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## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND POLICY IMPERATIVES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION IN BIHAR

Khagendra Kumar<sup>1</sup> and Pankaj Kumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor at the Department of Education, Patna University and Chair Professor (I/C), Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Dr. Ambedkar Centre, Patna University, Patna.

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar at the Department of Education, Patna University, Patna.

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### ABSTRACT

This article delves into the theoretical underpinnings and policy imperatives crucial for understanding and reforming Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEIs) in Bihar. It argues that the challenges confronting teacher education in the state, exemplified by its low educational quality indices, necessitate a profound examination beyond mere empirical evaluation. By synthesizing the historical evolution of teacher education in India and Bihar, analyzing key national policy frameworks such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and critically reviewing existing literature, this paper identifies significant conceptual and systemic issues. The discussion highlights the complex mandate of ETEIs, the persistent gap between policy ideals and ground realities, and the theoretical implications of structural and pedagogical deficiencies. It posits that a robust theoretical grounding, which acknowledges historical legacies, socio-political influences, and the multifaceted nature of teacher development, is essential for formulating effective strategies to improve the quality and relevance of elementary teacher education in Bihar, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of the broader educational ecosystem.

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher Education, Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEIs), Bihar, Policy Imperatives

### 1. Introduction: The Crucial Role of Elementary Teacher Education

#### 1.1. Defining Teacher Education and the Significance of ETEIs

An educational institution plays a great role in providing learning experiences to budding scholars, facilitating their journey from "gloom to illumination." Central to these organizations are teachers, who are indispensable for achieving desired educational modifications; indeed, without teacher, educational process cannot be implemented at any stage. The quality and effectiveness of these teachers are significantly shaped by their initial preparation, a process formally known as teacher education. Teacher education can be comprehensively defined as "the policy and procedure designed to equip prospective teachers with knowledge, behaviour and skills they require to perform their task

effectively in the classroom, school and wider community" (Mangla, 2001). This definition underscores that teacher education is not merely a training regimen but a holistic developmental process. It encompasses the cultivation of teaching skills, the inculcation of sound pedagogical theory, and the development of essential professional skills. Teaching skills involve instruction and practice in diverse techniques that enable a teacher to plan and deliver instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement, and conduct effective assessments. These skills include classroom management, the perception and application of instructional materials, and communication proficiencies. Pedagogical theory, on the other hand, is rooted in psychological, sociological, and philosophical foundations. The psychological basis helps teachers develop insights into students' makeup and understand themselves and their circumstances. Sociological considerations enable an understanding of society's role in the educational system, both nationally and globally. Philosophical considerations provide insights into applying different philosophical schools of thought and constructing curricula and discipline frameworks. Professional skills encompass techniques, strategies, and plans of action that foster professional growth, including interpersonal, counselling, computer, and management skills. The amalgamation of these diverse components is intended to foster all round development, which is deemed necessary for a teacher. Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEs) are pivotal in this endeavour, as they are tasked with shaping the capabilities of future educators who will, in turn, influence generations of learners. The multi-faceted nature of teacher education—encompassing a wide array of skills, deep pedagogical understanding derived from various disciplines, and a broad spectrum of professional attributes implies that ETEs carry a complex and demanding mandate. This mandate extends far beyond simple instructional technique delivery. Each component, from understanding the psychological makeup of a learner to grasping the sociological impact of education or mastering interpersonal communication, requires distinct pedagogical inputs, learning environments, and assessment strategies. If ETEs, due to resource constraints, policy misdirection, or a narrow conceptualization of their role, focus disproportionately on one aspect (e.g., theoretical knowledge) at the expense of others (e.g., professional skills), the aspired 'all round development' of teachers is inevitably compromised. This potential mismatch between the ideal of holistic teacher education and the actual capacity or operational focus of ETEs can be a significant, yet often overlooked, root cause of the challenges observed in the quality of teacher preparation. A fundamental theoretical assumption underpinning the entire rationale for formal teacher education is encapsulated in the principle that 'teachers are prepared, not born'. This assertion, central to the nature of teacher education, signifies that teaching competence is not an innate talent but a set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are systematically developed through deliberate and structured educational processes. Consequently, the quality, dynamism, and responsiveness of these educational processes, namely the programs offered by ETEs—are of paramount importance. If ETEs are found to be deficient or failing in their mission it suggests that either the 'teacher preparation' process itself is flawed in its design or execution, or the resources and conditions necessary for this developmental process are critically inadequate. This principle thus provides a strong theoretical justification for the critical evaluation and continuous improvement of ETEs.

