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Research Article

Teaching Competency: Challenges And Opportunities (With Reference To NEP 2020)

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ABSTRACT

Teaching competency has emerged as a crucial foundation for improving educational quality in India, especially within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. As classrooms evolve with digital tools, diverse learners, and new expectations, teachers must demonstrate not only subject mastery but also pedagogical, digital, emotional, and inclusive competencies. This paper explores teaching competency in simple, relatable terms and examines the challenges faced by Indian educators, including inadequate training, heavy administrative workload, digital divides, and exam-oriented pressures. It also highlights opportunities NEP 2020 provides—such as competency-based teaching, digital pedagogy, continuous professional development, inclusive practices, and the use of platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM. Practical tips, school-level actions, and real-life examples illustrate how competency can be strengthened even in resource-limited settings. Overall, the paper emphasizes that empowered, digitally literate, and reflective teachers are central to India's vision of transforming learning outcomes and preparing students for a rapidly changing world. [NCERT, 2021; NEP, 2020

Introduction: Why Teaching is More Than Just "Chalk and Talk"

Think back to your school days. We all had that one teacher who just came to class, opened the textbook, read line-by-line, and told us to copy the answers from the blackboard. We memorized the answers, passed the exam, and forgot everything the next day.

But then, maybe you had that *one* special teacher. The one who didn't just dictate notes. Maybe it was a History teacher who told stories like they were movies, or a Science teacher who took you to the garden to show you how plants breathe. That teacher made you think. That teacher made you feel confident.

This difference between the first teacher and the second teacher is what we call **Teaching Competency**.

In simple Indian English, teaching competency is not just about having a degree like B.Ed. It is the special mix of knowledge, skills, attitude, and values. It is the ability to handle a class of 50 noisy students, explain a tough concept so even the backbencher understands, and make learning fun.

Today, the world is changing very fast. We have Artificial Intelligence (AI), robots, and climate change. The old style of "rote learning" (ratta-fication) is no longer useful. We need students who can think, solve problems, and work in teams. To create such students, we need super-competent teachers.

In this article, we will explore what teaching competency really is, the struggles Indian teachers face daily, and how NEP 2020 is trying to fix these problems. The quality of teaching in India varies widely, and the difference often lies in teaching competency—the blend of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that teachers bring into classrooms (NCTE, 2021). In an era shaped by AI, automation, and global shifts, India needs teachers who can promote creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving (NITI Aayog, 2021). NEP 2020 underscores that teacher competence directly influences learning outcomes across all stages of schooling (NCERT Journals, 2022).

Chapter 1: What Exactly is "Teaching Competency"?

Teaching competency sounds like a heavy academic word, but let's break it down into simple parts. It basically means: "Does the teacher have the right tools in their toolkit to do a good job?" Teaching competency is a multifaceted construct that includes mastery of subjects, pedagogical practices, assessment strategies, classroom management, digital literacy, inclusive practices, and socio-emotional skills (Khandelwal, 2022).

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Here are the main parts of this toolkit:

A. Subject Knowledge (Knowing Your Stuff)

Imagine a Physics teacher who gets confused when a student asks a tricky question about gravity. Students are smart; they lose respect if the teacher doesn't know the subject well.
Competency means knowing the subject deeply.

Example: A good teacher won't just write the formula for speed on the board. They will explain it using real-life examples, like how a Metro train slows down at a station, or why a cricket ball swings in the air. When a teacher knows their subject well, they can connect the topic to real life—like explaining chemistry through the dyeing industry in Surat or agriculture in Punjab. Teachers must possess strong conceptual knowledge to respond confidently to student questions and connect learning to real-life contexts (Aggarwal, 2023).

B. Pedagogical Skills (The Art of Teaching)

"Pedagogy" just means the method of teaching. A teacher with good pedagogy doesn't just lecture. Effective pedagogy involves lesson planning, interactive methods, contextual examples, and student-centered learning (EducationWorld, 2023)

- **Planning:** They come to class with a clear plan.
- **Activities:** They use games, quizzes, and group work.
- **Real Examples:** They teach math (percentages) using a bill from the local *kirana* store or GST rates.
- **Involvement:** They make sure everyone speaks, not just the toppers sitting in the front row.
- **Language:** In India, we speak many languages. A competent teacher explains a hard English word in Hindi or the local language so that everyone understands.

