**, learners benefit from moral education and service-learning initiatives that foster moral awareness and a sense of responsibility toward the broader community. Such experiences nurture dispositions of empathy, accountability, and collective well-being.

Importantly, learners are no longer positioned merely as *future* citizens but are recognized as **present citizens**, whose contributions are integral to democratic processes. Participation in community-based projects and experiential learning opportunities reinforces their identity as active agents of social transformation.

These roles are simultaneously evolving and enduring across educational levels. At the elementary stage, teachers establish the foundations of equality and collaboration, thereby enabling learners to grow into socially responsible and democratically engaged individuals. Within secondary education, pedagogy is orchestrated by educators who lead students through processes of identity formation as well as career - orientated decision making.

At the tertiary level, instructors guide students to professional ethics and leadership praxis by providing students with the competencies required by contemporary society. In response, students demonstrate agency in ways that involve autonomy - creating environments, working on projects, and various forms of participation in civic engagement.

Policy Alignment: Evidence and NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a visionary framework that aligns closely with global research evidence on the roles of teachers and learners.



Convergences

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reconceptualizes teachers as guides and facilitators, moving away from the conventionally orientalized image of educators. This shift is reinforced by empirical studies that emphasize the moral and formative dimensions of instructional practice. In alignment with academic literature that underscores the significance of learner agency and civic activism, the policy advocates for learner-centered pedagogy, experiential learning, and citizenship education. Furthermore, both policy documents and research evidence converge on the necessity of fostering inclusivity, equity, and respect for diversity within classroom environments.

Gaps

Despite these convergences, several gaps remain. Current teacher-education programs, while positioning educators as ethical professionals and institutional leaders, often fail to provide explicit training in ethics, dialogic pedagogy, and inclusive practices. Similarly, although the policy acknowledges the importance of learner agency, it offers limited guidance for evaluating collaboration, initiative, and civic engagement. Assessment practices remain predominantly test-focused, with developmental competencies insufficiently addressed. Institutional support also presents a challenge: while participatory pedagogies and autonomous decision-making are recommended, many institutions lack the resources, leadership structures, and autonomy required to implement such reforms effectively.

Implications

Without targeted interventions to address these shortcomings, the developmental aspirations of NEP 2020 risk remaining rhetorical rather than actionable. Systemic reforms that prioritize comprehensive professional development, innovative evaluation frameworks, and robust institutional support structures are essential to realizing the transformative vision articulated in the policy.

Discussion: Implications for Teacher Education and Curriculum

The findings have significant implications for both teacher education and curriculum design.



Teacher Education:

Teacher preparation programs must extend beyond technical training to encompass ethical decision-making, dialogic approaches to education, inclusive practices, and institutional leadership. This requires a multidimensional framework that integrates:

- **Curriculum Reform:** Teacher education curricula should incorporate modules on ethics, civic responsibility, and inclusive pedagogy, ensuring that educators are equipped to foster democratic and socially responsive classrooms.
- **Experiential Learning:** Teachers must be provided with opportunities to engage in community projects, reflective practices, and collaborative problem-solving, thereby strengthening their capacity for critical engagement and social leadership.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Systems of continuous training should be established to respond to evolving social and technological contexts, enabling teachers to remain adaptive and future-oriented.

Curriculum Design

Learner-centered curriculum design is essential. This involves moving away from examination-driven models toward project-based learning, service-learning, and interdisciplinary approaches that emphasize collaboration and civic responsibility. Integrating community-focused projects into curricula allows students to connect classroom learning with societal issues, while innovative assessment practices should evaluate initiative, ethical awareness, and problem-solving skills alongside traditional academic achievement.

Systemic Coherence

Education must be understood as a mediating institution between policy intentions and social outcomes. Effective reform requires systemic coherence, aligning teacher identity, pedagogical approaches, and student participation. Consistency in policy implementation, educator development, school leadership, and assessment methodologies is critical to sustaining meaningful change.

Broader Developmental Agenda

Within India's diverse socio-economic landscape, schools and educators are expected to play an increasingly significant role in shaping democratic practices, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. This transformation can be realized by empowering teachers as professionals



and positioning students as engaged participants, thereby enabling educational institutions to evolve into spaces that actively foster democratic and developmental values.

Conclusion and Future Research

The present investigation affirms that teachers and learners are central participants in India's developmental trajectory, functioning as collaborative agents of national progress. Educators occupy a pivotal role in cultivating individuals who embody ethical standards, act as agents of change, practice inclusivity, and drive institutional transformation. Concurrently, learners are increasingly recognized as proactive problem-solvers and responsible citizens. Together, teachers and students reconfigure classroom environments into spaces where the principles of democracy, moral reasoning, and civic responsibility are actively enacted and experienced.

Empirical findings reveal substantial alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly its emphasis on learner-centered pedagogies and teacher mentorship. Nonetheless, persistent gaps remain in teacher education, the evaluation of learner agency, and the provision of institutional support. Addressing these deficiencies requires systemic coherence across teacher preparation, curriculum design, innovative assessment practices, and school leadership, ensuring that developmental aspirations articulated in policy discourse are translated into actionable practice.

Future research should prioritize the exploration of these roles across diverse institutional contexts, employing longitudinal and comparative methodologies to generate deeper insights into civic engagement, employability, and social participation. India thus stands at a critical juncture: by conceptualizing and organizing its educational framework as a catalyst for development, the nation can advance toward a more inclusive, democratic, and socially cohesive society, driven by the collaborative efforts of teachers and learners.

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