



English language teaching,
learning and assessment
in India:
Policies and practices in
the school education system

Simon Borg, Amol Padwad and Pranjana Kalita Nath

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Introduction to the series

Across South Asia, English is widely seen as the language of social mobility, educational opportunity, employability, global business and dialogue. Many consider English language skills to be an essential component of economic development and growth – both on an individual and national level. However, the inclusion of English within language-in-education policies that must simultaneously promote other national languages, along with its history as a colonial and/or elite language in most countries in this region, means that it does not always sit easily within education systems. The place of English within school systems in South Asia has fluctuated over time and a number of challenges remain around ensuring equitable, high-quality provision of English language teaching and learning for all who want or need it.

This report is one of a series of five focusing on the policy and practices relating to English language education in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It aims to provide a contemporary snapshot of the role that English currently plays within the lives of school children and the wider community. It explores the current scenario, considering both the private and government school sectors, including reflections on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. It also looks to the future: how might some of the current challenges be addressed, and what opportunities exist to support the development of this aspect of the school education system?

Across the series, the author teams collaborated in defining the overall focus and structure, and peer-reviewed each other's work to provide feedback and ensure coherence across the reports. The authors have focused primarily on a review of policy documentation, reports and data provided by relevant government departments, academics and international agencies. This is supported by input from a small number of important stakeholders such as teachers, curriculum and textbook writers, and policy officers. Their input is often included verbatim to provide further contextualised insight into the realities of the classroom and wider education system.

Providing a detailed overview of even a single subject like English within any school education system is a significant task, particularly in large, complex and multilingual countries. Coupled with the historical, political and cultural factors that are unique to English in South Asia, we are conscious that these reports have their limitations and can serve mainly as an entry point to this vast and complicated topic. Nevertheless, we hope that readers will find them informative and useful for critical discussion, research and development – particularly those who are involved in English language education implementation in this region.

To access the full series of reports, please visit our TeachingEnglish website: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-learning-assessment-south-asia

Amy Lightfoot

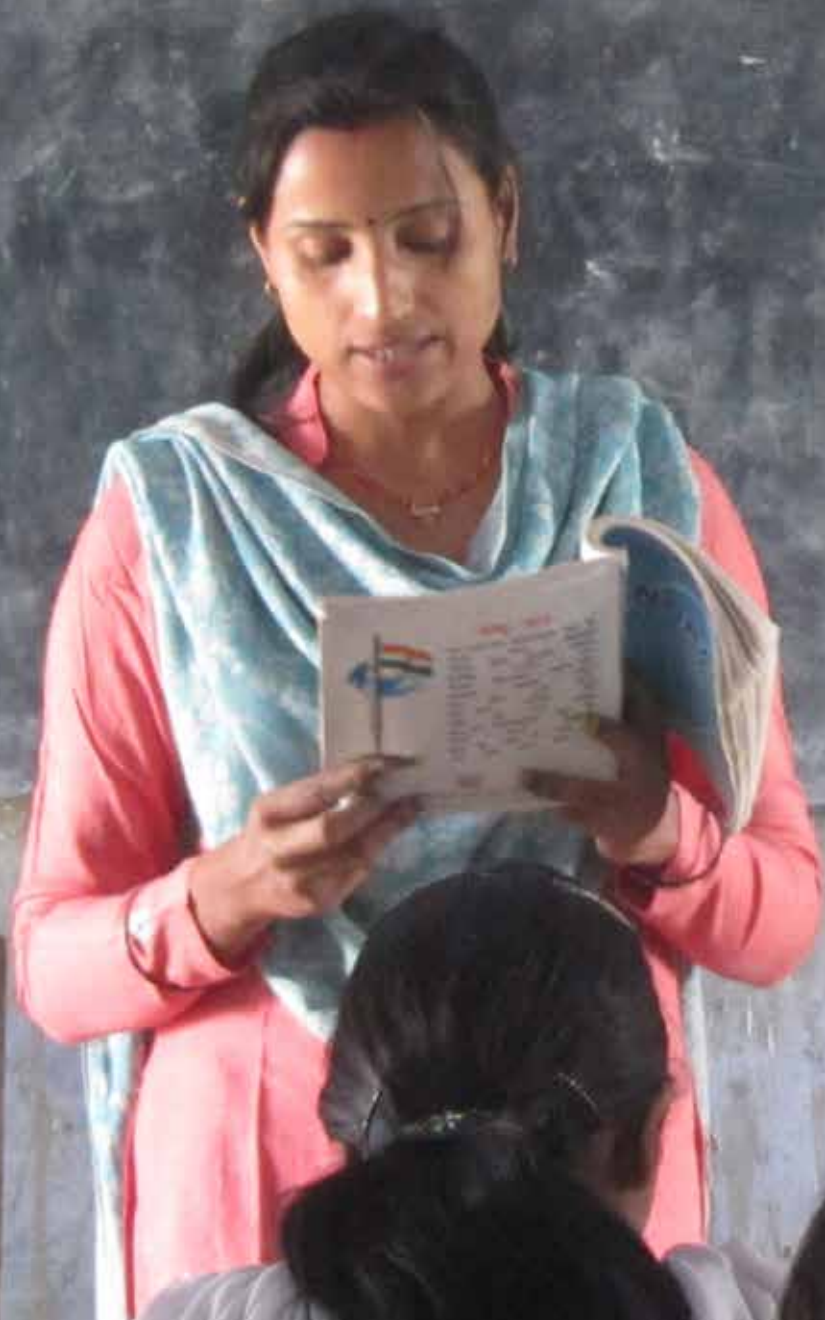
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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| ASER | Annual Status of Education Report |
| BEd | Bachelor of Education |
| CABE | Central Advisory Board of Education |
| CBSE | Central Board of Secondary Education |
| CCE | Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation |
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| CISCE | Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| CTE | College of Teacher Education |
| CTET | Central Teacher Eligibility Test |
| DEIEd | Diploma in Elementary Education |
| DIET | District Institute for Education and Training |
| DIKSHA | Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing |
| EFLU | English and Foreign Languages University |
| ELTI | English Language Training Institutes |
| EMI | English Medium Instruction |
| ETA | English Teacher Association |
| IASE | Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| ITEP | Integrated Teacher Education Programme |
| KVS | Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan |
| MHRD | Ministry of Human Resource Development |
| MITRA | Maharashtra In-service Teachers Resource App |
| NCERT | National Council of Educational Research and Training |
| NCF | National Curriculum Framework |
| NCFTE | National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education |
| NCTE | National Council for Teacher Education |
| NEP/NPE | National Education Policy/National Policy on Education |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NIEPA | National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration |
| NIOS | National Institute of Open Schooling |
| NPST | National Professional Standards for Teachers |
| OER | Open Education Resources |
| PET | Pre-entry Test |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| RIE | Regional Institute of English |
| RMSA | Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (National Secondary Education Mission) |
| SCERT | State Council of Educational Research and Training |
| SCF | State Curriculum Framework |
| SEBA | Board of Secondary Education Assam |
| SSA | Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (Integrated Education Mission) |
| TET | Teacher Eligibility Test |
| TLM | Teaching and Learning Material |

'Wings of Fire' -



Executive summary

Education in India is immensely complex and varied. In addition to the sheer scale of schooling in the country – 1.5 million schools, 260 million learners and 9.7 million teachers – national educational policies operate alongside those defined and implemented locally in 28 states and eight union territories. There are also over 400,000 private schools – often loosely regulated and with more autonomy than government schools – which account for a substantial proportion of school-age students in the country. India is also richly multilingual, with hundreds of languages in use and a national policy that emphasises the study of at least three languages at school. It is within this complex educational landscape that the teaching and learning of English unfolds.

English in India is, in fact, a conundrum because, despite the value attached to it (children learn it for seven to ten years at school) and the benefits (socially, for employment, leisure and study) that accrue from its mastery, the over-riding sense that persists is that the quality of English teaching and learning across primary and early secondary education is modest, a factor that feeds into low English proficiency at subsequent stages of education, including among university students and in the population more generally.

This report provides insight into this problem by reviewing the current status of English in the Indian education system. It is informed by a desk-based review of policy documents, educational reports, academic papers and information available online, such as official government statistics. This desk work is supplemented by a small number of interviews with practitioners – teachers and teacher educators – with first-hand experience of English education in the country. Overall, the goals of the analysis presented here are to describe what is known about various aspects of English education in India and to make recommendations for issues that can be a productive focus of efforts – by national and state governments and the many educational partners they work with – to improve English teaching and learning.