## **1.2. Context of Teacher Education Challenges and Rationale for Theoretical Scrutiny**

The state of Bihar presents a compelling case for a deep theoretical scrutiny of its teacher education system. The state's ranking as the “second lowest in the School Education Quality Index (SEQI) report released by NITI Aayog” (Education Times of India, Oct. 4, 2019 ) serves as a stark indicator of systemic issues within its broader education sector. Such poor performance inevitably draws attention to the quality of its teaching workforce and, by extension, the institutions responsible for their preparation. The assertion within the foundational research for this analysis that “Elementary teacher education Institutions of Bihar have totally failed in providing quality education to the prospective teachers” underscores the gravity of the situation. This perceived failure is further elaborated with observations that these institutions often “lack sufficient physical facilities, qualified lecturers, libraries, and laboratories,” and are plagued by problematic “admission, examination, and evaluation processes,” alongside issues of “excessive fees” and “poor payment is given to the educators”. The very problem statement guiding the original evaluative study, "An Evaluative Study of Organization and Functions of Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEIs) in Bihar," points to recognized and deeply entrenched deficiencies. This context of acknowledged crisis sets the stage for an argument that a purely empirical description of these failures, while necessary, is insufficient. A thorough theoretical examination is crucial to unearth and understand the underlying conceptual, systemic, and policy-related reasons for these persistent shortcomings. It is through such theoretical scrutiny that the deeper patterns and root causes of institutional dysfunction can be identified, moving beyond a mere cataloguing of symptoms. The rapid increase in number of ETEIs in Bihar, juxtaposed with their widespread failure to meet the norms and standards of the NCTE and BSEB and to provide quality education (Kumar & Madhusoodanam, 2024), points towards a significant theoretical concern regarding the balance between quantity and quality in educational expansion. This phenomenon suggests that the proliferation of ETEIs may have been driven by factors other than a carefully considered strategy for enhancing educational quality, such as market demand, policy targets focused on increasing enrollment capacity, or perhaps insufficient regulatory foresight. Theoretically, any expansion of educational provision, if not accompanied by robust quality control mechanisms and a sound theoretical basis for ensuring sustainable quality, risks diluting standards and can lead to systemic underperformance, as evidenced by Bihar's SEQI ranking. This points to a potential flaw in the policy theory or the implementation theory that guided the expansion of ETEIs in Bihar, where the mechanisms for ensuring that quantity is matched with quality were either absent, inadequate, or ineffectively applied.

## **2. Historical and Policy Landscape of Teacher Education in India**

### **2.1. Evolutionary Trends in Teacher Education: From Gurukuls to Modern Institutions**

The history of teacher education in India is ancient and has undergone significant transformations over millennia. In ancient India, systems like the Gurukuls provided holistic education, with the Guru (teacher) playing a central role. While teaching focused on Vedas, and Brahmins were often seen as

community teachers, a formal teacher training system as understood today was largely absent. The Buddhist period (500 BC to 1200 AD) saw the emergence of a more structured monastic system where a monk had to study under two teachers to become an Acharya, and it is noted that formal teachers training systems was emerged in this period, with teachers trained through a monitorial system. Even in this era, pedagogy began to take shape, though not as a distinct branch of knowledge, with emphasis on clear pronunciation and recitation. The Muslim period (1200 AD to 1700 AD) did not have a formal teacher training system, with education centered in Maktabas and Madrasas focusing on the Quran, using oral methods (Balwaria & Gupta, 2014).

The advent of British colonial rule marked a significant shift, with the introduction of a modern educational system tailored to colonial needs. The British initiated the formal teacher education system, with a Danish Missionary establishing a public formal training institution at Serampur in West Bengal in 1793, considered a "first milestone" (Hazra, 2018).

