

# Teaching Preparedness among Research Scholars in Indian Universities: A Phenomenological Study

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## ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a holistic academic approach where research and teaching are intertwined, promoting the development of well-rounded scholars. This paper examines the importance of cultivating teaching competence among doctoral research scholars in different Indian Universities, as emphasized in NEP 2020, specifically Para 15.9. Using a phenomenological approach, the study explores insights and lived experiences of Ph.D. scholars, focusing on how integrating key components like curriculum design, innovative pedagogy, assessment strategies, and communication skills into Ph.D. training can reshape their academic identity. By addressing these aspects, the research highlights the need for a balanced academic development that values both research output and effective teaching. It suggests that such an integration will help scholars become more proficient educators, ultimately elevating the quality and relevance of higher education. The study advocates for policy changes that are in consonance with NEP 2020's vision, ensuring expertise in research and also skilled in teaching and thus contributing to a more dynamic and holistic academic environment.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Design, Innovative Pedagogy, Assessment Strategies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a pivotal role in national development, with universities at the forefront of advancing knowledge and shaping future leaders. However, a significant challenge in academia is the imbalance between teaching and research. Research often takes precedence, while teaching competence—vital for effective knowledge dissemination and student engagement—frequently receives less attention. This imbalance can undermine the quality of teaching, as scholars who are primarily trained in research may lack the pedagogical skills required to excel as educators.

NEP 2020, particularly Para 15.9, seeks to address this issue by emphasizing the dual responsibilities of research with teaching for Ph.D. scholars (Government of India, Ministry of Education, 2020). The NEP advocates for structured training initiatives to equip research scholars with vital pedagogical skills, ensuring that they can thrive both as researchers and educators. This policy intervention aligns with the current expansion phase in tertiary education, where universities are diversifying programs and exploring innovative strategies to enhance academic quality.

This paper examines the dynamic relationship between research and teaching, as well as its impact on the academic identities of doctoral scholars in Indian universities. By adopting a phenomenological approach, it delves into scholars' perceptions of teaching, emphasizing the competencies they need to succeed in academic roles. It also examines the role of institutional policies in filling the gap between research and teaching, offering suggestions to foster balanced academic development. The research highlights that while scholars may possess deep expertise in their fields, their lack of formal teaching training can hinder their effectiveness as educators.

Furthermore, the study examines how the integration of pedagogical training can enhance scholars' teaching practices, thereby contributing to improved student engagement and learning outcomes. It also reflects on the importance of institutional support in facilitating this integration, through training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities that provide scholars with the tools to navigate their teaching responsibilities effectively. Such efforts are essential in producing academics who are not only proficient in research but also skilled in teaching, ultimately benefiting both students and the academic community.

Through its insights, this paper underscores the necessity of incorporating pedagogical development into the training of research scholars, aligning with the NEP 2020's vision of producing well-rounded academics capable of making meaningful contributions to higher education. It calls for reforms that recognize teaching and research as complementary aspects of academic growth, advocating for a holistic approach to faculty development in Indian universities. This balanced approach can help to create a new generation of scholars who excel in both research and teaching, enriching the overall academic landscape and contributing to the advancement of knowledge and societal development.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**Islami (2019)** studied the causal association between digital literacy (including computer and internet abilities) and entrepreneurial practices. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study indicated that digital literacy had a limited direct effect on entrepreneurial activities among students in economic education programs in Jember. However, it strongly influenced entrepreneurial goals, which in turn mediated its impact on entrepreneurial activities.

**Lagarto and Lopes (2018)** study focused on digital literacy among teachers in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of schools in Viseu, sought to discover how they obtained ICT training. According to the data, initial teacher education typically does not include ICT training. Instead, teachers generally rely on self-training, backed by colleagues and acquaintances, and participate in training provided by educational departments.

**Pachaiyappan and Sadayakumar (2018)** assessed the soft skills and instructional capacity of prospective teachers. A survey method was employed for obtaining data. The study's findings demonstrate that there are considerable variances in B.Ed. student teachers' forms of management when it comes to their teaching skills. The data reveal that among B.Ed. student teachers, soft skills, and teaching competence have a considerable positive correlation.

**Sharma and Kumar's (2018)** study compares instructors from government and private schools to examine the connection between elementary teachers' self-concept and their ability to teach. It finds that female teachers tend to be more competent, talented, and innovative. Furthermore, experience and age have a favourable impact on teaching abilities, with more information improving teaching skills.

**Cam and Kiyici (2017)** study was undertaken to assess the perceptions of likely instructors on digital literacy, with a sample of 334 participants. Data analysis was carried out using exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha, t-tests, and ANOVA. The results showed that male instructors had higher levels of digital literacy compared to female teachers. Furthermore, likely teachers from the computer education and instructional technology department demonstrated significantly greater levels of digital literacy compared to those from other departments.

