

Problems Faced by Principals in the Effective Implementation of the Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Programme in Gujarat.

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Abstract

The implementation of the four-year Integrated B.Ed. programme represents a significant shift in the landscape of teacher education. The objective of the study was to investigate the problems faced by principals in executing this programme in Gujarat and to provide suggestions for improvement. It was a descriptive survey research design. The sample included the total population of four principals from Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in Gujarat currently offering the integrated course. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and administered to collect data across six dimensions: Admission, Infrastructure, Internship, Examination, Mentoring, and Support Services. Content analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data. The results showed that while the domains of examination and mentoring were functioning effectively, the principals faced significant challenges in admissions due to a lack of awareness and technical issues. Additionally, limitations in smart classroom infrastructure and difficulties in coordinating internships with hesitant cooperating schools were observed...

Keywords: Integrated B.Ed. Programme, Teacher Education, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), Implementation Challenges, School Internship, Principals' Perspective..

Introduction

The four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme is a special course offered by the Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs), which are part of NCERT. This program was started in the 1960s with a simple idea: to train students to become teachers right after they finish Class 12. In the normal system, people usually finish college first and then learn how to teach. But RIEs believe that to be a great teacher, you should start training early, just like doctors or engineers do. This course is unique because it gives students two degrees at once—like a Science degree (B.Sc.) combined with a Teaching degree (B.Ed.). This means students learn their favorite subjects, like Math or History, while also learning the skills to teach them to children. Instead of studying these things separately, they learn them together for four years. This method helps students understand teaching much better. It also benefits the students because it saves them one full year of study compared to the traditional way of becoming a teacher.

Norms and Standards (NCTE Regulation 2014)

The curriculum of the four-year integrated B.Ed. programme is precisely designed to foster both subject-based mastery and professional teaching competencies simultaneously. As per the NCTE Regulations of 2014, the primary aim of this dual-degree course is to prepare teachers for the upper primary and secondary stages by integrating general studies in Science or Humanities with professional pedagogical training. This approach ensures that prospective teachers are well-versed in the foundations of education, specific school subject pedagogy, and the practical tasks required of a teacher, rather than treating teacher training as a separate, subsequent qualification.

The programme is rigorous in its structure and timeline. There are four academic years or eight semesters, although students are permitted a maximum of six years to complete the requirements. To ensure deep engagement, the regulations mandate at least 250 working days per year with a minimum of 36 working hours per week, ensuring availability for mentoring and guidance. Attendance is strictly monitored to maintain professional standards, requiring 80% attendance for general coursework and a higher benchmark of 90% for school internships. This high requirement for the internship highlights the programme's strong emphasis on practical experience and sustained engagement with the school environment.

Admission into the programme follows a standardized and merit-based procedure. Institutions typically operate with basic units of fifty students, admitting candidates who have secured at least 50% marks in their Senior Secondary (+2) examinations. While the admission process relies on merit from qualifying or entrance exams, it also adheres to central and state reservation policies for various categories. Upon entry, students must select their disciplinary stream, which dictates their pedagogic specialization, ensuring that their training is focused and relevant to their future teaching subjects from the very beginning.

The academic framework is comprehensive, blending undergraduate content with educational perspectives, pedagogic studies, and language proficiency. Crucial elements like ICT, yoga, gender studies, and inclusive education are integrated into the curriculum to create well-rounded educators. A significant portion of the learning involves practicum and school internship, which is reflected in the assessment structure; at least one-fourth of the total marks are dedicated to the 16-week practice teaching component. Evaluation is a balanced mix of external annual examinations and internal assessments based on assignments, portfolios, and observational records. To support this holistic training, institutions are required to provide barrier-free infrastructure, including adequate classrooms, libraries, and resource centres.

Objectives of the Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Course

The following are the objectives of the 4-year Integrated B.Ed. course as per the new guidelines of NCTE (2014): Prepare teachers equipped with knowledge and competencies to conduct themselves as professionals and handle the challenges of the present-day classroom.

Prepare teachers with a sound background in perspectives of education along with hands-on experience based on field exposure.

Develop a rational conceptualization of pedagogical knowledge and incorporate it into specific content areas.

Develop teachers with a deep and critical awareness of professional ethics and an ability to critically engage in reflective practices.

To understand the challenges Principals face, we must look closely at the six most important parts (dimensions) of the Integrated B.Ed. course.

The Admission Process. The admission process serves as the entry point where students are selected based on the merit and eligibility criteria set by the NCTE and state authorities. In this four-year model, the process is unique because it targets students immediately after Class 12, requiring them to choose a specific disciplinary stream (Arts or Science) right at the beginning. The Principal's role here is to ensure that the selection is transparent, follows reservation policies, and successfully identifies candidates who are genuinely committed to a long-term professional career in teaching.