This was followed by the establishment of normal schools in Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta, and later by government normal schools in Poona, Surat, and Calcutta. Wood's Despatch (1854) emphasized the establishment of teacher training institutions. The Indian Education Commission (1882) further accepted training systems for elementary and secondary school teachers and advocated for more normal schools, leading to the establishment of 106 such institutions. Lord Curzon (1902-05) significantly highlighted the importance of teacher training, stating, "If school education system has to make more effective the teachers should be correctly trained," and a 1912 resolution mandated appropriate teacher training certificates for teaching. Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Basic Education in 1937, which was self-supporting and correlated subjects with crafts, led to the establishment of Basic training colleges (Balwaria & Gupta, 2014).

Post-independence, a crucial conceptual shift occurred, the term "teacher training" was substituted with "teacher education". This change was deemed "more appropriate because teacher preparedness, needed different skills in teaching field" (Saxena et al., 2006). This terminological evolution signifies a deeper theoretical understanding of the teacher's role, moving beyond the mere impartation of instructional techniques to a more holistic and professionalized preparation.

The University Education Commission (1949) and the Secondary Education Commission (1953) made important recommendations for improving teacher education programs. The establishment of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1961 was a significant development, organizing pre-service and in-service training. Four Regional Colleges of Education were set up as model institutions. A landmark development was the establishment of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), which received statutory status through an Act of Parliament in 1993, tasked with regulatory functions and the academic improvement of teacher education programs (Balwaria & Gupta, 2014). Despite these efforts and numerous committees reports and policy reviews (e.g., Rama Murti Committee, 1990), strong criticism of teacher education has

persisted, indicating that "despite of so many attempts, teacher education has not been totally profitable in keeping out negative component" (Hazra, 2018).

This historical trajectory reveals that teacher education has consistently been a subject of reform and concern in India. The critical question that arises, particularly in the context of Bihar's contemporary challenges, is whether the ETEIs in the state fully embody the theoretical shift from a narrow 'training' model to a comprehensive 'education' paradigm. The documented deficiencies in Bihar's ETEIs, such as inadequate facilities, issues with curriculum transaction, and concerns about teacher quality (Dhal, 2018; Kumar, 2020) suggest that this theoretical transition may not have been fully actualized in practice. It prompts a deeper inquiry into the current problems in Bihar's ETEIs partly attributable to a regression to, or an incomplete evolution from, a simplistic 'training' framework, despite the adoption of the 'education' nomenclature. If the focus remains primarily on the mechanical aspects of teaching without adequate attention to the development of critical thinking, reflective practice, and a deep understanding of the socio-cultural context of education, then the very essence of 'teacher education' is undermined.

## **2.2. Key National Policy Directives and their Theoretical Implications**

National policies on education have consistently shaped the discourse and direction of teacher education in India, each carrying distinct theoretical implications for the role of teachers and the nature of their preparation. The Education Commission (1966), also known as the Kothari Commission, underscored the necessity of "a well organised program of teacher education" as fundamental for the development of quality education. It perceptively noted that without structured pedagogical renewal, teachers tend to replicate the methods by which they were taught, thereby perpetuating outdated practices. The commission's call for teachers to "learn new pedagogy in view of new theories and knowledge" implied a dynamic view of teaching, requiring continuous learning and adaptation. Its advocacy for a Common School System also had profound implications for teacher preparation, necessitating teachers capable of addressing diverse student populations in an equitable manner. The modified National Policy on Education (Ministry of Education 1992) identified teacher performance as "the most determining input in education system." Critically, it remarked that contemporary teacher education programs were often "not pertinent" to the evolving needs of schools and society (Ministry of Education, 1985). To address this, NPE 1986 proposed significant structural reforms, including the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) in every district, envisioned as centres for both pre-service and in-service training for elementary school teachers and personnel in non-formal and adult education (Ministry of Education, 1992). The policy also recommended that teacher training should be "capability based" and emphasize a strong "combination between theory and practice for situational uses". The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 brought a significant pedagogical shift, envisioning the teacher as a "facilitator of learning" rather than a mere transmitter of information. It emphasized "continuous professional development" for teachers to stay abreast of new research and approaches. NCF 2005 promoted "critical pedagogy," encouraging teachers to foster questioning, analysis, and dialogue in classrooms. A key tenet was "connecting