Following a brief analysis of the Indian education system and the role of languages generally and English specifically in the country, the report focuses on the practice of English language teaching and teacher education, including the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers of English. The following key points emerge from the analysis:

1. National- and state-level educational policies operate simultaneously but may not always be wholly consistent given the autonomy that states have. Policies provide a good basis for reform but are often not supported by mechanisms that lead to effective implementation.
2. Across school education, governments have invested in numerous large-scale initiatives that aim to support teaching and learning, especially in primary school. These include online platforms for teachers and learners and various forms of teacher CPD. However, multiple initiatives across and within states, particularly related to teacher CPD, are often not well co-ordinated.
3. Several initiatives have promoted the use of technology to support education, though evidence from the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that most learners have been unable to benefit from opportunities to take part in online learning.
4. English is a compulsory subject, often from Grade 1. A national curriculum is available but is implemented through textbooks, which remain the predominant source of material used by teachers. For many teachers it is likely that there is little distinction between ‘curriculum’ and ‘textbook’. The levels of English assumed in the textbooks used are often beyond the ability of learners and perhaps in many cases also the teachers. Especially, but not only, in the private sector, English-medium instruction is used, but often as a status symbol and not always with a clear understanding of how it might assist or hinder learning.
5. Teaching practices across subjects, including English, remain didactic. In English lessons, typical activities include detailed analyses of written texts using translation and with a focus on vocabulary. While awareness of the importance of speaking and listening skills is increasing, they are not given substantial space during English lessons; in contrast, students spend much time copying information from the board. Classes are multilingual but teachers of English lack the skills to exploit and build on the language resources learners have. Various factors contribute to the persistence of teacher-centred pedagogies. These include limitations in teachers’ competences as well as pressures that come from heavily loaded syllabi and demands from parents that teaching and learning follow a certain conventional pattern.
6. Limitations in pre-service teacher education mean that graduates become primary school teachers of English with insufficient subject-specific pedagogical competence and modest levels of English proficiency. Any induction training they receive is generic and does not address gaps in their knowledge and skills. Teachers of English do have access to various forms of CPD provided by government and non-government bodies, though provision and quality vary and there is limited information about which forms of CPD work best in

promoting positive change in the teaching and learning of English.

7. The 2020 National Education Policy establishes a number of principles for improving school education in India and focuses on the importance of teacher quality. Thus, the structure of pre-service programmes is being revised and the CPD allocation for teachers increased. New teacher professional standards are also being introduced. Such measures can contribute to more effective education generally, including for English, but it is important that reform proceeds in an informed manner, guided by an understanding of current barriers to progress in education, aware of international good practice in teacher education and CPD and based on systematic evaluations of reform initiatives. New policies alone will not lead to change in what educational practitioners believe and do.

The report concludes with ten recommendations that reflect on these key findings. Strengthening the English proficiency of teachers will be critical to improve the outcomes of English across the system. Equally important will be revisions to pre-service and CPD activity so that teachers can develop the practical pedagogical skills they need to work in multilingual classrooms and with textbooks that are often too demanding for learners. Generally, more informed decision-making regarding the use of English medium of instruction is needed.



1 Introduction

This report provides an overview of English in the school education system in India. India's Right to Education Act 2009 guarantees free and compulsory education to learners in Grades 1–8 (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021a), and accordingly this review examines the status of English in India in those grades (which we refer to here as *basic education*). Throughout, we focus on national policy and its implementation, though it must be acknowledged from the outset that individual states across India have their own educational policies and corresponding practices. We seek to capture some of these by citing examples from across the country.

The analysis that follows is based largely on a deskwork review of publicly available educational reports, academic papers and online information. Some key informant interviews were also carried out to supplement the desk work with the voices and perspectives of practitioners involved in specific areas of English education in India. These interviews, while not in any way generalisable, provide the specific practical insight often absent in official documents and allow some gaps in the available literature to be addressed.

The report begins with an overview of education in India generally before focusing in more detail on a range of issues of specific relevance to English language education. Following a discussion of the role of English in India, key educational policies that affect English language education are highlighted. The core section of the report examines the practice of English language teaching, including a discussion of the multilingual context for language learning in India, textbooks and resources, educational technology, teaching methods and assessment. Pre-service education and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of English in India are also discussed. The report concludes by highlighting opportunities, challenges and future trends for English education in India that emerge from the analysis presented here.

Key facts about education in India

Population 
1.4 billion (2021)
(Worldometer, 2021)

Political division


28 states
and **8 union territories**
(Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, 2021)

Number of schools
1.5 million 
(July 2021) (All Schools in India, 2021)

Private schools
422,000 
(July 2021) (All Schools in India, 2021)

Number of learners
260 million 
(2019–20) (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021b; see Figure 1 for gender breakdown)

Number of teachers
9.7 million 
(Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021c)

Compulsory education 
Grade 1–8
(Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021a)

Enrolment rates


(Net Enrolment Ratio)
(all enrolment rates below are from Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021b)

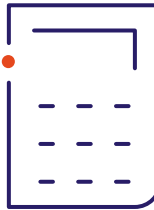
Primary
92.4% 

Upper primary
71.9% 

Secondary
50.0% 

Upper secondary
33.3% 

Adult literacy rate 
74.4%
(Knoema, 2021)

Expenditure on education (per cent of GDP) 
3.5%
(2019–20) (Ministry of Finance, 2021)

2 Education in India

This section, which draws on and updates where necessary a 2019 analysis published by the British Council (Anderson and Lightfoot, 2019), provides an overview of the education system in India (see also Mehendale and Mukhopadhyay, 2019 and, most recently, UNESCO, 2021). This is a very large and complex system, as the indicators shown on the previous page suggest. It is important to note that while a new National Education Policy (NEP) was released in 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020; for an analysis, see Agarwal and Narang, 2021), this has not yet impacted significantly on educational practices around the country. Our focus here, therefore, is on the situation in education and English education in India as it currently stands, although proposed reforms that are of particular relevance will be highlighted.

2.1 Responsibility for education

The Ministry of Education (formerly the Ministry of Human Resource and Development) has overall responsibility for education in India. The educational system, though, is regulated and managed by a complex range of councils and institutes at both national and state level (see Anderson and Lightfoot, 2019:38–9 for an organogram). For example, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) (for its 2020 annual report, see National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2020) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), both based in New Delhi, play central roles in school education (particularly curricula and textbooks) and initial teacher education respectively. Education within states, though, is also regulated by State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and supported at district level by District Institutes for Education and Training (DIETs).

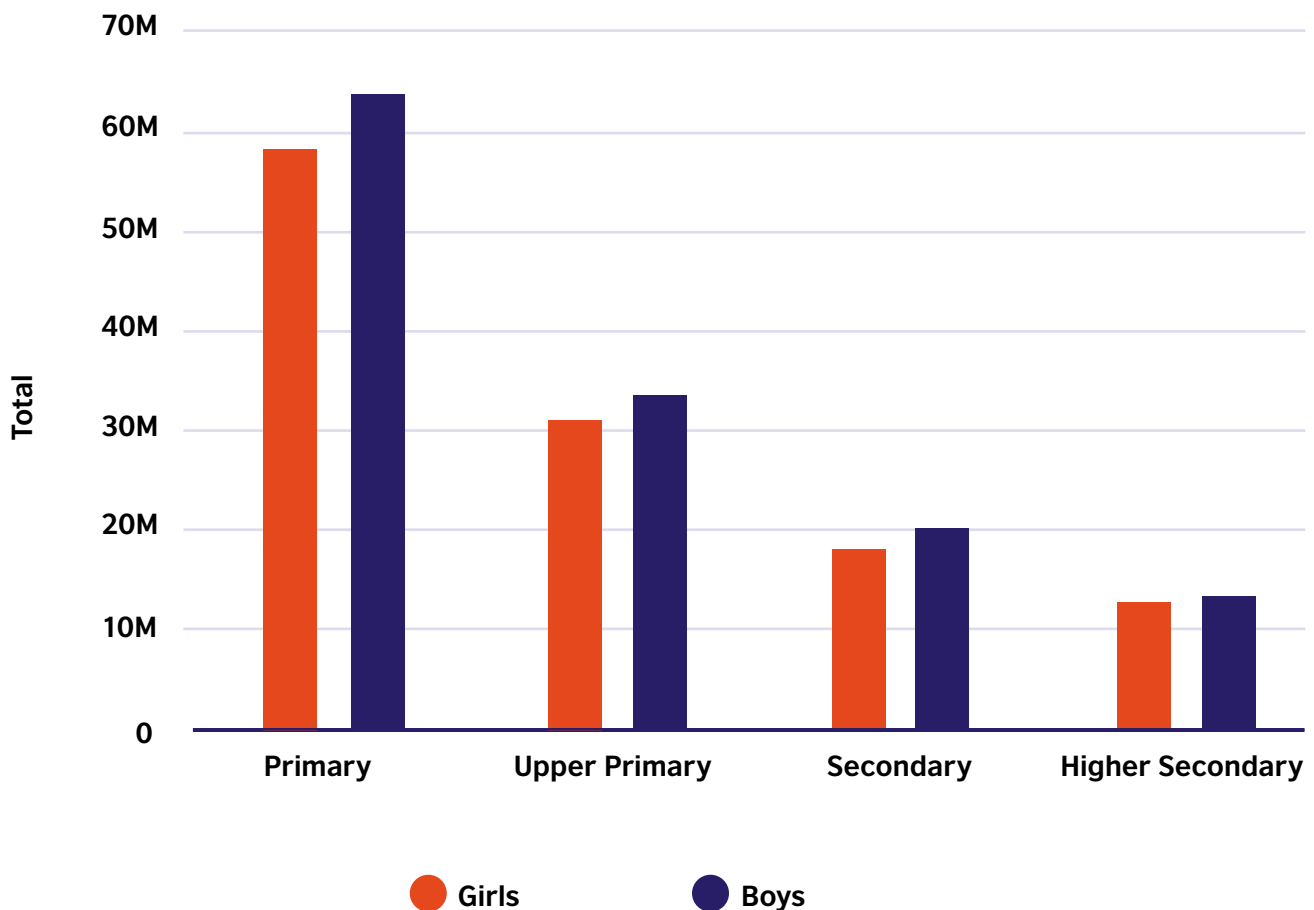


Figure 1: Learners in primary and secondary education in India (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021b)

2.2 Structure

Education in India is divided into pre-primary (ages 3–6), primary (6–10), upper primary (11–14), secondary (14–16) and higher secondary (17–18).¹ These divisions are not always reflected in practice and variations in the range of age groups present in specific grades have been found, particularly in rural areas.