C. Assessment Skills (Checking Understanding)

Assessment is not just the final exam or the Unit Test. It is checking if students are learning *while* you are teaching. Formative assessment strategies—like questioning, exit slips, and performance tasks—are essential for monitoring student progress (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

- **Formative Assessment:** This means asking quick questions during the class. For example, using "Exit Tickets"—where students write one thing they learned on a slip of paper before leaving the class.
- **Projects:** Asking students to make a poster or a model instead of just writing long answers.
- **Feedback:** Telling a student *how* to improve, not just giving them 5/10 marks.

D. Classroom Management (Controlling the Chaos)

Indian classrooms are big. We often have 40, 50, or even 60 students in one room. If the teacher cannot manage the crowd, no learning happens.
Competency here means:

- Setting clear rules from Day 1.
- Handling naughty students calmly without getting angry.
- Making sure shy students (especially girls in some rural areas) feel safe to speak up.

E. Digital Competency (Tech Skills)

After the COVID-19 lockdown, this has become very important. Teachers can no longer say, "I am not good with computers." Digital literacy has become essential, supported through platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM that offer e-content and teacher training (DIKSHA, 2022; Swayam, 2018).
Competency means:

- Using a smartphone or laptop to show educational videos.
- Using apps like Zoom or Google Meet.
- Using government portals like **DIKSHA** to find lesson plans.
- Teaching students how to be safe online (Cyber safety).

F. Inclusive Teaching (Teaching Everyone)

Our classrooms are very diverse. We have rich kids, poor kids, kids who speak different languages, and kids with disabilities.
Inclusive teaching means making sure no one is left behind.

- **UDL (Universal Design for Learning):** This means teaching in different ways—showing pictures for those who learn by seeing, and doing activities for those who learn by doing.
- **Support:** Giving extra time to a student who writes slowly or explaining again to a first-generation learner (a student whose parents did not go to school).

G. Social and Emotional Skills (Being Human)

Students go through a lot of stress. A teacher is also a role model.

- It means being patient.
- Noticing if a student looks sad or is being bullied.
- Teaching life skills like how to work in a team or how to handle failure.

H. Continuous Learning (Student for Life)

A good teacher never stops learning. They attend workshops, read new books, and reflect on their own teaching. They ask themselves, "Did my class understand today's lesson? If not, how can I teach it better tomorrow?" NEP 2020 emphasizes continuous professional development, requiring teachers to update pedagogical and digital skills (India Today, 2021).

Chapter 2: The Reality of Indian Schools

To understand teaching in India, we have to look at the ground reality. India is a land of contrasts.

On one side, we have high-tech international schools in cities like Mumbai and Bengaluru. These schools have AC classrooms, smart boards, and tablets for every child. Teachers here have a lot of resources.

On the other side, we have government schools in remote villages of Bihar, Odisha, or Jharkhand. Here, a teacher might face:

- Power cuts.
- No internet.
- Broken blackboards.
- "Multi-grade teaching"—where students of Class 3, 4, and 5 sit in the same room because there are not enough teachers.

But here is the main point: Teaching Competency is needed in BOTH places.

A teacher in a rich school needs to know how to use the technology responsibly. A teacher in a village school needs creativity to teach using simple things like stones, leaves, or charts.

Both NEP 2020 and INTEF want to build teachers who can handle *any* situation with confidence. India's educational landscape ranges from highly equipped urban schools to rural, multi-grade classrooms with minimal infrastructure (ASER, 2022). Despite disparities, teachers in both contexts rely on strong teaching competency to improve learning outcomes (Pratham, 2023).

Chapter 3: Challenges Faced by Indian Teachers

We expect a lot from our teachers, but we must also understand their problems. Why is it hard for Indian teachers to be fully "competent"? Here are the main hurdles.

1. Weak Training Before Becoming a Teacher (Pre-Service Issues)

Many B.Ed colleges in India focus too much on theory. Student-teachers spend months writing long assignments on "Educational Psychology" but get very little time to actually stand in a classroom and teach real students. When they finally get a job, they feel nervous because they haven't practiced enough. Many B.Ed institutions remain theory-heavy and lack sufficient practicum experience (Mohanty, 2015).

2. Boring Training After Becoming a Teacher (In-Service Issues)

Once a teacher gets a job, the training they get is often boring. It is usually a lecture in a big hall where someone reads from a PPT. It doesn't help them solve real problems like "How do I make Class 7 students interested in Math?"

3. Too Much Non-Teaching Work

This is a major pain point. In government schools, teachers are asked to do everything except teach.

- Election duty.
- Census duty.
- Managing Mid-Day Meal records.
- Distributing uniforms and books.
- Data entry work.