knowledge to life," making learning relevant and meaningful for students (NCERT, 2005). Furthermore, it stressed the teacher's role in "nurturing an overriding identity" that promotes national values, respect for diversity, and social justice. The theoretical underpinnings of NCF 2005 are clearly constructivist, advocating for learner-centered environments where students actively construct knowledge. The NEP 2020 represents the latest comprehensive framework, reinforcing and extending many earlier themes while introducing new imperatives. It highlights the need for "multidisciplinary inputs" in teacher education, moving beyond pedagogy to include psychology, philosophy, arts, and sciences for a well-rounded teacher profile. A "deep understanding of Indian Society," its history, culture, and socio-political context, is deemed essential for teachers to connect with diverse student needs. NEP 2020 reiterates the teacher's role as a "facilitator of learning" and underscores the importance of "continuous professional development" through mechanisms like micro-teaching and internships. A significant structural reform proposed is that by 2030, all teacher education programs will be offered by "composite multidisciplinary institutions," integrating education departments with other academic disciplines. The policy also aims to attract "dedicated educators" to the profession through improved curricula and recruitment processes.

Across these policies, particularly NCF 2005 and NEP 2020, there is a consistent theoretical progression towards envisioning teachers in more dynamic, facilitative, and learner-centric roles. However, a critical observation from the context of Bihar is that the "Present plan of actions of teacher education are not appropriate for emerging proposals in Circumstances and pedagogy" and that "This teacher education to be moved from educator Centric to pupil Centric" (Dhal, 2018). This starkly indicates a substantial gap between the ideals articulated in national policies and the actual practices prevalent in Bihar's ETEIs. The implication is that the institutional structures, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches within these ETEIs may still be anchored in older, more didactic models of teaching, despite clear and repeated policy mandates for transformative change. This failure to translate national policy theory into effective institutional practice is a central challenge. Furthermore, NEP 2020's mandate for teacher education to be housed within "composite multidisciplinary institutions" by 2030 presents a profound theoretical and structural challenge for the existing ETEI landscape in Bihar. Almost all private ETEIs and government funded ETEIs function as standalone institutions. Their current organizational structure may be theoretically incompatible with this future vision, which emphasizes interdisciplinary learning and research environments for prospective teachers. This suggests an impending need for a significant structural and theoretical reorientation of ETEIs in Bihar to align with national policy. Such a reorientation could involve mergers, closures, fundamental redesigns of programs, or the forging of deep, meaningful collaborations with existing multidisciplinary higher education institutions. Without such a transformation, many current ETEIs risk becoming anachronistic and unable to meet the evolving standards for teacher preparation.

### **3. Conceptualizing Quality and Effectiveness in ETEIs**

**3.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Institutional Organization and Functions** Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEIs) requires a clear conceptual

framework. Various theoretical models of institutional effectiveness, commonly applied to educational organizations, can provide such a framework. Systems theory, for instance, views an ETEI as an open system that takes in inputs (students, faculty, resources, curriculum framework), engages in transformation processes (teaching-learning, practical training, assessment), produces outputs (trained teachers, research), and relies on feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement. The quality of each component and the synergy between them determine overall effectiveness. Organizational learning theories suggest that effective ETEIs are those that can adapt, innovate, and improve over time by learning from their experiences and a changing environment. This implies a need for reflective practices, data-driven decision-making, and a culture that supports professional growth among faculty. Quality management frameworks, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or outcome-based education (OBE), offer structured approaches to defining quality standards, monitoring performance, and implementing continuous improvement cycles. These frameworks emphasize stakeholder satisfaction (students, employers, society), clear learning outcomes, and efficient processes. The core functions of an ETEI providing pre-service education, conducting in-service training, developing curriculum, engaging in research, and fostering community linkages are all theoretically intertwined with its organizational structure and resources. Factors such as the adequacy and functionality of infrastructure (classrooms, labs, libraries), the qualifications and motivation of human resources (faculty, administrative staff), the relevance and rigor of the curriculum, the effectiveness of pedagogical practices, the transparency and efficiency of governance and management, and the strength of linkages with schools and the wider community, all theoretically contribute to the ETEI's capacity to achieve its goals and produce quality teachers. The very act of undertaking "An Evaluative Study of Organization and Functions of Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEIs) in Bihar" presupposes an underlying theoretical model of what constitutes a well-organized and functional ETEI. The specific objectives outlined in the study—such as identifying the availability of infrastructure and physical facilities, finding out the availability of teachers and their qualifications, examining admission procedures, analyzing curricular and co-curricular activities, and exploring the nature of management, implicitly define the key parameters of this evaluative framework. These parameters are not arbitrary; they align with established components of organizational effectiveness models in education. For example, adequate infrastructure is a necessary input, qualified faculty are essential for the transformation process, relevant curriculum guides the content and pedagogy of education, and effective management ensures the smooth functioning of the entire system. This theoretical article can, therefore, make this implicit framework more explicit by drawing upon established theories of educational administration, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness to provide a robust conceptual lens for interpreting the study's findings.