Schools are classified as either government or private, with the latter being further divided into government aided or unaided (i.e. which receive no financial support from the state). Education is also provided through madrasas and Tribal/Social Welfare Department schools. According to the Department of School Education and Literacy (2021b), students are divided almost evenly between government and non-government schools. Though class sizes vary significantly across the country, the average pupil–teacher ratio for primary schools is 27 and for upper primary it is 19 (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021c).

2.3 Gender

According to 2018 figures, the adult literacy rate is over 74 per cent (66 per cent of females and 82 per cent of males). Among G20 countries, India has the highest share of adults without primary education (OECD, 2019). While primary enrolment figures for boys and girls are both over 90 per cent, 'the gender gap in educational attainment remains high [in favour of men] across all levels of education' (OECD, 2019:02). India participated in PISA in 2009 but performed badly (72nd out of 73 nations) (ThePrint, 2021) and did not participate in 2012 and 2015. It was planning to participate again in 2021 but this has been postponed until 2022 due to Covid–19 (Exams Daily, 2021).

2.4 Curriculum and assessment

The National Curriculum Framework (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005) regulates education provision in the country and school syllabi and textbooks are expected to be aligned with it. Assessment in government schools is designed and delivered largely by teachers, though high-stakes examinations taken at the end of Grades 10 and 12 are managed centrally through various assessment boards.

NCERT views the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as a broad plan for achieving educational goals. It provides a 'curriculum core' that offers a conceptual structure, which indicates workable principles to guide the development of textbooks and pedagogic practices (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006a). Curriculum frameworks are expected to be periodically formulated both at national and state levels. The most recent NCF was released in

2005 and, in principle, this works as an overarching guide for curriculum development across subjects, with flexibility and freedom within states to adapt the framework as necessary and relevant without compromising its basic tenets. But very few states develop their own explicit and independent curricular framework documents. In most cases, curricula appear in the form of brief outlines appended to textbooks, summarising the objectives, pedagogic approaches and assessment schemes to be followed for the given subject. At present, the guidelines of the NCF 2005 are in force, but a new NCF is envisaged in response to NEP 2020. In the past, State Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs) followed the NCF and were developed on the basis of it. However, in the current exercise, SCFs are expected to feed into the NCF. SCERTs have been tasked to prepare SCFs of four kinds – school education, early childhood care and education, teacher education and adult education – which will then be used by a National Steering Committee for the Development of National Curriculum Frameworks, according to a recent press release by the central Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

2.5 Teachers

According to UNESCO (2021), the workforce in India has a deficit of over one million teachers. The government schoolteacher population is made up of more males (2.7 million) than females (2.1 million) (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021c), though this gender gap has been closed substantially in recent years. In private schools, though, females total 2.3 million compared to 1.3 million males.

2.5.1 Pre-service teacher education and qualifications

As noted above, responsibility for initial teacher education in India lies with the NCTE and is regulated by the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009). Various teacher qualifications are recognised, such as the Diploma in Elementary Education (DEEd) and Bachelor of Education (BED). Prospective basic education teachers must also pass the Teacher Eligibility Test (Government of India, 2021a) An important government report (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2012) noted several problems associated with initial teacher education in India, including a lack of breadth and depth due to its short duration. It was also noted that 'one major area of weakness in existing teacher education programmes is the quality and experience of those who have the responsibility of training young entrants to the profession of teaching' (p.21). In response to the first concern about the duration of initial teacher education in India, the new NEP proposes that a revised (i.e. with a greater focus on developing practical teaching skills)

¹ The 2020 NEP proposes a revised structure of education into ages 3–8 (Foundation), 8–11 (Preparatory), 11–14 (Middle) and 14–18 (Secondary).

four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) be the minimum teaching qualification by 2030. The launch of a new four-year integrated teacher education programme aligned with the NEP was in fact announced in November 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2021a).

2.5.2 In-service teacher education

There is no specific framework for teacher professional development in India, though the NCFTE (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009) does include a chapter entitled 'Continuing Professional Development and Support for In-Service Teachers'. This defines several aims for teacher professional development, including, for example, 'Explore, reflect on and develop one's own practice' and 'Deepen one's knowledge of and update oneself about one's academic discipline or other areas of school curriculum' (p.64). General principles for the design of in-service programmes are also outlined; for example, it is advised that 'interactivity must not be compromised on any account. Large numbers and the use of electronic media in the place of human interaction compromise on the non-negotiable' (p.67). Primary teachers in India, according to the NCFTE, are mandated to complete 20 days of training each year. Three problems with the existing approach to teacher professional development in India were also outlined: teachers in private schools are excluded; teachers have little autonomy in the kinds of professional development they do; and education departments do not 'have any mechanism for co-ordinating the total training being undergone by teachers, with the result there is a lot of over-training, repetition and overlap' (p.71).

For teachers who are newly recruited, induction training of 30 days is funded by Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)². In 2017–18, 0.27 lakh (27,000) teachers were approved by MHRD for induction training (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018). Such induction programmes focus on general pedagogical issues for teachers and are not subject-specific.

According to UNESCO (2021:115), 'several central institutions such as NCERT, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and state institutions including the State Institutes of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT), SCERTs, DIETs and BRCs-CRCs, design and offer CPD'. CPD is also provided by NGOs and international educational development organisations such as UNICEF and (particularly for teachers of English) the British Council (see Section 6.7). According to figures cited by Anderson and Lightfoot (2019), 3.5 million teachers in India receive in-service training each year, though provision and quality vary across states and programmes. Generally, though, commentators suggest that official in-service training remains largely top-down and transmissive (Padwad and Dixit, 2014),

with primarily cascade models of delivery (UNESCO, 2021). The new NEP recommends a yearly minimum of 50 hours of in-service training, which gives teachers an element of choice and avoids cascade and other top-down models of training. Covid-19 has also given rise to many opportunities for teachers to pursue professional development through online platforms such as, for example, DIKSHA (<https://diksha.gov.in/>) and Firki (<https://firki.co/>), Teach for India's online teacher education platform.

2.5.3 Teacher evaluation and performance standards

An analysis of teacher evaluation in India (Bambawale, Hughes and Lightfoot, 2018) concluded that the importance of this process was recognised and relevant tools to support it are available but that 'uncertainty exists around its purpose and application' (p.29). Thus, for example, while a guide on teacher self-assessment has been published (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2019a), it is unclear in practice how teachers use this to reflect on their own competences. In a more recent analysis, Pandey (2021) also notes that various approaches to teacher appraisal (such as APAR – Annual Performance Assessment Reports) are applied in India but without any consistency. NEP 2020 has stimulated closer attention to teacher quality, including teacher appraisal, and new draft teacher standards have been published (National Council for Teacher Education, 2021). Four standards are defined: core values and ethics; professional knowledge and understanding; professional practice and competence; and professional development and growth. It will be interesting to monitor how these standards shape teacher evaluation practices in the years ahead; creating new frameworks and tools is important, but these need to be accompanied by support and education that allows teachers and other stakeholders to modify established ideas and practices regarding what counts as teacher quality and how it should be assessed.

2.6 Technology and education

The number of internet users in India rose by over eight per cent to 624 million in 2021 compared to the previous year (DATAREPORTAL, 2021). Recent years have also seen an increasing focus on the role of technology in education as reflected in various national initiatives. These have included 'Digital India' (<https://www.digitalindia.gov.in/>), SWAYAM (<https://swayam.gov.in/>) and DIKSHA (<https://diksha.gov.in/>).

2 SSA is an over-arching government programme to support the improvement of school education in India; see <https://samagra.education.gov.in/features.html>

The new NEP also emphasises the importance of technology and states that ‘use and integration of technology to improve multiple aspects of education will be supported and adopted’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020:56). Challenges in relation to this goal are also acknowledged, such as ensuring schools have access to electricity (according to the Department of School Education and Literacy, 2021d, 83.4 per cent of schools in India meet this requirement), hardware and software. According to UNESCO (2021), most teachers in India have positive attitudes towards the integration of technology into their work.

Since March 2020, Covid–19 has impacted substantially on education in India (Vegas, Shah and Fowler, 2021). A recent report (ASER, 2020) examined the impact of Covid–19 in rural areas, finding, for example, that 50 per cent of the respondent teachers had received training to support teaching remotely. However, only around 18 per cent of rural students, mostly above Standard 8 and in private schools, attended online classes, with the general conclusion being that, even though 62 per cent of households had a smartphone, ‘the impact of digital means of reaching children is not impressive, whether in government schools or private’ (p.10). UNESCO (2021:07) reports that smartphones have been the primary technology used by teachers during Covid–19 but, again, notes, that ‘a large proportion of students have had limited or no access to devices and data’.

