



Research Article

Faculty Preparedness and Professional Development in Private Teacher-Education Institutions: Barriers, Enablers, and Quality Outcomes

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Abstract

Faculty preparedness and sustained professional development are critical determinants of quality in teacher-education programs, especially within private colleges that constitute a large and rapidly growing segment of West Bengal's higher education landscape. This study investigates the complex interplay between institutional conditions, faculty competencies, professional learning opportunities, and their collective impact on quality outcomes in private teacher-education institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates survey data from 102 teacher educators across private B.Ed. Colleges with qualitative insights drawn from 10 semi-structured interviews involving principals, senior faculty members, and academic coordinators. Findings reveal persistent structural and cultural barriers—including limited institutional support, inadequate mentoring, irregular workload management, scarcity of research opportunities, and inconsistent policy compliance—that undermine faculty preparedness. Simultaneously, several enablers—such as collaborative learning communities, technology-driven pedagogy, targeted capacity-building workshops, and stronger school-college partnerships—emerge as catalysts for enhanced faculty performance. The study argues that quality outcomes in teacher education depend on a systemic and sustained approach to professional development that prioritises pedagogical innovation, reflective practice, and strategic investment in human capital. Recommendations include structured induction programs, ongoing needs-based training, stronger leadership support, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and the creation of professional learning communities to achieve long-term quality enhancement in private teacher-education institutions of West Bengal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education represents the backbone of a nation's educational progress, as the competencies and attitudes of teachers directly shape student learning, institutional culture, and societal development. In the Indian context, teacher education has been undergoing rapid expansion, with private colleges constituting a major proportion of institutions offering Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and related programs. In West Bengal, private teacher-education institutions have grown significantly in the past two decades, responding to increasing demand for trained teachers in both government and private schools. However, the expansion has raised critical questions regarding the quality of preparation provided to future teachers, especially in environments characterised by resource constraints, uneven regulatory compliance, and high variability in faculty expertise.

Faculty preparedness—defined as the readiness, competencies, pedagogical understanding, and professional attitudes of teacher educators—is central to determining the quality of teacher education. Professional development, both pre-service and in-service, plays an indispensable role in strengthening faculty capabilities, enabling them to adopt new pedagogical strategies, integrate technology, conduct research, and respond to evolving educational reforms.

Despite the acknowledged importance of faculty development, many private teacher-education colleges in West Bengal face challenges in ensuring continuous professional learning. Issues such as limited institutional budgets, high faculty turnover, inconsistent policy implementation, irregular mentoring structures, and a lack of research culture often impede quality outcomes.

This study aims to examine the barriers and enablers of faculty preparedness and professional development in private teacher-education institutions of West Bengal, exploring how these dynamics influence overall quality enhancement. It seeks to contribute to ongoing scholarly and policy debates on strengthening the human capital foundation of teacher-education programs.

2. Background and Rationale

Teacher education in private colleges functions within a complex regulatory and institutional environment shaped by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), state governments, affiliating universities, and accreditation bodies such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). While the regulatory frameworks are clearly established, implementation often varies significantly.

2.1 Growth of Private Teacher-Education Institutions in West Bengal

The last decade has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of private B.Ed. Colleges in West Bengal. Many of these institutions are located in semi-urban and rural areas, widening access to teacher training. However, growth has also brought quality concerns:

- variability in faculty qualifications and experience
- insufficient professional development opportunities

- resource constraints
- limited exposure to school-based innovation
- uneven technological integration

2.2 Faculty Development as a Quality Driver

Effective teacher educators are expected to possess:

- deep content knowledge
- sound pedagogical and andragogical understanding
- research competencies
- technological proficiency
- reflective and innovative practice

Without continuous professional development (CPD), faculty members struggle to meet these expectations, especially in dynamic educational environments.

2.3 Need for Systematic Investigation

Existing literature on teacher education in India highlights concerns about faculty quality, but there is limited empirical work focusing specifically on private teacher-education colleges in West Bengal. This study addresses this gap by exploring barriers, enablers, and institutional strategies related to faculty preparedness and development.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on faculty preparedness and professional development can be organised into four major themes: (1) faculty competencies, (2) professional learning, (3) institutional challenges, and (4) quality outcomes.

3.1 Faculty Competencies in Teacher Education

Teacher educators must demonstrate not only mastery of subject knowledge but also expertise in curriculum design, classroom facilitation, assessment strategies, research methodologies, and mentorship. Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasises that teacher educators are responsible for modelling best teaching practices to their student-teachers. Similarly, Zeichner (2016) highlights the need for reflective practice and critical pedagogy among teacher educators. In India, NCTE regulations require faculty members to possess advanced qualifications, including M.Ed. and NET /SET qualifications, though compliance varies.

3.2 Professional Learning and Continuous Development

Professional development encompasses structured training, workshops, seminars, conferences, peer collaboration, and self-directed learning. Guskey (2002) asserts that effective professional development is characterised by relevance, sustained engagement, institutional support, and opportunities for feedback. International research shows that collaborative learning communities enhance teacher educators' ability to adapt to change, integrate technology, and engage in action research (Loughran, 2014).

3.3 Institutional Barriers to Faculty Development

Institutional challenges often limit professional learning opportunities. Common barriers include:

- financial constraints (Batra, 2013)
- high workloads or administrative burdens
- inadequate leadership support
- limited mentoring systems

- insufficient technological infrastructure
- absence of research incentives
- irregular implementation of professional standards

Private institutions often depend heavily on contractual faculty, who may have limited access to training.