### **3.2. Critical Review of Literature: Identifying Gaps and Prevailing Issues in Teacher Education**

The literature on teacher education, both nationally and internationally, reveals a range of persistent issues and areas requiring further investigation, many of which resonate with the challenges observed in Bihar. Shaeffer (1986) highlighted the importance of in-service training, suggesting a cost-effective model of shorter pre-service training followed by robust in-service support, a theme echoed by Pillai

(1992) who focused on the role of DIETs in this regard. Several studies point to significant problems within teacher education programs. Kumar (2020) identified issues with infrastructure, staff, and curriculum in Bihar's teacher education programs, while Desai (2012) noted problems with lecturer selection, learner and lecturer competency, and School Experience Programs in India more broadly. Kumar and Madhusoodanam (2024) also critically analyzed issues arising from the proliferation of teacher education institutions in Bihar, including concerns about buildings, learners, curriculum, and evaluation. The Azim Premji Foundation (2010) delivered a critical assessment of DIETs in India, stating that many have failed to fulfill their roles appropriately, citing poor physical infrastructure and staffing problems as key concerns. Of late it has been observed that in most of the self-financing teacher training colleges, while having good infrastructure, often lacked skillful educators and were primarily driven by financial motives rather than quality concerns. The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is increasingly recognized, with Sharma (2022) emphasizing its potential to enhance teacher education quality. Gopalan (2013) stressed the need for better coordination between pre-service and in-service training programs. Other studies have explored teacher self-efficacy (Pendergast et al., 2011; Flores, 2015), assessment competency (Goel, 2010), and pedagogical approaches (Jain et al., 2016 on constructivism). Despite this body of research, the thesis identifies several critical research gaps: limited understanding of the long-term impact of teacher education programs on teacher retention and practice; insufficient focus on training for diverse learning needs; inadequate exploration of effective technology integration in teacher education; limited research on mentorship and coaching; and a lack of focus on teacher leadership development. The consistency with which issues like poor infrastructure, staffing problems, and ineffective DIETs appear in the broader literature, and which also form the impetus for the Bihar study, is noteworthy. The problems motivating the Bihar evaluation such as ETEIs lacking sufficient physical facilities, qualified lecturers, charging excessive fees and the influence of powerful pressure groups of private teacher education institutions mirror these widespread challenges. This congruence suggests that the difficulties faced by ETEIs in Bihar are not isolated or unique phenomena but are rather manifestations of deeper, systemic, and endemic problems within the larger Indian teacher education system. Consequently, while state-specific interventions are crucial, solutions may also necessitate national-level policy rethinking and more robust regulatory mechanisms that address these pervasive issues at their root. The identified research gap concerning the "inadequate exploration of technology integration in teacher education" is particularly salient in the current educational landscape. NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on leveraging technology for teaching and learning at all levels, including teacher preparation. If ETEIs are not theoretically equipped or practically prepared to integrate ICT effectively into their curriculum and pedagogy, they risk becoming obsolete and failing to prepare teachers for the demands of 21st-century classrooms. The empirical findings from the Bihar study, which indicate that a "very high proportion of Elementary teacher education Institutions were not provided ICT facility to the learners", highlight a critical disconnect. This gap between policy aspirations for technology-enabled education, the existing research lacunae regarding effective integration strategies (Sharma, 2022), and the stark on-the-ground reality of inadequate ICT facilities and utilization in Bihar's ETEIs points to a multifaceted failure theoretical, practical, and policy related. ETEIs urgently need a



comprehensive theoretical framework for integrating ICT not merely as a supplementary tool, but as a transformative pedagogical approach that enhances learning and prepares future-ready teachers.