2.7 NGOs in education

Reliable statistics regarding NGOs in India are not available. According to one estimate (Anand, 2015) there are over 3.1 million NGOs operating across the country. While the sector-wise distribution of NGOs is also not accurately known, *Niti Darpan*, the directory of NGOs maintained by the Niti Ayog (formerly the Planning Commission of India), has 130,000 entries. Of these, 73,000 work in education and literacy (Niti Ayog, 2021). It may be safely assumed that the contribution of NGOs to school education in India is quite substantial, though the specific extent of this contribution to English language education is unclear.

A white paper on NGOs by Global Governance Initiative (GGI, 2020) identifies four broad areas of intervention followed by educational NGOs – infrastructure, government advocacy, primary teaching services and human capital development. Based on surveys with the top 32 NGOs, this report concludes that the last two of these areas are where most NGOs focus, while there is less focus on infrastructure and government advocacy. Activity reports from several leading NGOs indicate that, in school education, issues such as literacy, numeracy, access and inclusion are given. NGOs working in education also intervene in many ways, from direct involvement in teaching and learning to advocacy and

research. The Azim Premji Foundation, for example, runs its own lower primary ‘demonstration schools’ in nine districts in four states (Azim Premji Foundation, 2017). It also has ‘field institutes’ in 50 districts across six states and one union territory aimed at ‘improving the government school education system at the district level’ through professional capacity building of stakeholders (Azim Premji Foundation, 2017). Another NGO, Pratham, intervenes both directly (its instructors teaching children in schools and communities) and through partnerships with government teams, and has an extensive portfolio of activities especially in primary education. It also conducts the annual national survey of children’s schooling and foundational learning across rural India, leading to Annual Status of Education Reports (ASERs), which are considered key documents on basic literacy and the status of education (Pratham, n.d.). NGOs like Central Square Foundation also work with the government, technology partners and educational entrepreneurs to support initiatives aimed at improving the quality of foundational and basic education. Some other well-known NGOs working in education in India are the Akshara Foundation, Ekalavya, Digantar and Teach for India.



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3 The role of English in India

The legacy of English in India can be traced back to the early 17th century via the trade and evangelical missions of the East India Company and Christian missionaries respectively. English began to take a more central position with the introduction of public instruction in English in the 1830s and it became the official language of the Company rule in 1835. It became further entrenched as the language of administration and consequently of prosperity, power and modernity with the establishment of the British colonial rule. Ambivalent positions arose regarding English during India's struggle for independence; it was opposed as the colonisers' language and a 'Westernising' influence, but also valued for the prospects of modernisation and unification it seemed to offer. These tensions continued even after independence which continued even after independence; the Constituent Assembly in fact spent three years debating the status of English in the free India. These conflicting positions were reconciled in a 'compromise' status of English as an 'associate language', initially for 15 years until 1965, but later indefinitely via the Official Languages Act of 1963. The fact that India does not have a specific 'national' language and that English continues to be formally recognised as a language of administration and education, contrary to the original plans at the Independence, indicate the immense socio-cultural, historical, political and economic complexities besetting languages in India in general and English in particular.

English touches nearly all aspects of the social and personal life of every individual in India, as it is widely used in a range of fields including federal and state administration, legislation and the judiciary, trade and commerce, public services, education and social media. It also has utility as a lingua franca in the vastly multilingual landscape of India. It is therefore seen as the language of opportunity, prosperity and social mobility. In other words, knowledge of English significantly boosts one's social, economic and cultural capital.

A recent survey (Guha, 2021) points out that the centrality of English in a social aspirational space is tied to it being a language of the ruling elite, the emancipatory potential it has and the socio-economic benefits it brings. Higher studies, career and employment opportunities are significantly shaped by a knowledge of English. All high-stakes examinations, whether for entry into prestigious institutions and academic programmes or into high-end public or corporate careers, inevitably include

English proficiency as a key determinant of success (it is therefore somewhat ironic that insufficient attention is paid to the levels of English that teachers of the language should have – see Section 6.7).

The strong demand for English spurred by the software and ICT industries two decades ago still remains high, now thanks to the booming services sector, where even jobs with lower levels of educational requirements still demand some knowledge of English (Endow, 2021). English language skills provide significant returns to those with high proficiency as compared to those without in many sectors of employment (Azam, Chin and Prakash, 2010). Mohan (2014) notes that even when good jobs do not intrinsically require English, the language serves as a kind of gatekeeper. Two reports (Erling, 2014; and Prince and Singh, 2015) also find English proficiency figuring to varying but significant degrees in all major sectors of employment as an important influence on recruitment and career progression.

English also has a strong presence in the cultural life of India, particularly in literature and films, as evidenced by, for example, a large English language publication industry and a substantial readership for Indian writings in English. The widespread use of English by celebrities and luminaries from the cultural world is one example of numerous intangible but powerful influences that continue to uphold the prestige status of English (see Gaekwad, 2017 and various discussions on forums such as Quora³, for interesting insights into this phenomenon).

3 For example: <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-Bollywood-films-have-almost-half-of-the-lines-spoken-in-English-Is-this-how-they-speak-in-India-too>.



4 Languages and education

English is just one of the hundreds of languages used in India. According to the People's Linguistic Survey of India (2016), there are 780 living languages and potentially 100 unreported languages in India, while Ethnologue (2019) reports 447 living languages in India (both sources above are cited in Bedi, 2020). According to Graddol (2010), estimates of how many Indians speak English vary between 55 and 350 million, while the 2011 India census reported that 260,000 people consider English to be their primary language, 83 million view it as their second language and 46 million as their third. Reliable recent figures for the number of English speakers in the country, though, are unavailable. In terms of proficiency, data is also limited but according to EF's English Proficiency Index, India's position is 48th among 112 countries with an overall proficiency rating of 'moderate' (Education First, 2021). However, the linguistic diversity of the country is so rich and complex that 'people have multilinguality rather than one specific language', according to Agnihotri (2007, 2014) (cited in Heugh et al., 2019:18).

4.1 The Three Language Formula

In terms of policy, language education in India is regulated by the three-language formula, emphasising the study of at least three languages in school, one of which has always been English. Introduced by NEP in 1968 and continued by subsequent NEPs, the formula remains in force with English as a constant feature across the nation, though its implementation differs across states and sectors. Typically, the state language is considered the first language in this formula and English as the second, with various options for the third language, though most states allow students to study other languages, including English, as the first language. However, in all cases, states insist on students taking the state language as one of the three. States usually keep schools not affiliated to the state board out of this mandate, but now there is an increasing tendency to insist on the mandatory teaching of the state language across all schools, irrespective of affiliation, levels or medium of instruction. On the other hand, while all education policies so far have unequivocally favoured other Indian languages as the most preferable medium of school education, English-medium instruction (EMI) has seen a significant rise during the last few years (Nagarajan, 2021). Thus, there are contradictory policy approaches on promoting Indian languages and English across different states.

4.2 English as a subject vs as a medium of instruction

The teaching of English typically starts between Grade 1 and Grade 3 in most states and children generally spend seven to ten years learning English at school. On average, English is taught for about three hours per week at the primary level up to five hours per week at the secondary, with at least one lesson every day. In certain schools and for specific subjects, EMI is used. For example, English-medium schools, which are predominant in the private sector (a point stressed in an earlier analysis of medium of instruction policy in India by Erling et al., 2016), start teaching widely in English from pre-primary years. Other schools are informally known as 'semi-English' medium and in these EMI is introduced later, often from Grade 5 and typically only for mathematics and natural sciences. It is not uncommon to find schools with some classes in the regional medium and others in the English or 'semi-English' medium. Government schools that typically offer education in the regional medium are now increasingly accommodating EMI by converting or adding EMI sections in existing schools and more rarely converting entire schools to EMI or setting up new EMI schools. This is often justified as a response to strong parental demand, but concerns about dwindling enrolments in state-run regional-medium schools are also seen as an important cause behind this move.

Recent statistical surveys illustrate the rise in English-medium schools in comparison to schools with other languages as a medium of instruction in the country. According to 2019 National Statistical Survey data reported in the press (The Indian Express, 2020), the proportion of English-medium students at lower primary level (Grade 1 to 5) went up to 23.2 per cent in 2017–18 from 22.3 per cent in 2014, whereas it went up to 21 per cent from 19.3 per cent at upper primary level. Except for Karnataka, in all southern states of India English was also found to be the most preferred medium of instruction according to another recent survey conducted by the Unified District Information System in 2019 and reported in The Federal (2021).

Sometimes, the spread of English as a medium of instruction is seen as an indication of dilemma and transition caused by the increasing importance of English on the one hand and strong cultural and emotional values attached to Indian languages on the other:

While English as a lingua franca gains importance as the language of social and professional mobility, Indian languages hold cultural and emotional value. In some instances, English becomes indigenised and operates as

an Indian language, evoking emotional and cultural connections through its creolisation. English in these circumstances occupies a liminal place, simultaneously desired and distrusted. The proliferation of private and public schools that advertise education in the English medium is an example of this dichotomy. The teaching of English then requires strategic handling to achieve the aims of a language classroom that strengthens critical literacy in a globalised world. (Jayendran, Ramanathan and Nagpal, 2021:42)

In relation to these tensions between English and local languages, official documents encourage a balance. For example, acknowledging the place of English in the Indian education sector, the Position Paper of the National Focus Group on Teaching of English (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006b:01) describes English as 'a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life'. But it also stresses that English cannot stand alone and must find its place in both regional-medium and English-medium schools along with other Indian languages. This is echoed in the National Curriculum Framework (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:39) as well: 'English needs to find its place along with other Indian languages in different states, where children's other languages strengthen English teaching and learning'. Similar opinions are expressed in Jayendran, Ramanathan and Nagpal (2021:45):

The teaching and learning of English, at this point, must not be seen as an act isolated from the teaching and learning of indigenous languages and their cultures. Instead, the rich narrative, discursive and representational traditions embedded in post-colonial contexts can be leveraged to achieve cultural and critical literacy, in the process of which, operational literacy develops naturally.