3.4 Enablers of Quality Outcomes

Positive institutional practices significantly enhance quality:

- strong leadership and academic governance
- culture of collaboration and peer learning
- technology-enabled teaching reforms
- meaningful school–college partnerships
- quality assurance practices (NAAC, 2020)
- accountability structures

When faculty members are systematically supported, student learning outcomes, institutional reputation, and accreditation performance improve.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the current state of faculty preparedness in private teacher-education institutions in West Bengal.
2. To identify the barriers affecting faculty professional development.
3. To explore the institutional enablers that facilitate improved faculty performance.
4. To analyse the relationship between faculty development practices and quality outcomes.
5. To propose recommendations for strengthening faculty preparedness and development.

5. Research Questions

1. What is the current level of faculty preparedness in private teacher-education institutions of West Bengal?
2. What barriers impede faculty professional development?
3. What enabling factors support faculty growth and effectiveness?
4. How do faculty preparedness and professional development influence quality outcomes in teacher-education programs?
5. What strategies can be implemented to enhance faculty development in private colleges?

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to provide both breadth and depth in understanding faculty preparedness.

6.2 Sample

- 102 faculty members from 18 private B.Ed. Colleges participated in the survey.
- 10 institutional leaders (principals, coordinators, and senior faculty) participated in interviews.

6.3 Data Collection Tools

1. **Structured Questionnaire:** items related to faculty preparedness, pedagogical skills, technology use, research engagement, and institutional support.

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** focused on institutional culture, challenges, professional development practices, and perceptions of quality.

6.4 Data Analysis

- Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic grouping.
- Qualitative data were analysed using thematic coding and interpretation.

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation were ensured.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Faculty Preparedness Levels

Survey results indicate moderate preparedness among faculty members:

- 82% reported strong content knowledge
- 58% demonstrated confidence in pedagogical design
- 66% were proficient in technology integration
- only 22% engaged in research or publishing
- 45% had received formal training in the last two years

Interviews revealed that while many faculty members possess theoretical knowledge, they often lack exposure to innovative teaching practices.

Interpretation

Faculty preparedness is uneven and heavily influenced by institutional culture. Colleges with stronger leadership and better infrastructure showed higher preparedness levels.

7.2 Barriers to Faculty Development

Several prominent barriers emerged:

a) Limited Institutional Support

Many colleges allocate minimal budgets for faculty training, especially those located in rural areas.

b) Heavy Workload and Administrative Burdens

Faculty members frequently manage multiple roles, reducing time for professional learning.

c) Lack of Mentoring and Peer Support

New faculty often enter without structured induction programs.

d) Insufficient Research Opportunities

Absence of research funding and institutional encouragement discourages scholarly engagement.

e) Policy Implementation Gaps

Although NCTE and NAAC guidelines emphasize faculty development, implementation remains inconsistent.

f) Technological Barriers

Limited access to ICT tools hinders effective integration of digital pedagogies.

7.3 Enablers of Faculty Preparedness

Despite challenges, several enabling factors were identified:

a) Collaborative Learning Cultures

Institutions with peer observation, joint lesson planning, and academic discussions reported higher faculty growth.

b) Technology-Supported Pedagogy

Use of learning management systems, digital content creation, and virtual labs enhanced preparedness.

c) School–College Partnerships

Meaningful engagements with schools provided faculty members with real-time feedback and field-based learning.

d) Targeted Workshops and Training

Leadership-driven training initiatives had positive effects on pedagogy and assessment practices.

e) Supportive Governance

Transparent leadership and academic freedom emerged as strong enablers.

7.4 Impact on Quality Outcomes

Faculty preparedness and professional development significantly influenced:

a) Teaching Quality

Student-teachers reported better engagement in classrooms with well-prepared faculty.

b) Assessment and Feedback

Faculty trained in modern assessment methods produced more valid and reliable evaluations.

c) Practicum Quality

Effective faculty mentoring improved school-based teaching performance of trainees.

d) Accreditation and Compliance

Institutions with strong faculty development practices performed better in NAAC assessments.

8. Implications

For Institutions

- Allocate dedicated budgets for continuous professional development
- Enforce structured induction and mentoring programs
- Promote research and innovation through incentives

For Policymakers

- Ensure stricter monitoring of NCTE and NAAC compliance
- Encourage collaboration between government and private colleges
- Promote state-funded faculty development programs

For Faculty

- Engage in self-directed learning and reflective practice
- Remain updated with modern pedagogical and technological tools

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Establish compulsory induction programs for new faculty members.
2. Provide financial and non-financial incentives for research and innovation.
3. Integrate technology-enhanced teaching through structured ICT training.
4. Develop school-college collaboration models for practice-based learning.
5. Encourage collaborative research and publications through university-level networks.

10. CONCLUSION

Faculty preparedness and professional development are central to quality enhancement in private teacher-education institutions of West Bengal. The study reveals that while faculty members possess foundational competencies, their professional growth is hindered by structural, cultural, and resource-related barriers. However, when institutional enablers such as collaborative learning cultures, leadership support, technology, and sustained professional development initiatives are present, significant improvements in teaching quality, research engagement, and overall institutional performance emerge.

Strengthening faculty capacity must be viewed as a strategic investment rather than an administrative requirement. A systemic approach—where institutions, policymakers, and faculty work together—is essential to building high-quality teacher-education ecosystems capable of preparing competent, reflective, and innovative future teachers.

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