#### **4. Teacher Education in Bihar: A Theoretical Scrutiny**

**4.1. Historical Development and Specific Challenges in the State** Bihar has a rich educational heritage, with ancient centres of learning like Nalanda, Vikramshila, and Udanpur universities. Before British intervention, indigenous institutions like Pathshalas and Makhtabs provided elementary education (Dhal, 2018). Formal teacher training programs in Bihar commenced with the establishment of a Normal School in Patna in 1895-96. A significant milestone was the setting up of Patna Training College in 1908, initially for a bachelor's degree in teacher training, which later introduced the Bachelor of Training (B.T.) in 1915-16 and subsequently the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) (Dhal, 2018, as cited in). The state also embraced Mahatma Gandhi's Basic Education concept in 1937, correlating subjects with crafts, and established Basic Training Schools. Post-independence, Bihar witnessed an expansion of teacher training institutions. By 1953, there were 94 training institutions, including 84 for primary teachers (Dhal, 2018). However, challenges emerged. From 1988-89, 37 Primary Teacher Education Colleges (PTECs) were converted into DIETs, a move described in the study as an "eyewash" due to the "absence of bare required physical infrastructures and evaluators". This suggests a superficial adherence to national policy directives (like NPE 1986 which advocated for DIETs (Ministry of Education, 1992) without a genuine commitment to the underlying theoretical principles of quality enhancement or the necessary resource allocation. Such a theoretically flawed inception, a change in nomenclature and structure without substantive functional improvements likely contributed to the current poor state of many DIETs, as also indicated by the national findings of the Azim Premji Foundation (2010). This historical misstep of creating DIETs on weak foundations has had long-term negative consequences for elementary teacher education in the state. The Bihar Education Project (BEP), initiated in 1991 with UNICEF support, aimed for quantitative and qualitative improvements in primary education, including teacher training modules like Ujala and Samarth, and training for Shiksha Mitras through the Prerna module (Dhal, 2018). The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) also played a role. Despite these initiatives, the study notes that the "Present plan of actions of teacher education are not appropriate for emerging proposals in Circumstances and pedagogy" (Dhal, 2018). A significant policy initiative was the establishment of the Bihar Common School System Commission (CSSC) in 2006, the first of its kind in India (Government of Bihar, 2008). The CSSC produced a comprehensive report and drafted legislation, including "The Bihar Right to Education and Common School System (Equality, Excellence, and Social Justice) Bill 2007" (Kumar, 2014). The commission's report emphasized a paradigm shift in elementary teacher training, with key recommendations such as establishing robust, state-funded TEIs with adequate infrastructure and qualified faculty, designing a comprehensive and relevant child-centred curriculum, implementing rigorous selection criteria for trainees, prioritizing continuous professional development (CPD), and establishing strong TEI-school linkages (Government of Bihar, 2008). However, "despite initial enthusiasm and promotion by the state government, the CSSC's recommendations were not implemented" (Kumar, 2014). This non-implementation represents a major theoretical and policy

failure. It highlights a critical disconnect between well-intentioned, theoretically-grounded policy formulation and the political will or administrative capacity required for effective implementation. The failure to act upon such a comprehensive reform plan has likely perpetuated or even exacerbated the very problems that the current evaluative study seeks to address, underscoring implementation failure as a key variable in the policy-outcomes equation in Bihar.