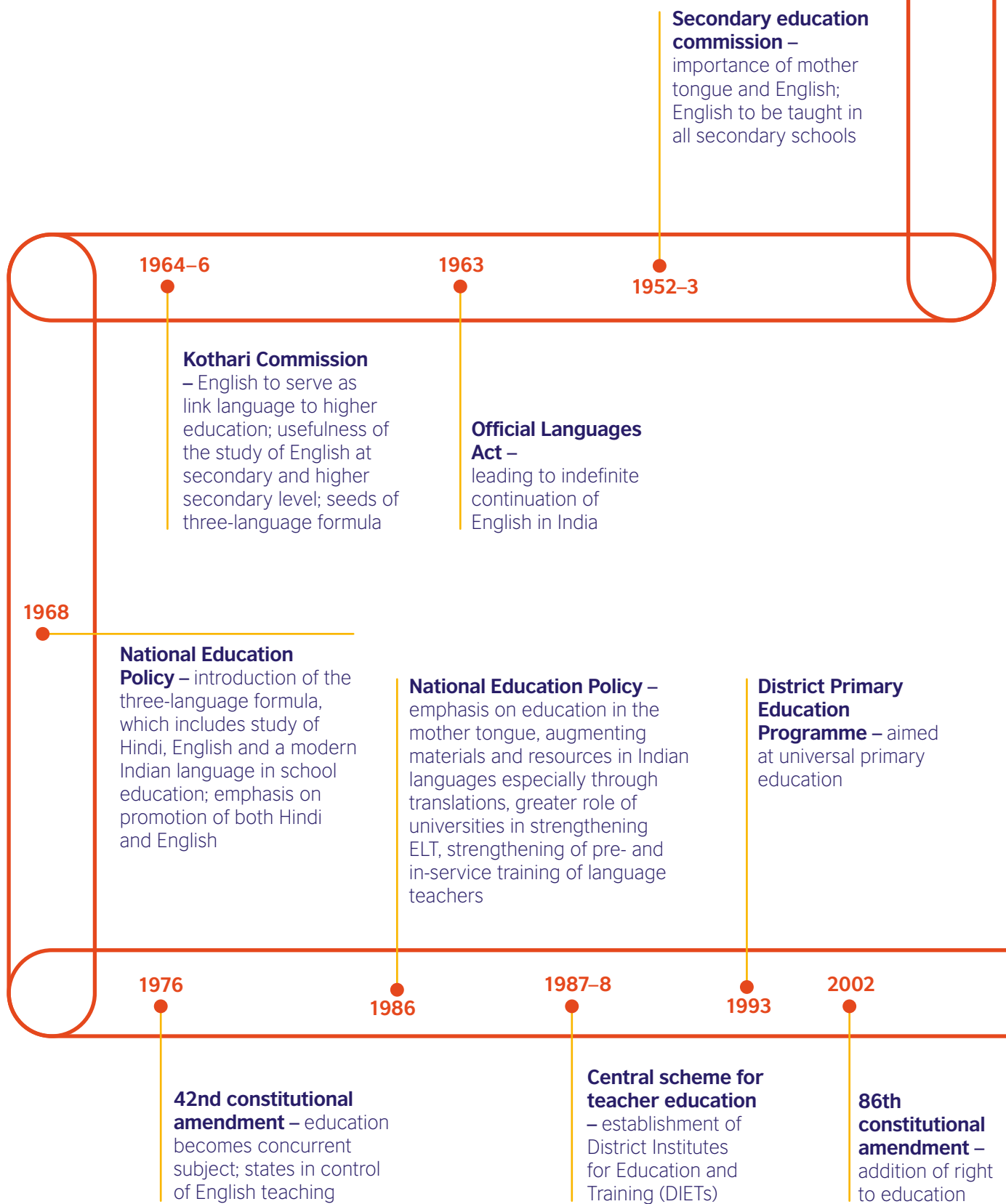
4.3 Language mixing in the classroom

Irrespective of the medium of instruction, language mixing is a common practice in the schools in India. This multilingual reality has been clearly documented in a study conducted by Lightfoot et al. (2021) in two different cities of India where the frequent occurrence of language mixing was found in Grade 4 and 5 in English-, Hindi- and Telegu-medium schools in both English and Maths subject classes.

Not surprisingly, the multilingual nature of the society is reflected in both the teacher and student population in classrooms. While students' linguistic resources are considered to have an important positive role in successful learning at school (Heugh et al., 2019), this does not seem to receive enough pedagogical attention in language classrooms. A small study (Goswami, 2004) in 33 primary schools on the medium

of instruction and languages taught in the primary schools of Assam reported that more than 60.6 per cent of the schools were heterogeneous in terms of students' linguistic composition and 75.5 per cent of the teachers used two or more languages in their speech. Two further findings from the same study were that teachers did not receive any training to help them deal with linguistically diverse classrooms and that teachers tended to ignore the linguistic heterogeneity of the classrooms. There are other studies highlighting the lack of preparedness of teachers to deal with linguistic diversity (Borah, 2018) and how teachers encourage students to behave like monolingual speakers (Boruah, 2017). Anderson and Lightfoot (2021:1210) also highlight schoolteachers' reluctance to encourage use of other languages in English language classrooms despite widespread use of translanguaging practices in daily lives, and advocate for the 'need for explicit focus on use of other languages in Indian English language teacher education' and 'more cohesive support for translanguaging practices across the education system'.

A timeline of English and English education in India



National Focus Group Position Paper on Teaching of Indian Languages

– English becoming integral to Indian socio-cultural matrix; acknowledges English as a language of mobility and aspirations; recommends teaching of English interwoven into teaching of Indian languages in multilingual classrooms; foreign languages to be introduced only after the child has gained proficiency in one or more languages

National Focus Group Position Paper on Teaching of English

– revisiting aims and challenges of English teaching, proposing new approaches such as multilingualism and language across curriculum, tri-dialectal model; recognises teachers' PD and English proficiency as concerns

2006

National Curriculum Framework

– recognition of multilingualism as a resource, stress on language across curriculum, introduction of second language acquisition frameworks and approaches to conceptualise English education

2005

Model school scheme

– expanding access to quality education, leading to more English and EMI opportunities

2007–8

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) (National Secondary Education Mission)

– objectives include quality enhancement of English teaching, entailing in-service re-training of all secondary teachers

2009

Right to Education Act

– economically weaker students get access to private sector (including EMI) schools through 25 per cent quota reserved for them

2009–10

Scheme to provide quality education in madrasas

– support to madrasas to introduce English among other subjects; Madrasas to join mainstream school education, including affiliation to education boards

2014

2020

National Education Policy

– bilingual teaching-learning materials in mother tongue and English; Three-Language Formula from the foundational stage; funding to alternative schools to introduce English (among other subjects); recommendation to offer all subjects at two levels of 'standard' and 'higher'

2018

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Integrated Education Mission merging of SSA and RMSA)

– quality enhancement across Grade 1–12 continuum; State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTS) to cover Grades 1-12; SCERTs and DIETs to have separate cells and faculties for English education; English achievement in Grade 10 to be measured through National Achievement Survey

5 English in education structures

5.1 Organisational structure for education

The broad organisational structure that regulates education in India, of which English education forms a part, is summarised in Table 1.

Usually, English language education falls within the purview of the agencies listed in the table with respect to their specific roles. However, there is some diversity at the state level in terms of how these broad structures are further devolved. For example, separate structures for textbook production, examinations, training and research or publications have been set up within the boards of education.

5.2 Departments for English language education

There are also some key institutions and agencies at the national, regional and state levels, which specifically deal with English language education in the school sector. Two Regional Institutes of English (RIE-North at Chandigarh and RIE-South at Bengaluru) undertake in-service education and training of teachers (see Section 6.7.1). Some states also have English Language Training Institutes (ELTIs), while many states have departments or autonomous institutes looking after English education included within the SCERTs.