Infrastructure Facilities. Infrastructure is the physical foundation that supports a multidisciplinary learning environment for four years. Because the program combines a liberal degree with professional training, the college must provide specialized facilities such as science laboratories, computer centers, and "smart" classrooms. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that these spaces are barrier-free and equipped with the necessary tools, such as a well-stocked library containing both academic textbooks and journals on educational research.

The Internship Programme. The internship is the most critical practical component of the framework, where students change from being learners to becoming teachers. Over a period of 16 weeks, students are placed in local schools to gain real-world experience in classroom management and lesson delivery. The Principal must act as a bridge between the college and the community, forming strong school-college partnerships to ensure that trainees receive proper guidance and a supportive environment during their field exposure.

Examination and Evaluation Examination and evaluation ensure that students meet the high academic and professional standards required for a dual degree. This dimension follows a system of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), where students are graded through a mix of internal assignments, practical

portfolios, and final university exams. The challenge for the administration is to manage a complex assessment schedule that fairly evaluates a student's mastery of their subject matter alongside their pedagogical or teaching skills.

Mentoring. Mentoring is the "human" pillar of the program, focusing on the emotional and professional growth of the students over their four-year stay. Since these students join at a young age, they require constant guidance to develop the ethics and personality needed for the teaching profession. The institution creates a system where faculty members act as mentors, tracking each student's progress and helping them overcome personal or academic hurdles to become reflective and confident educators.

Support Services. Support services provide the extra help and resources that ensure a student's overall well-being and future success. These services include career counseling, placement cells to help graduates find jobs, and grievance redressal systems to handle any student concerns. By offering these auxiliary supports, the institution ensures that students are not just academically qualified, but are also physically and mentally prepared for the demands of a professional career in the education sector.

Rationale of the Study

The importance of this study is clear because of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy states that by 2030, the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) will be the required degree for all school teachers. As colleges across India prepare to switch to this new model, we can learn valuable lessons from the institutions that are already running it. The Principal is the key leader in this transition. They are responsible for making the official government rules work within the real-life limits of their colleges. Therefore, this study does more than just look at current problems; it acts as a guide for the future of teacher education in India. By identifying the daily challenges Principals face today—such as managing infrastructure and organizing internships—this research creates a roadmap for the rest of the country. Finding these problems, now it will help policymakers and institutions fix them before they happen again. This will ensure that the nationwide launch of ITEP is smoother, stronger, and more successful.

Objective of my Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the problems faced by principals in executing the four-year integrated B.Ed. programme and to provide suggestions for improvement.

Research Methods

This study followed a qualitative approach using a descriptive survey design. The research focused on the four Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in Gujarat that currently offer the four-year Integrated B.Ed. programme. Among these, three institutions only offer the B.A. B.Ed. course, while one offers both B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed. courses. The participants for the study were the Principals of these four institutions. Since the study included every institution in this specific category, the sample size was equal to the total population. To capture the real-life experiences and challenges faced by the Principals, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The collected information was then analyzed using content analysis to identify common themes across the six key dimensions of the study.

Material

In order to realize the objectives of the study, a **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule** was developed and used as the primary tool by the investigator. The schedule was constructed to cover six specific dimensions of the programme administration: Admission Process, Infrastructure Facilities, Internship Programme, Examination and Evaluation, Mentoring, and Support Services.

Procedure of the Study

The data collection was carried out by personally visiting the selected Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in Gujarat. The investigator approached the Principals of these institutions and conducted in-depth interviews to gather qualitative data regarding their administrative experiences. The responses provided by the principals were recorded and subsequently analyzed using the **Content Analysis** technique to interpret the data and identify the major challenges in the implementation of the Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Programme.

Results

The qualitative data obtained through the interviews with the Principals were analyzed using content analysis. The findings have been classified under six key dimensions, revealing the operational realities of the Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Programme.

The Admission Process

The admission phase emerged as a significant hurdle. The analysis reveals a "Communication Gap" where half of the principals reported a severe lack of awareness among stakeholders. Unlike the traditional B.Ed., the concept of an "Integrated" degree is often confused with regular graduation courses. Furthermore, the transition to the centralized Gujarat Common Admission Services (GCAS) has faced significant challenges, like technical errors and rigid timelines, which have hampered efficient seat fulfillment. Additionally, the absence of on-campus hostel facilities deters students from outside districts, leading to application withdrawals. To resolve these problems, principals suggested that the university must streamline the GCAS portal to remove technical glitches and launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign to clarify the admission criteria.

Infrastructure Facilities

While the curriculum emphasizes ICT integration, two out of four principals explicitly stated that their institutions lack Smart Classrooms. This forces a regression where future teachers are trained in 21st-century skills using traditional "chalk-and-talk" infrastructure. Some institutions also reported basic shortages in general classrooms and washrooms, suggesting that facilities were not fully upgraded to accommodate the increased batch load of a four-year programme. The principals strongly emphasized that management/Government must prioritize funding for Smart Classrooms and hostel facilities to support the technological and residential requirements of the course.