This leaves them with very little time to plan good lessons or pay attention to weak students.

4. The Digital Gap (Digital Divide)

While the government wants digital education, the reality is tough.

- Many teachers share one smartphone with their whole family.
- Internet in villages is slow or patchy.
- Older teachers are sometimes afraid of pressing the wrong button and "breaking" the computer. They need hand-holding, not just orders.

5. The Pressure of Exams

The Indian education system is obsessed with marks. Parents want their children to score 95%. This forces teachers to focus on "finishing the syllabus" and making students memorize answers for the exam, rather than

helping them actually understand the concept.

6. Language Issues

In a single class, you might have a child who speaks Bhojpuri at home, another who speaks Hindi, and the textbook is in English. The teacher has to constantly translate (code-switch) to make sure everyone understands. This is mentally tiring.

7. Mental Stress and Low Salary

In many private schools, teachers are paid very less. They have no job security. In government schools, the salary is better, but the workload and class size (60+ students) cause burnout. Teachers are humans too; they get stressed, but there is no one to counsel them.

Chapter 4: Opportunities and Good News (NEP 2020)

Despite the challenges, things are looking up. The new education policies are like a breath of fresh air. They offer new chances for teachers to grow. NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening teacher capacity (NEP, 2020).

Better Training under NEP 2020

NEP says that the old 1-year or 2-year B.Ed is not enough. It proposes a 4-Year Integrated B.Ed. This means a student who wants to be a teacher will start learning right after Class 12. They will get a lot of practical training in schools.

NEP also says that every teacher must do 50 hours of training (CPD) every year to stay updated.

- How to plan lessons using apps.
- How to use data (quiz scores) to see which student is weak.
- How to be ethical and safe online.

This prepares teachers for "Blended Learning"—a mix of classroom teaching and online resources.

Shift from Rote Learning to Competency-Based Learning

This is the biggest change. NEP says: "Stop asking students to memorize definitions." Instead, teach them how to apply knowledge.

- ample: Instead of memorizing the definition of "Pollution," take students to a nearby river or lake, show them the dirty water, and ask them to think of solutions.

This makes teaching more fun and creative.

- Online Learning Platforms (Swayam & DIKSHA)

Teachers don't have to wait for a government trainer to come to their school. They can log on to apps like DIKSHA or NISHTHA.

These apps have:

- Lesson plans.
- Worksheets.
- Training videos.

Teachers can learn at their own speed, sitting at home.

Focus on Inclusion

There is a new push to help children with disabilities (Divyang). Teachers are being trained on how to make their classrooms friendly for everyone. This includes using simple tricks like making a student with weak eyesight sit in the front, or using larger fonts on worksheets. The introduction of a 4-year integrated B.Ed strengthens alignment between pedagogical and disciplinary competence (NCTE, 2021).

Peer Learning

Teachers are now forming WhatsApp groups or school clusters where they share ideas. If a teacher in one school makes a great Math worksheet, they share it with teachers in other schools. This team spirit helps everyone improve.

Holistic Development

NEP says education is not just Physics, Chemistry, and Math. It is also Sports, Arts, Yoga, and Vocational Skills (like carpentry, coding, or gardening). Teachers now have the freedom to include art and sports in their regular lessons.

Combined Effect:

Think of NEP as the "What to do" and still exploring “How to do”

Together, they want to create a classroom where:

1. Students are active, not sleeping.
2. Teachers use digital tools confidently.
3. Exams test skills, not memory.
4. Every child feels included.

Chapter 5: Practical Tips for Teachers (Things needed *Right Now*)

If you are a future teacher or a current teacher, you don't need millions of rupees to improve. Here are some low-cost, practical strategies. NEP promotes real-world applications, experiential learning, and conceptual

clarity (NCERT, 2021).

A. To Improve Subject Teaching:

- **Concept Maps:** Before starting a chapter, draw a map on the board showing how topics are connected.
- **Local Stories:** Explain difficult concepts using stories from your own village or city.
- **Micro-Teaching:** Practice a 10-minute lesson in front of a friend and ask them to give honest feedback.
- **B. To Improve Assessment:**
- **Traffic Light System:** Give students red, yellow, and green cards. Ask "Did you understand?"
  - Green = Yes.
  - Yellow = Little bit.
  - Red = No.

This gives you instant feedback without grading papers.

- **Portfolios:** Keep a file of the student's best drawings or worksheets to show parents during PTM.