Table 1: Educational structures and English education

| Level | Administrative | Academic | Assessment and Certification |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| Central | Central Ministry of Education and its various departments | National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) | CBSE, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) |
| State | State Ministries and Directorates of Education | State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), State Boards of Education, Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) | State Boards of Education, State Boards of Open Schooling |
| District and town/village | District and block education offices | District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), Block and Cluster Resource Centres | |



6 English language teaching in practice

6.1 Textbooks

Though India does have a national curriculum, schools are not compelled to use uniform textbooks until Grade 8 and these vary significantly across states and schools. Many government and government-aided schools follow NCERT/SCERT textbooks for English, while private schools use a wider variety of their own choice, including, in some cases, standard ELT textbooks produced by international publishers. To illustrate these variations, government and government-aided schools in Assam mostly use the textbook series developed by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, Assam (the state academic authority), while regional-medium private schools affiliated to the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) mostly use their own series of textbooks. Additionally, some CBSE-affiliated English-medium private (usually high-cost) schools follow standard ELT textbooks such as *Snowflakes: Northeast Edition* (Cambridge University Press), *Communicate in English* (Ratna Sagar Pvt. Limited) and *Collins Enriching English Reader*. As a result, the textbooks used for English across the country and within states differ substantially in terms of content, layout and price, providing students with different language learning experiences. Mahapatra (2012:14) describes the ‘government-private divide’ as ‘perhaps the most obvious factor when it comes to class politics in ELT in India,’ and differences in the textbooks used in these two sectors are one clear sign of this division.

State boards can exercise their own autonomy in developing textbooks for English and a closer look at the Grade 1 textbooks in three different states (Telangana, Assam and West Bengal) illustrates this. In Telangana state, the textbook *My English World* has seven units connected through the story of a single character, though each unit has a specific theme. The textbook has big pictures and activities for developing listening and responding, vocabulary, reading and writing. In Assam, the textbook (*Beginners’ English – I*) has eight lessons (units), each of which has a different topic. Each unit begins with a picture followed by a text or rhyme and a number of activities for developing skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and storytelling. West Bengal adopts a different approach – it has integrated the teaching of Bangla, English and Mathematics into a single textbook (*Amar Boi*) rather than using a separate textbook for teaching English. For teaching English, the textbook consists of worksheets addressing, for example, listening, speaking and letter recognition. Besides the lesson content, textbooks often contain notes or instructions for teachers at the end of each lesson/unit (Assam) or towards the end of the textbook (West Bengal).

The Position paper of the National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006a) called for the use of ‘a package of teaching learning material’ rather than a single textbook. However, Indian classrooms, particularly the ones in the government sector, are still largely dominated by the use of textbooks. This dependence on textbooks has been termed a ‘textbook trap’ by Dutta and Bala (2012).

6.2 Other resources

Other resources available for English classrooms include grammar books, spoken English books and other materials such as chart paper, pictures and worksheets. But the availability and use of these resources vary greatly in different schools and is driven by various factors. For example, one informant working in a private school explained that, though he wanted to draw on a variety of resources for teaching grammar, he was compelled to fall back on traditional grammar exercises from a single grammar book due to pressures by guardians (who believe that having one grammar book to learn is more effective) or the school authorities. On the other hand, a key informant (who is a teacher in a government school) explained that the textbook was self-sufficient and that she did not feel much need to use any other material. It is also commonly the case that materials complementing and supplementing the textbook are not readily available (Meganathan, 2019).

The MHRD Annual Report 2017–18 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2018) acknowledges the challenges of making teaching and learning materials (TLM) packages available in government schools, suggesting collaboration with private bodies as a possible solution and highlighting the need for developing clear mechanisms for quality control that can be led by government institutions such as DIETs. However, our desk research did not identify evidence of the form such mechanisms might take in practice.

Some private schools develop a set of TLMs by asking teachers to submit a definite number of TLMs per year, as explained by one of our key informant teachers. Other agencies/institutions are sometimes engaged by the SCERTs and/or the government to design materials for teaching English. For example, SCERT Sikkim was supported by Azim Premji University to revise their English textbooks for Grades 1 to 5 in 2018–19. Government schools in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have been regularly using 20 video films titled ‘Hello English’ produced by the Regional Institute of English South India (RIESI) for learning English at

primary level. Government and government-aided schools usually procure books including supplementary readers in English through library grants provided by SSA. Many schools have set up reading corners for children with such books with the aim of developing positive reading habits.

Materials are also developed in a responsive manner. For example, to address grey areas in learning outcomes identified by the assessment surveys and programmes such as the National Achievement Survey of 2017, Assam has developed grade-wise and subject-wise Open Education Resources (OERs) for English along with other subjects at primary level using the expertise of resource persons from SCERT, subject experts, SSA, RMSA, CTE and DIET (Government of Assam, n.d.). These materials have attempted to address the learning gaps with the help of case studies and include activities aimed at achieving particular learning outcomes.

States such as Maharashtra and Telangana have developed bridge courses for various subjects including English to help address the learning loss caused by the lockdown period during Covid-19. Such bridge courses help learners review material from the previous grade as well as helping them with content from the current grade. This is meant to provide students with a smooth transition between grades. In Assam, pedagogic support during the pandemic period has included, among others, the supply of learning recovery package for English, worksheets for students in neighbouring schools prepared by DIETs and YouTube videos (Y-Kiran) for students launched by the SSA.

6.3 ICT in English education

The use of ICT in English teaching and learning has gained momentum following the Covid-19 pandemic. The government has formulated eight steps for the implementation of online or digital education, namely PRAGYATA (plan, review, arrange, guide, Yak (talk), assign, track and appreciate). One national digital platform for school education is DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), an initiative of NCERT launched in 2017. Thirty-two states/union territories have uploaded content on the portal so far. Several states have uploaded e-resources related to the textbook content for various subjects, including English, that can be accessed by teachers, students and other stakeholders. For example, SCERT Assam has uploaded e-textbooks for English and practice resources along with interactive content for primary-level students, which the students are supposed to use with the guidance of teachers and guardians. This content is yet to be integrated extensively in schools and only seems to be used sporadically. Limited public information is available to date about the extent, manner and use of such resources for English teaching and learning.

PM eVidya (<https://www.swayamprabha.gov.in/index.php/schooledu>) is another initiative through which curriculum-based educational content for Grades 1 to 12, developed by NCERT and other agencies such as CBSE, KVS, NIOS, Rotary, etc, is telecast by 12 eVidya direct-to-home (DTH) channels, making the materials accessible to students with limited internet connection. The materials include English.

In Maharashtra, e-content for schoolteachers was developed by the Maharashtra Academic Authority under the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra Programme in 2017 and made available through the Maharashtra In-service Teachers Resource App (MITRA). Later, MITRA materials were incorporated into the DIKSHA portal; however, an evaluation report (Ocansey and Sharma, 2019) observed that the current version of DIKSHA does not have some features that made MITRA popular among teachers (these were not specified in the report).

Despite these large-scale ICT initiatives, limited research is available into the impact they have on the teaching and learning of English. Meganathan (2019) mentions one study that demonstrates how technology had a positive effect on the speaking skills of Grade 6 students in a regional-medium school in West Bengal. However, while the use of mobile phones and digital apps has increased rapidly in India during the pandemic, including for teaching English, studies of the outcomes of these innovations are not yet available.

6.4 Classroom practices

Though there are policy documents and resources available for teaching English, classroom practices, particularly in the government sector, are largely driven by the textbook content without much consideration for policy. Teachers working in government schools do review the learning outcomes occasionally during the teaching process, but find it difficult to attain the outcomes at the respective grades, as reported by the teacher informants, due to very limited exposure of the students to the language outside the classroom and/or insufficient learning at a lower grade. On the other hand, our sources suggest that teachers working at private schools often do not consider the learning outcomes and simply follow the textbook activities and instructions of school authorities.

From discussions with the teacher informants, it can be said that a typical lesson in an English class often begins with a read-aloud activity. Sometimes this is preceded by the teacher giving an idea about the content of the text in the school language, in the belief that doing so will create students' interest in the text. This is followed by translation and/or explanation of texts in the textbooks. Difficult words are written on the board and meanings are discussed or written up. All these activities are mostly teacher-led and students

are expected to follow and listen to the teacher and/or copy the teacher's writing into their notebooks. Rather than helping students complete the language tasks or activities included in a lesson in the textbook, lessons often focus wholly on understanding the content of texts through translation.

Teacher talking time is usually much higher than student talking time in English classrooms. This might be the result of limited pedagogical competence among teachers, in particular a lack of skill in implementing activity-based and learner-centred instruction. As reported by a teacher informant, teachers' efforts are also often constrained by practical challenges such as large classrooms, limited time for completing the syllabus and the low proficiency of students.

Among the language skills, reading and writing are emphasised more than listening and speaking (Dutta and Bala, 2012) in most government schools. Listening and speaking are becoming more prominent (see, for example, The Hindu, 2021, for an article about the introduction of 30 minutes of English speaking in Grades 6 to 12) but generally such developments are not supported by change in curriculum and in the way teachers are trained (Meganathan, 2019). In some private schools, there are separate spoken English classes where activities for improving oral skills are conducted, but practices in conducting such classes are not uniform across schools.

The teaching of reading and writing is often limited to lower-level skills in most government schools. Reading aloud is both taught and assessed until Grade 5 in some schools, as reported by one of the teacher informants. A study (Dutta and Bala, 2012 :34) conducted in eight states/union territories explained the practice of teaching reading as follows:

Teaching of 'reading' was synonymous with reading aloud by one student or teacher, choral reading, group reading (loud). Textbook was used in more than 90 per cent of classrooms for being read by the teacher and making children listen. Teachers themselves performed 'model' reading without understanding the concept of reading for comprehension. 'Reading', as silent reading at classes III, IV or V level was not observed in any school.