**Kalaiyaran (2015)** studied the relationship between student teachers' aptitude and intellect and their ability to instruct. The survey approach is used to get the information. 200 B.Ed. using a random sampling method, student instructors from five colleges of education. Findings: there was a substantial positive link between teaching competence with respect to intellect and attitude among the pupil instructors.

**Rajina Selvakumari and Arockiasamy (2015)** examined the connection between B.Ed. teaching competency and ICT proficiency. trainees. 300 B.Ed. are included in the sample. Students selected from ten institutions located in Tamil Nadu, India's Tirunelveli district. The researcher adopted the survey method. The results showed a substantial discrepancy between B.Ed. teaching ability and ICT skills. trainees in regard of gender and age.

**Singh and Singh (2015)** investigated the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward ICT and their efficacy as educators. The study was conducted in the Kangra region of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. The sample comprised of 100 teachers from private institutions. The results showed that there was no meaningful connection between the variables looked at and teacher effectiveness.

**Shih-Hsiung Liu's (2015)** study studied the impact of self-perception on self-learning among 248 teacher education students in Taiwan. The findings, which are based on confirmatory factor analysis and path modelling, demonstrate that students' self-perception as competent educators has a major impact on their self-learning activities.

**Kaur and Talwar (2014)** investigated the relationship between secondary school teachers' emotional intelligence and their capacity for instruction. Participants included 1001 secondary school teachers who completed the emotional intelligence and general teaching competency assessments. As per the study's findings, instructors' emotional intelligence and their ability to teach are considerably positively associated. Additionally, the study reveals that gender has no effect on emotional intelligence or teaching capacity.

**Hudson (2013)** studied in order to examine the connection between mentoring and inspirational leadership where data collected through focus groups discussion, work samples, and questionnaires from 25 teachers. The results explored that instructors with organizational goals, professional skills, and personal traits were regarded inspirational school leaders.

### **3. INSIGHT FROM THE REVIEWS AND RESEARCH GAP**

Research on teaching ability among Ph.D. scholars notably in the Indian context demonstrates a considerable gap in understanding how these scholars view and evaluate their own teaching duties. While previous work largely addresses instructional skills, curriculum design, and the use of digital pedagogical resources, minimal emphasis has been paid to scholars' self-perceptions as developing educators. In order to close this gap, this study investigates the pedagogical orientations and teaching self-concepts of Ph.D. candidates in the fields of science, social science, and education in India. By identifying discipline-specific variances, the study

contributes to a greater understanding of the problems, expectations, and professional identities driving the teaching practices of Indian research academics.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

Phenomenology is set out as a research method when the goal is to explore and describe a particular phenomenon. It involves studying the lived experiences of individuals to unmask the shared meaning and essence of a phenomenon. Experts in phenomenology emphasize identifying the universal essence of such experiences, seeking to understand the “true nature of the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2013). Originally rooted in philosophy, phenomenology has evolved into both an approach and a method. Its presupposition-less approach requires researchers to set aside biases and preconceived notions before beginning their investigation. Data is typically collected through interviews, but other sources, like poems, observations, and documents, may also be used. The analysis follows systematic procedures, focusing on two main features: what individuals experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The ultimate goal of phenomenology is to uncover the "essence" of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

##### **4.1 Why conceive phenomenological research as a methodology:**

Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences, focusing on how individuals perceive and make sense of their world (Zilsel, 1941; Zahavi, 2012). In line with the NEP 2020, Para 15.9, this study ranges over how research scholars, regardless of their discipline, have lived and experienced various aspects of education. As students, they encountered the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment methods, communication, teaching practices, and technology throughout their academic journey. These experiences shape their comprehension of education and are central to this study, offering a deeper exploration of how these factors impact their development as scholars and educators.

#### **5. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In recent decades, Indian higher education has gone through a significant transformation, characterized by a growing emphasis on research and academic expansion. Research scholars play a vital role in this shift, contributing not only to research but also to teaching. However, their teaching roles are often overlooked due to the prevailing research-centric academic culture. Despite being the future educators of higher education, research scholars face numerous challenges in teaching, such as limited exposure to pedagogical training, a lack of institutional support, and insufficient recognition of teaching excellence. These challenges undermine their development as educators and diminish the quality of education provided in universities.

Without proper pedagogical training and institutional backing, research scholars may struggle to effectively communicate knowledge and engage students. This gap in teaching preparation, moreover, limits their own growth and impacts the learning experience of students, who may not receive the guidance and engagement they need. It is crucial to address this issue by integrating pedagogical development into research scholar training programs. Providing targeted support and training will equip scholars with the important skills to succeed in both research and teaching roles, enhancing their academic development and contributing to a more holistic and effective tertiary education system in India.