C. To Manage Large Classes:

- **Group Leaders:** Divide the class into groups of 5. Make one student the leader who is responsible for checking homework or keeping quiet.
- **Signals:** Instead of shouting "Silence!", use a clap pattern. When you clap twice, students know they have to stop talking.

D. To Use Digital Tools:

- **Start Small:** Don't try to learn everything at once. Just start by showing one YouTube video related to the topic.
- **QR Codes:** If students have phones at home, print QR codes on worksheets that link to helpful videos.

E. To Include Everyone:

- **Buddy System:** Pair a fast learner with a slow learner. Tell the fast learner their job is to help their buddy understand, not just to finish their own work.
- **Bilingual Lists:** Give students a list of keywords in English and their meaning in the local language.

F. For Social Skills:

- **Check-in:** Start the class by asking "How are you feeling today?"
- **Praise Effort:** Don't just praise marks. Say, "I like how hard you tried to solve that problem," even if the answer was wrong.

Chapter 6: A Roadmap for Schools

It is not just the teacher's responsibility. The School Management and Principals also have to act. DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and QR-coded textbooks help teachers integrate blended learning (DIKSHA, 2022; Swayam, 2018).

Create Standards: clearly tell teachers what is expected of them (using NPST).

1. **Give Time:** Reduce the data-entry workload so teachers can plan lessons.
2. **Mentoring:** Pair a junior teacher with a senior teacher. The junior can learn classroom management from the senior, and the senior can learn digital skills from the junior.
3. **Data Use:** Use marks and attendance data to find out which students are struggling and arrange extra classes for them.
4. **Safe Culture:** Make sure the school has strict rules against bullying and that female teachers and students feel safe.
5. **Involve Parents:** Don't just call parents to complain. Call them to explain how they can help their child read at home.

Chapter 7: Digital Literacy & Technology Integration for Teachers under NEP

NEP 2020 gives strong importance to digital education — not just for students, but for teachers. Even without advanced infrastructure, teachers can use concept maps, micro-teaching, bilingual support, QR codes, group work, and formative assessments to enhance competency (Kumar, 2022).

Key changes include:

- Use of ICT/digital tools in teaching, learning and evaluation: Teachers are expected to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) — such as digital classrooms, e-content, virtual labs, online assessments and blended learning methods. reflections.live+2shikshan.org+2
- Teacher training in digital pedagogy: As part of teacher education (pre-service and in-service), NEP mandates training teachers to become capable of delivering online content, creating e-lessons, digital assessments, interactive teaching rather than relying solely on traditional chalk-board. shikshan.org+2reflections.live+2

- Blended learning & online content creation: Teachers are encouraged to leverage digital platforms for teaching — and also to create open educational resources (OER) in regional languages: e-textbooks, quizzes, videos — so that learning becomes more accessible, flexible, and inclusive. reflections.live+2Next IAS+2

Digital infrastructure & support via national frameworks: NEP proposes the creation of a body National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to support and guide the adoption of EdTech, share best practices, and provide resources for teacher training, content creation, assessment tools — facilitating technology integration across schools and higher education. shikshan.org+2lce.lakshay.edu.in+2 Schools must provide mentoring, reduce non-teaching duties, promote data-driven decision-making, ensure emotional safety, and support teacher well-being to strengthen teaching competency (NITI Aayog, 2021).

Why This Matters — What NEP aims to achieve through these changes

By upgrading teacher-education (with 4-year integrated B.Ed & practical teaching practice), NEP aims to ensure better quality teachers — more competent, confident, and ready to handle diverse students and modern pedagogy. NEP 2020 emphasizes ICT-enabled teaching, online assessments, digital content creation, and blended learning. Platforms like DIKSHA and NETF help teachers transition from traditional to technology-enhanced instruction (NETF, 2020; NCERT Journals, 2022).

- Digital literacy ensures that teachers — even in remote or rource-constrained schools — can deliver interactive, flexible and inclusive education, reaching more students, with better teaching materials (e-content, recordings, adaptive assessments etc.).
- Continuous training + digital enablement helps teachers stay updated with evolving educational demands (technology, 21st-century skills, digital-era students), instead of being stuck with outdated methods.
- Teachers can become content creators — building contextually relevant, regional-language educational materials — which helps democratize quality education and make it accessible everywhere.