**4.2. The Theoretical Rationale for Evaluating ETEIs in Bihar** the rationale for conducting an evaluative study of ETEIs in Bihar is compelling and theoretically grounded. As previously noted, Bihar's low ranking in national education quality indices serves as a critical starting point (Education Times of India, 2019). Given the established understanding that teacher quality is a primary determinant of educational outcomes, the performance of ETEIs, which are responsible for preparing these teachers, comes under necessary scrutiny. The thesis posits that ETEIs in Bihar have largely failed to deliver quality education to prospective teachers, citing deficiencies in physical facilities, lecturer availability and qualifications, problematic institutional processes, and financial irregularities (Kumar, 2020; Kumar & Madhusoodanam, 2024). An evaluative study is theoretically justified as a diagnostic tool to systematically investigate these perceived systemic failures. It allows for an assessment of institutional performance against established educational theories, quality benchmarks, and policy expectations. The objectives of the study, which include examining infrastructure, staffing, curriculum, admission and evaluation processes, management functions, and stakeholder opinions, align with a comprehensive theoretical understanding of what constitutes effective institutional functioning. Such an evaluation moves beyond anecdotal evidence to provide empirical data that can inform targeted interventions and policy reforms. The mention within the rationale of "Powerful pressure groups of private teacher education institutions attempt to influence NCTE norms and BSEB rules for financial gain" introduces a crucial political economy perspective into the theoretical analysis of ETEI functioning. This observation suggests that the quality and operations of ETEIs are not solely determined by pedagogical theories, resource availability, or administrative efficiency. Instead, they are also significantly shaped by power dynamics, vested economic interests, and the broader socio-political context. Theories of regulatory capture, where regulatory agencies may become influenced by the industries they are supposed to regulate, or public choice theory, which examines how self-interest can influence policy decisions, could offer relevant frameworks for understanding why ETEIs might deviate from prescribed norms or why quality standards may be compromised. A purely pedagogical or organizational theory approach to diagnosing ETEI deficiencies would, therefore, be incomplete without considering these potent socio-political and economic influences that can distort policy intentions and institutional practices for private benefit rather than public good. This necessitates a multi-theoretical lens for a comprehensive understanding.

## **5. Discussion: Bridging Theory, Policy, and Practice in Bihar's ETEIs**

**5.1. Synthesizing Theoretical Insights for Teacher Education Reform** A meaningful reform of Elementary Teacher Education Institutions in Bihar necessitates a robust synthesis of theoretical insights with policy directives and an understanding of ground realities. If ETEIs are to genuinely

embody the principles of holistic teacher development, where teachers are viewed as facilitators of learning and education is rooted in constructivist philosophies (NCERT, 2005; Jain et al., 2016 ), significant transformations are required. National policies like NCF (NCERT, 2005) and NEP 2020 provide clear mandates for such a shift. An ETEI aligned with these ideals would feature a curriculum rich in multidisciplinary inputs, fostering not just pedagogical knowledge but also a deep understanding of child psychology, societal dynamics, and philosophical perspectives on education (NEP 2020). Its pedagogy would be experiential, inquiry-based, and technology-integrated, moving away from rote memorization and didactic instruction. Assessment practices would be continuous, comprehensive, and aimed at fostering learning rather than mere certification. The institutional environment would be one of collaboration, reflection, and continuous professional development for faculty. This ideal contrasts sharply with the implied shortcomings suggested by the rationale for the Bihar study (Kumar, 2020; Kumar & Madhusoodanam, 2024) and the broader literature on teacher education challenges (Desai, 2012; Azim Premji Foundation, 2010). The call for "multidisciplinary inputs" in teacher education, as strongly advocated by NEP 2020, presents a particularly significant theoretical and practical bridge to build. Many ETEIs, especially in Bihar, operate in relative isolation, lacking organic connections with broader higher education institutions that house departments of psychology, philosophy, sociology, arts, and sciences. The practical implications of this theoretical shift are profound. It requires more than just adding a few interdisciplinary courses to the curriculum; it demands a fundamental rethinking of institutional structures, faculty expertise, and pedagogical approaches. For the Bihar context, which is often resource-constrained and faces historical challenges in educational quality (Dhal, 2018), the question of how ETEIs can genuinely and effectively integrate these multidisciplinary inputs, rather than merely paying lip service to the policy, needs deep theoretical exploration and innovative, contextually relevant solutions. This might involve forging strategic partnerships, developing shared faculty models, or creating new institutional configurations that foster true interdisciplinary engagement for prospective teachers.