Internship Programme

The internship programme, which is central to teacher preparation, faces significant problems from practicing schools. Three out of four principals reported that schools view interns as a burden rather than a resource. One Principal said that allotted schools are often located far from the students' residences or the college, imposing a heavy travel burden. A critical recommendation from the Principals is that the internship programme should be made mandatory for schools by the government. A formal government order would ensure schools accept interns as a duty rather than a favor.

Examination and Evaluation

In contrast to administrative challenges, this dimension appeared the most stable. All four principals expressed their satisfaction with the university's examination and evaluation processes. The semester-wise organization and internal evaluation mechanisms are functioning smoothly, indicating that the academic administration has adapted to the new syllabus more effectively than the external support systems.

Mentoring

The study found that the colleges are actively following the NCTE rules for mentoring students. Three principals confirmed the existence of strong mentoring programs in their institutions. These include the presence of counselors for psychological guidance and supplementary workshops in areas like Yoga, Ved, and Puran, ensuring the holistic development of the student-teachers.

Support Services

Positive indicators were also found in auxiliary support services. Principals highlighted the active presence of extra-curricular bodies like NCC (National Cadet Corps) and NSS (National Service Scheme), which are essential for character building. Furthermore, the availability of scholarships was noted as a crucial factor in retaining students from economically weaker sections throughout the long duration of the course.

Discussion

The results showed that the implementation of the Four-Year Integrated B.Ed. Programme (ITEP) in Gujarat is currently facing significant administrative and operational challenges. It was found that while the academic

components of examination and mentoring are functioning effectively, the logistical domains of admission, infrastructure, and internship coordination are creating bottlenecks. The principals reported that the centralized admission system (GCAS) created resistance due to technical errors and a lack of public awareness, wherein the clarity regarding the integrated nature of the course was lacking among stakeholders.

The confusion regarding the admission process and the structural similarity to general graduation courses is consistent with Manani and Kumar's (2023) study, which highlighted that without clear communication, stakeholders often fail to distinguish the professional value of the integrated degree. Furthermore, the logistical challenge of students withdrawing due to a lack of hostels resonates with Mohanty's (2022) findings that the cost and duration of the four-year programme can be a deterrent if supporting facilities are not available.

The curriculum of the ITEP comprised mandates for digital pedagogy and ICT integration. However, it was found that the physical infrastructure in terms of Smart Classrooms was insufficient to support this vision. This aligns with Parveen and Adil's (2025) observation that there exists a significant gap between policy intent and infrastructural readiness in teacher education institutions. Saxena (2017) also argued that while ICT is a must-have, a lack of basic facilities remains a chronic issue in many B.Ed. colleges.

The internship programme, which is central to teacher preparation, faced resistance from practicing schools. The principals indicated that schools often viewed interns as a burden rather than a resource. This confirms Zaman's (2024) finding that "Poor School-College Partnerships" are a primary hurdle in teacher education. This is further supported by Chakrabarty (2023), who emphasized that the shift to longer internships is a challenging task for institutions that lack binding authority over schools.

Educational Implications and Suggestions

Based on the feedback from principals, this study provides suggestions to improve the programme. First, regarding infrastructure, the government needs to provide specific funding to build smart classrooms and computer labs. College management also needs to prioritize building hostels for students coming from other towns. Second, for the internship programme, the government should issue a strict order making it mandatory for schools to accept B.Ed. trainees as part of their duty, not as a favor. A system should be created to assign students to schools near their homes to reduce travel costs, and colleges should meet with school principals beforehand to clarify expectations. Finally, to improve admissions, universities must fix technical issues in the GCAS system and create help desks. It is also important to launch a public campaign to explain the benefits of this integrated degree to students and parents. These recommendations have serious implications for the ITEP programme. As the programme is already active in some institutions and expanding to other universities, addressing these issues is essential for its smooth and successful functioning.

Conclusion

In any progressive democracy, the importance of a strong teacher preparation framework cannot be denied. It is critical for the development of the self and the nation. The Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) would go a long way in realising this aim. The study found that while the academic aspects of examination and mentoring are stable, the programme faces significant challenges in the domains of admission, infrastructure, and internship coordination. There is no doubt that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a holistic and multidisciplinary environment for future teachers. However, the transaction of this policy at the institutional level often lacks the necessary infrastructural readiness and administrative support. A systematic, concentrated approach in the way of streamlined centralized admissions and mandatory school internship partnerships would be effective in accomplishing the goals of quality teacher education. The student-teachers today are the nation-builders of tomorrow, taking the country forward.

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