## 6. NEP 2020'S VISION FOR TEACHING COMPETENCE

The NEP 2020 provides a transformative framework to address these challenges. By advocating for comprehensive training programs for Ph.D. scholars, it aims to fill the gap between teaching and research. Key elements of this vision include Effective academic training for Ph.D. scholars, which requires a broad approach that integrates key competencies to enhance both their teaching and research roles.

**6.1 Curriculum design** plays a crucial role by equipping scholars with the skills necessary to develop relevant and impactful courses that address the evolving needs of students and the academic field.

**6.2 Innovative pedagogy** focuses on promoting learner-centred teaching methods, allowing scholars to engage students through diverse approaches that cater to different learning styles and preferences. Ensure that students remain active participants in their own learning, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

**6.3 Assessment strategies** are equally important, with a focus on 360-degree assessment that goes further than traditional exams to evaluate student progress from multiple perspectives. This approach helps refine teaching practices by providing comprehensive feedback on both student learning and the effectiveness of teaching.

**6.4 Communication skills** are crucial for scholars to effectively convey knowledge in various academic contexts, whether in the classroom, research presentations, or written work. Strengthening these skills enables scholars to engage their audiences more effectively and foster a productive learning environment.

Together, these abilities create a complete framework that supports the growth of Ph.D. scholars as both researchers and educators, thereby increasing the overall quality and impact of higher education. Collectively, these factors prepare doctoral scholars for holistic academic responsibilities, enabling them to contribute successfully to student learning, scholarly growth, and institutional development.

## 7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal a complex interplay between teaching and research in shaping the academic identity of research scholars. Key themes that emerged include:

- i. Perceptions of Teaching:** Scholars view teaching as both a challenge and an opportunity for professional growth. While many recognize its importance, they often feel inadequately prepared to handle teaching responsibilities effectively.
- ii. Importance of Pedagogical Training:** Participants emphasized the required for structured training programs to develop skills in curriculum design, innovative pedagogy, and assessment.
- iii. Emotional and Intellectual Dimensions:** Teaching is not merely a technical skill but also an emotional and intellectual endeavour. Scholars highlighted the need for institutional support to navigate the complexities of teaching.
- iv. Balancing Teaching and Research:** Many participants convey concerns about balancing their dual roles, citing the lack of recognition for teaching excellence as a significant barrier.

## 8. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The study underscores the need for teaching preparedness among universities research scholar to adopt integrated approaches to academic training, recognizing the dual importance of teaching and research. Key recommendations include:

- i. **Mandatory Pedagogical Training:** Teaching competence as a core component of Ph.D. coursework. Ph.D. regulation 2022 focused on teaching competence.
- ii. **Incentives for Teaching Excellence:** Incentives are a crucial aspect for teaching excellence. Establish also awards and recognition programs to incentivize high-quality teaching.
- iii. **Mentorship Programs:** Ph.D. research scholars with experienced faculty to provide guidance on teaching and curriculum development.
- iv. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement systems for collecting and acting on student feedback to improve teaching practices.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The NEP 2020's focus on developing teaching competence among Ph.D. scholars is a vital step in redefining academic roles within Indian higher education. By incorporating elements like curriculum design, innovative pedagogy, assessment strategies, and communication skills into Ph.D. training, universities can better prepare scholars to excel in both teaching and research. This approach not only addresses the imbalance between research and teaching but also equips scholars to be more effective educators, contributing to a richer academic environment. This phenomenological inquiry sheds light on the lived experiences of Ph.D. scholars, providing important insights into their perceptions of teaching and its impact on their professional identity. It highlights the challenges scholars face, such as limited pedagogical training and institutional support, and calls for a more balanced approach to academic development that nurtures both research and teaching competencies.

This study addresses key challenges in tertiary education by proposing a broad framework for academic development, contributing to the discourse on education reform. Under the dual role of research and teaching emphasized in NEP 2020, the integration of these roles of research scholars may transform Indian academia. It envisions producing research scholars who excel not only as researchers but also as effective educators, fostering a balance between knowledge creation and dissemination. This dual focus equips scholars with the competencies to engage students meaningfully, enhancing the quality of education and fostering a culture of academic excellence. By filling the gaps in teaching preparation, the proposed framework empowers scholars to guide and inspire future generations effectively. Such reforms have the possible to drive innovation, elevate educational standards, and generate a sustainable impact on the nation's academic landscape, aligning with NEP 2020's vision of comprehensive and transformative tertiary education.

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