A common problem, also voiced by the teacher informants in this study, is learners' composition skills. Classroom practice is largely dominated by the dictating of notes by teachers due to various reasons such as limited time for 'covering' the syllabus, pressure from school authorities to keep the learners' notebooks error-free and low proficiency of learners. As a result, learners, particularly in government schools, are rarely taught the process of writing.

Practices vary in more challenging contexts. As discussed in Section 4, English classrooms in India are linguistically diverse. Due to teachers' lack of the awareness of appropriate methodological strategies, this diversity becomes a barrier to the process of English teaching and learning. Frustration caused by such challenges combined with the very disadvantaged socio-economic background of the students is reflected in a teacher informant's opinions:

Teaching English is even more problematic than teaching other subjects ... They use a different language variety at home ... they even find it difficult to speak the first language used in the school ... so this is a challenge to make the transition to English ... Rather than using any recommended techniques, I rely on whatever works best to keep them interested in the lesson without much focus on vocabulary or other language points ... We do not have any spoken English classes ... we actually cannot reach that level ... there are many hindrances ... students are from poor backgrounds ... it is difficult to even bring them to the school.

6.5 Assessment

Considering assessment as an integral part of teaching-learning activities, the Right to Education Act of 2009 mandated the use of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for all subjects at primary level⁴. Accordingly, a number of learning outcomes for each grade and subject have been formulated by NCERT as reference points that assessment systems are supposed to use for measuring students' progress qualitatively or quantitatively. For the subject of English, learning outcomes have been spelt out based on separate curricular expectations for lower primary and upper primary stages. For example, one of the Grade 1 learning outcomes is 'identifies characters and sequence of events in a story' (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2017:25), while for Grade 8, one is 'narrates stories (real or imaginary) and real-life experiences in English' (ibid:39).

Classroom assessment practices, through CCE, are supposed to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes developed for English in each grade at both lower primary and upper primary levels. The NCERT has developed CCE packages to help teachers understand and implement CCE in teaching-learning with examples of activities for English classes.

It is not clear how far these reforms have been translated into practice in English classrooms. No studies were found during this desk research investigating how effectively CCE had been implemented in English classrooms at the basic education level. However, interviews with key informants (school teachers) align with an observation made in the

⁴ CCE was introduced in 2009 but withdrawn in 2017, with plans to reintroduce in 2020-1; see <https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/why-the-cbse-introduced-and-then-withdrew-continuous-evaluation-1821304-2021-07-01>

Foreword of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation Guidelines prepared by NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2019b) that there are no visible changes at the ground level probably because of the habit of using tests and examinations as traditional assessment strategies. Teachers tend to equate CCE to the unit tests conducted at regular intervals. Those unit tests actually test the learners' grasp of the syllabus/textbook content rather than measuring their progress in terms of English language level. The teacher informant from a private school shared some practices he follows for continuously assessing spoken English performance of the learners in a separate class hour. However, he did not have any knowledge about learning outcomes or policy directives and just followed instructions from his school authorities. On the other hand, the teacher working in a government school was aware of learning outcomes and CCE because of orientations she received through SSA, but she expressed the need for more guidance on pedagogy for using these ideas in the classroom.

Though there are no other assessment systems exclusively focused on measuring the English language levels of primary-level students, general assessments of some bodies partially include such assessment. For example, along with arithmetic ability, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey (facilitated by the NGO Pratham and carried out by partner institutions) assesses basic reading ability through tasks designed on the basis of analyses of state textbooks and curricular framework documents. The basic reading and comprehension abilities in English of children aged five to 16 years were assessed by administering the ASER English tool for ASER in 2007, 2009 and 2012. Banerji and Bobde (2013:31) state that the ASER English tool, with five levels for reading and two levels for comprehension, has been used on average with over 522,000 children a year, 'making it perhaps the most widely used basic English assessment for children in the non-English-speaking world'.

The assessment survey results have implications for English learning and teaching in India. For example, according to Banerji and Bobde (2013:31), 'less than half the children in Grade 5 can read simple words in English ... and, of the children who can read words, approximately 40 per cent cannot tell the meanings of the words they have read'. This is a clear indication of the need for immediate attention to reading skills in India in both regional language and more so in English. Be it in classroom assessments or other assessment systems, there seems to be very little or no focus on either productive skills (speaking/writing) or on listening.

6.6 NGOs and English

The role of NGOs in education in India was discussed in Section 2.7. In some cases they also provide specific support for the teaching and learning of English. For example, Teach-India, a CSR initiative of The Times of India, runs spoken English development programmes for underprivileged youth. Another NGO, e-Vidyaloka, teaches English among other subjects to rural children of Grades 5–8 through online and digital means. Many education NGOs have their own teaching and teacher training centres, where methodologies and materials developed in-house are put into practice. Similarly, NGOs also develop their own materials and practices for the learning, teaching and assessment of English, which are used in a variety of contexts. Often there is little information about the origins of such materials or practices. The pedagogic soundness and socio-cultural relevance of materials, approaches or practices followed by NGOs, or how they compare or align with those followed in the formal state education system, are issues which need urgent attention, given the large number of entities operating in this space.

Issues of alignment and pedagogic soundness are further aggravated by a common challenge of human resources NGOs all over India face: NGOs typically work with volunteers with no or limited skills, training and knowledge in pedagogy or even subject areas. The GGI white paper (GGI, 2020) cites a report of the Confederation of Indian Industries, which 'indicated the glaring void of skilled workforce in the Indian education NGO space. It was found that Indian NGOs face huge hurdles when it comes to recruiting, training and retaining quality teachers' (Section 4). NGOs functioning without qualified materials producers, curriculum designers and teacher trainers should not be surprising, but is certainly alarming.

6.7 English language teachers

6.7.1 Qualifications

In accordance with the provisions of the Right to Education Act of 2009, the NCTE has laid down minimum entry and academic qualifications for a person to be eligible to be appointed as a teacher at the primary level. One essential qualification is passing the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) conducted by both the central government and state governments. Passing the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) helps one to be recruited in central schools, while passing the TET conducted by the state governments helps one to be recruited in the state schools.

TET (an objective-type test) consists of two papers – Paper 1 for those intending to be teachers at the lower primary level and Paper 2 for those intending to be teachers at the upper primary level. A candidate can take both papers. There are two language components in each paper – the first is on the proficiency of the language which is the medium of instruction,

while the other component sees candidates choose from the available options. In states such as Assam, candidates need to take a test of English for the second component in both papers. The syllabus for this component includes aspects of teaching and learning languages and grammar. The syllabus for the lower primary level seems to be a reduced version of that in the upper primary level. This second component carries 30 marks out of the total of 150 marks in the test.

The minimum academic qualifications needed to be a teacher are a senior secondary certificate (or equivalent) for lower primary and graduation at upper primary level. Other than this, candidates need a professional qualification, namely a Diploma in Elementary Education (DEEd) for all grades at primary level or a Bachelor of Education (BEEd) for teaching at upper primary level only. Most private schools, however, define their own norms for appointing teachers of English. Besides looking for candidates with a higher degree, many such schools are still seen to consider the BEEd as an essential qualification and candidates with a specialised degree for teaching English are often preferred.

6.7.2 Subject specialisation

Teachers in primary schools in India might or might not be subject specialists and different practices are seen in government and private schools. In government schools, generally all teachers at lower primary level need to teach all subjects. Therefore, a teacher with any subject background may teach English at Grades 1–5. However, the Right to Education Act of 2009 mandated the norm of at least one teacher per class for languages at the upper primary level (Grades 6–8). This mandate, in many states, has been implemented so that teachers with an Arts degree teach a range of Arts subjects such as English and Social Science, while those with a Science degree teach Science subjects. In most private schools, though, a teacher with a degree in English/English language is assigned to teach English irrespective of the grade level.

There are few opportunities available for initial teacher training designed specifically for aspiring teachers of English or for newly recruited teachers of English. Whatever training they receive is in the form of limited input on teaching English as part of courses or training programmes meant for all teachers teaching at the primary level. Additionally, evaluations lack a focus on the extent to which pre-service courses sufficiently prepare teachers of English to work in basic education. It is possible, though, that the general observation that ‘there is little connection on the ground between ... programmes for teacher education with programmes for school education’ (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2015:02) applies to the overly theoretical and academic orientation of pre-service work for English teachers too.

6.7.3 Teachers’ English language levels

The English proficiency of teachers is not systematically assessed at the state or the national level, whether at entry into the profession or in-service, and hence it is difficult to present general estimates of teachers’ proficiency. Some isolated studies indicate teachers’ English levels to be much lower than those in textbooks and curricula. Three needs analysis surveys by the British Council in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar found that less than ten per cent of the surveyed teachers were at the preferred B2 level of CEFR (British Council, 2013, 2016; Hayes and Raman, 2013).

According to a press report (The Indian Express, 2014) a further British Council analysis in Maharashtra also found that only 39 per cent of teachers at secondary level had the required level of B1 proficiency or above in combined reading, grammar and vocabulary score and only 47 per cent had it in speaking. Also in Maharashtra, estimates based on the observation of teachers in classrooms (rather than tests) have suggested that most teachers were below B1 (Borg, 2018, 2019).

NCERT’s Position Paper of the National Focus Group on Teaching of English (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006b) recognises the importance of English teachers’ proficiency in the language, and in recent years some measures have been taken to address this issue (and that of subject-specific pedagogy training for teachers of English) at pre-service level, particularly through revisions to the Diploma in Elementary Education (DEEd) programme.