**5.2. Addressing Systemic Challenges through a Conceptual Lens** The systemic challenges confronting ETEIs in Bihar—such as poor quality of education, significant resource gaps, apparent regulatory weaknesses, and stark disparities between government and private institutions (Kumar, 2020; Kumar & Madhusoodanam, 2024)—can be more effectively addressed when analyzed through a conceptual lens. For instance, the reported failure of many ETEIs to "meet the norms and standards of the NCTE and BSEB" is not merely an administrative lapse. Theoretically, it reflects a potential failure in the understanding, acceptance, or application of quality assurance principles within these institutions, or perhaps a weakness in the enforcement capacity of the regulatory bodies themselves. If norms are perceived merely as bureaucratic hurdles rather than as essential frameworks for ensuring educational quality, their impact will be minimal. The historical "eyewash" of converting PTTCs into DIETs "in absence of bare required physical infrastructures and evaluators" is another example where a flawed theory of change seems to have been at play. Such an approach suggests a belief that structural or nominal changes alone can bring about qualitative improvement, without the necessary investment in resources, capacity building, and a genuine commitment to the functional transformation envisioned

by the DIET concept (Pillai, 1992; Azim Premji Foundation, 2010, as cited in ). This superficial approach to reform has likely contributed to the long-standing issues of quality. Furthermore, the aspirational role ascribed to teachers in national policy documents—as individuals who "transmit culture," "build character," act as "architecture for nation building," and serve as "catalytic agents in the Indian society" (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 1996)—presents a very high theoretical expectation. This vision of the teacher as a transformative agent places immense responsibility on the ETEIs tasked with their preparation. However, if these ETEIs are themselves dysfunctional, under-resourced, or characterized by poor academic quality, as suggested by the rationale and literature (Kumar, 2020; Desai, 2012), they cannot realistically be expected to prepare teachers capable of fulfilling such a profound and multifaceted societal role. This creates a fundamental and critical contradiction: a system that theoretically aims for highly empowered, skilled, and ethically grounded teachers is attempting to produce them through institutions that may themselves be struggling for basic quality and operational integrity. Such a misalignment between the aspirational ends (transformative teachers) and the deficient means (poor-quality ETEIs) is a recipe for systemic failure, perpetuating a cycle of mediocrity in the education system. Addressing this requires acknowledging the chasm and working towards aligning the capacity of ETEIs with the high expectations placed upon their graduates.

**6. Conclusion: Towards a Robust Theoretical Framework for ETEI Improvement in Bihar** the challenges confronting elementary teacher education in Bihar are complex and deeply rooted, demanding solutions that go beyond superficial fixes or piecemeal interventions. This analysis underscores the critical need for a stronger, more coherent theoretical and policy-consistent foundation to guide the reform of ETEIs in the state. Surface-level changes, such as minor adjustments to curriculum or sporadic training initiatives, are unlikely to yield sustainable improvements if the underlying conceptual frameworks and systemic flaws remain unaddressed. A robust theoretical framework for ETEI improvement in Bihar must acknowledge the historical legacies that have shaped the current system (Balwaria & Gupta, 2014; Hazra, 2018), the socio-economic realities that influence access and equity, the political economy of education that can create perverse incentives, and the practical challenges of implementing ambitious national policies like NEP 2020 within a resource-constrained environment. Such a framework should integrate diverse theoretical perspectives—drawing from organizational theory to improve institutional functioning, from pedagogical theory to enhance teaching-learning processes, from sociological theory to understand the ETEI's role in society, and from policy theory to bridge the gap between intent and outcome. This re-theorization of teacher education in Bihar should champion a holistic vision of teacher development, one that prepares educators not just with subject knowledge and teaching techniques, but also with critical thinking skills, reflective capacities, ethical grounding, and a deep understanding of the diverse learners they will serve (NCF 2005; NEP 2020). It must inform the development of contextually relevant strategies for curriculum reform, faculty development, infrastructure enhancement, and governance improvement. Ultimately, fostering high-quality ETEIs is indispensable for cultivating a cadre of competent, motivated, and effective elementary school teachers who can contribute meaningfully to raising educational standards and promoting equitable learning opportunities for all children in Bihar.

Future research and policy actions must be deeply informed by such sound educational theory and a pragmatic understanding of Bihar's unique context to pave the way for genuine and lasting transformation in elementary teacher education.

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### About the Authors

Dr. Khagendra Kumar is a Professor at the Department of Education, Patna University and Chair Professor (I/C), Dr. Ambedkar Chair, Dr. Ambedkar Centre, Patna University, Patna.

Pankaj Kumar is a Research Scholar at the Department of Education, Patna University, Patna.