Challenges & What's Still Pending (What to Watch Out For)

- Digital-infrastructure gaps remain. In many areas (especially rural, remote) — limited internet, poor devices — make digital-based teaching hard. NEP's ambitions depend heavily on bridging that "digital divide." NCERT Journals+1
- Not all teachers — especially senior ones trained under older regimes — may be comfortable with technology. Transitioning them requires significant training and motivation. reflections.live+1

Implementation pace varies across states & institutions: While some schools/universities have started adopting NEP-based teacher-training & digital systems, others lag behind — so equity and uniform quality are still a concern. Teachers across India demonstrate innovation: a Rajasthan teacher creating labs from local materials, a Mumbai teacher using train timetables to teach math, and an Odisha teacher using smartphones to teach English pronunciation (Education World, 2023).The success of blended or online teaching also depends on resources (devices, stable electricity/internet), administrative willingness, and continuous support — not just policy

- using the data students brought.
- **Activity 4 (Create):** In groups, students design a plan to save water in the school (e.g., fixing leaking taps).
- **Assessment:** Not a written test. The group presents their plan. Teacher checks if their ideas are practical.

Chapter 8: How to Measure Improvement?

How do we know if a teacher is getting better? We can look at these signs:

1. **Planning:** Does the teacher have a written plan with activities?
2. **Interaction:** Are the students asking questions, or are they silent?
3. **Tools:** Is the teacher using charts, models, or videos?
4. **Happiness:** Do the students look happy to come to class?
5. **Results:** Are the students actually learning and applying skills, not just rote memorizing?

Schools should celebrate small wins. If a teacher tries a new method, clap for them in the staff meeting. This builds confidence.

Chapter 9: Real Stories from India

To end, let's look at some inspiring examples (snapshots) of Indian teachers using these competencies:

- **The Scientist of Rajasthan:** A teacher in a village school had no Science lab. He used plastic bottles, local sand, and mirrors to teach Physics and Chemistry experiments. This is **Resourcefulness**.
- **The Railway Teacher of Mumbai:** A Math teacher used the Mumbai Local Train timetable to teach students about "Time," "Distance," and "Average Speed." This is **Contextual Pedagogy**.
- **The Digital Hero of Odisha:** A teacher used his own phone and a small Bluetooth speaker to play English stories for his tribal students so they could hear the correct pronunciation. This is **Digital Competency**.
- **The Mangrove Protector of Kerala:** A teacher took students to the backwaters to study mangroves. They learned biology and geography together. This is **Experiential Learning**.

Note on Sources:

- The concepts of NEP 2020 are based on the official National Education Policy document of the Government of India.
- The concepts of INTEF are based on the Indian National Teacher Education Framework guidelines.
- Contextual examples are drawn from general observations of the Indian education system.

Good question. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has several provisions that directly affect teacher-competency and digital literacy. Here's how NEP changes things for teachers — and what is expected of them now, especially in terms of digital teaching and competence.

What NEP expects from Teachers — Competency, Training & Roles

- New, stronger teacher-education programmes: Under NEP, the minimum qualification for a school-teacher will become a four-year integrated B.Ed (or equivalent). This aligns teacher training more deeply with both subject mastery and pedagogy. Amar Ujala+1
- Focus on practical / experiential training: Instead of theory-heavy courses, teacher training will involve significant hands-on teaching experience, real-classroom internships/mentorship, to ensure new teachers are ready for real-world classrooms. Extramarks+1
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD): Teachers and principals are expected to take at least 50 hours of CPD workshops each year — to keep updating their teaching skills, pedagogical methods, and adapt to evolving educational needs. India Today+1
- Role of teachers redefined: Teachers aren't just knowledge-givers under NEP — they are facilitators, mentors and guides. They are expected to nurture holistic development, critical thinking, creativity, and help students become lifelong learners. NCERT Journals+1

Conclusion: The Future is in Your Hands

Teaching competency is the heart of quality education. It is not about knowing everything; it is about being ready to learn and adapt. Indicators of improved competency include better lesson planning, student engagement, use of diverse resources, inclusive strategies, and conceptual learning outcomes (NCERT Journals, 2022).

Indian teachers work in difficult conditions. They face administrative pressure, large classes, and sometimes a lack of resources. But with the support of **NEP 2020** and **INTEF**, there is a clear path forward.

The vision is simple: We want classrooms where the teacher is not a "Boss" but a "Guide." We want classrooms where students are not afraid of making mistakes. We want classrooms where technology is a friend, not a burden.

If you are a student aspiring to be a teacher, remember this: You have the power to shape the next generation. It won't be easy, but by building these competencies—subject knowledge, digital skills, and a loving heart—you can change lives. As we say in India, the *Guru* (Teacher) holds a place higher than God because it is the Guru who shows the path to God. That is the level of competency and responsibility we aim for.

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