The compulsory admission examination for the DEEd programme, known as the Pre-entry Test (PET), now includes a component on ‘General English’. Moreover, some additional weight has been given to English language throughout the DEEd syllabus in terms of both proficiency and pedagogy. For example, in the syllabus developed by SCERT Assam (Government of Assam/UNICEF, 2018), eight credits of the 80-credit course have been devoted to proficiency development and pedagogy of English. There is one course each on Proficiency in English in the first and second semester, while in the third semester there is a course on the Pedagogy of English. In the fourth semester there is an optional pedagogy course on the teaching of English (meant for upper primary teachers of English).

The curriculum-syllabus for the DEEd programme (Government of Assam/UNICEF, 2018:03) justifies the inclusion of courses in English pedagogy in the syllabus document as follows:

Earlier, the study of English was introduced in upper primary classes in most of the states, but with the increasing use and importance of English its study now starts from Class I itself. Every teacher in primary classes is required to teach two or three languages; therefore,

courses in the pedagogy of English and regional language have been assigned an important place in the curriculum of the Elementary Teacher Education Programme.

However, the extent to which the proficiency courses in the DEEd programme address the English proficiency needs of teachers requires further investigation. For example, trainees are mostly assessed on reading and writing, while listening and speaking are not given much importance. Hence, it is likely that a gap remains between the stated aims of the proficiency development courses on the programme and the learning that actually takes place.

6.7.4 Postgraduate programmes for English teachers

Higher education programmes in English language teaching are available, though not specifically aimed at teachers at the primary level. For example, the two-year MA in English Language and English Language Teaching at Gauhati University provides, as stated on its website 'professional training to pre-service teachers' of English'. In the fourth semester, it offers a course on practice teaching where student teachers are trained to teach English, particularly at primary level, by engaging in lesson planning and completing a practicum at a local school. Students with any subject background can join the programme after passing an entrance test measuring their English language proficiency. In Assam, some institutions list an MA in English language and/or English language teaching as a desirable qualification for recruiting teachers of English.

Another university offering courses for enhancing English-teaching skills is the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad. It offers a Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of English (for those with an MA in English or an allied subject) and a Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English (for those who have completed the PGCTE), providing both theoretical and practical knowledge about the teaching of English. Some students who obtain these higher qualifications in English also go on to teach in basic education, though no clear estimates are available on the numbers of such teachers.

6.7.5 Changes under the new National Education Policy

The newly launched National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has signalled changes in pre-service education. National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) have been designed to monitor the design of pre-service teacher education programmes and to help teachers raise professional standards. Recently, the Ministry of Education announced a four-year integrated teacher education programme (ITEP), a dual-major bachelor's degree (an undergraduate degree and teacher education degree) to be offered in around 50 selected multidisciplinary institutions from 2022–3

in pilot mode. This announcement has been made following a mandate of the NEP 2020 that teachers for all school levels (from foundational to secondary stage as per the new structure proposed by NEP 2020) will be engaged only through ITEP from 2030 onwards. This programme will have the dual purpose of preparing aspiring teachers for school education and for higher studies by developing disciplinary knowledge. This seems to be an attempt to address the problem that 'initial training of primary teachers continues to suffer from isolation, low profile and poor visibility in view of it being a non-degree programme' (National Council for Teacher Education 2009:08). While these reforms are not specific to English, they will of course affect all pre-service programmes including those that prospective teachers of English follow.

6.8 Continuing professional development

As noted in Section 2, India does not have a national policy regarding the professional development of teachers generally, which means that CPD provision and practice will vary significantly across states. Examples of government and non-government CPD are discussed below. More broadly, while limited research into the attitudes to CPD of teachers of English in India exists, a study by the British Council in South Asia (British Council, 2015) did find that in India teachers were very interested in improving their English skills, particularly their speaking. They also wanted to improve their knowledge of teaching and learning materials, using technology for teaching and lesson planning. More systematic and up-to-date research, though, is required to better understand the CPD needs of Indian teachers of English. Such research, of course, is of little value unless the identified needs are then used to inform CPD provision in the country.

6.8.1 Government CPD

Regarding in-service training for basic education teachers of English provided by state or district educational authorities, our desk work yielded limited information. For example, NCERT's 2020 report (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2020) does not refer to any in-service development for teachers of English while the SCERT Delhi website (Government of India, 2021b) has a section on 'In-service Education and Training' but does not include information about any recent activity. A recent book on the teaching of English in India (Jayendran, Ramanathan and Nagpal, 2021) also makes no reference at all to in-service development. Through personal contacts and key informant interviews, though, we were able to obtain some insight into the contemporary situation regarding CPD for teachers of English across the country.

One initial point to make is that the volume of such activity has decreased in the last five years or so, largely due to reductions in the amount of central funding available. Thus, for example, until around

2015, there were over 30 English Language Training Institutes (ELTIs) around the country that received central funding. Since then, these have either closed or merged with the state government. And, to take a specific example highlighted by one of the key informants, until 2016 there existed in Telangana a Districts Centre in-service scheme for teachers of English. This was implemented by the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) and initially focused on secondary school teachers (Grades 8–12) although towards the end of the scheme primary teachers were also involved. The scheme consisted of an initial ten-day orientation followed by (for those teachers interested in continuing to study) a three-month training programme at the university. Teachers completing the full programme would then cascade the training to other teachers in their local districts. This has, though, been discontinued. Currently, EFLU continues to provide in-service courses on demand across states, though these are developed responsively rather than as part of any systematic programme.

Government-funded CPD also takes the form of very short and often specific meetings organised by DIETs (within which one officer is typically responsible for English). These are largely informational in nature; for example, teachers might receive updates on policies, the textbook, curriculum or assessment procedures (such training sessions are referred to as ‘content-enrichment programmes’). The extent to which such events qualify as CPD is arguable, but they do fulfil the purpose of ensuring teachers are up to date with developments in the teaching of English in their state. DIETs are responsible for the in-service training of English teachers, particularly in states not serviced by Regional Institutes of English (RIEs), which are discussed below. At local levels, Resource Persons placed at Block Resource Centres and Cluster Resource Centres conduct short training programmes for teachers and provide on-site support to teachers through monitoring, classroom observations and development of resource materials. Usually, such resource persons are trained by DIETs and then are supposed to cascade training to other teachers. However, a practising teacher, who was another informant in this project, expressed dissatisfaction with the general support received from such resource persons and believed that external resource persons with more expertise on language pedagogy would have been helpful.

Two RIEs also provide CPD for teachers of English. These are the Regional Institute of English for South India (RIESI, which covers six states in the south of India) and the Regional Institute for English in Chandigarh (which caters for a smaller number of states in the north). Both RIEs offer in-service courses for teachers of English in primary and secondary schools, though their models differ. The RIESI provides (among other distance programmes) an intensive

30-day residential certificate course (moved online recently due to Covid-19), while the RIE in Chandigarh, which also previously adopted an intensive short-course model, has since 2016–7 moved to a more distributed approach; teachers attend training several times in shorter blocks. More detailed information about the work of the RIEs is available on their websites (<http://riesielt.org/>; <http://www.rieni.org/>). State school teachers of English do not receive formal recognition for completing in-service courses at RIEs, although achieving a high grade can allow them to apply for a position at their DIET and offers the possibility of working as a Master Trainer on state- or district-level training programmes.

It is not clear how the CPD work of the RIEs is evaluated, but closer study of the in-service programmes they offer would certainly be of value in developing existing provision for in-service teachers of English in India. More generally, further research is needed into the design, delivery and impact of CPD in the country (see, Meganathan, 2019, for a summary of various studies in India that have examined aspects of professional development for teachers of English).

6.8.2 Non-government CPD

Different non-governmental organisations support the CPD of teachers of English in India and examples are discussed in this section.

The British Council

The British Council has worked in partnership with State Education departments across several Indian states, with over 20 projects for primary and secondary teachers listed on the British Council India website (British Council India, 2021a). These projects have been delivered using different models, including cascade training (for example, in the Andhra Pradesh Developing English Language Teaching project) and, more recently, teacher communities of practice (in person and online), such as in the Tejas project in Maharashtra (British Council India, 2021b and Borg, Lightfoot and Gholkar 2020). Mentoring is another model of CPD that has been used, such as on the ELISS project. Generally, projects have focused on improving teachers’ confidence in their own English and developing their classroom skills for teaching English. Several projects have also included a capacity-building element through which experienced teachers have had opportunities to develop competences as teacher educators. Most projects seem to have been evaluated, but while impact summaries are included on the British Council India website, evaluation reports do not seem to be publicly available (see, however, a recent external evaluation of the British Council’s work in Maharashtra – Ecctis, 2021). In the case of Tejas, a publication called *Stories of Change* (British Council, 2020) is available, which documents, from the perspective of diverse stakeholders, the impact that Tejas has had. Many

thousands of teachers of English have participated in CPD programmes delivered by the British Council in partnership with State Education authorities in India, with support from other UK organisations and consultants.

More recent CPD projects delivered by the British Council illustrate the role that social media can play in facilitating continued interaction and support for virtual teacher communities. For example, in the mentoring phase of the ELISS project, WhatsApp groups were created both for mentors and for each individual mentor and the group of teachers they supported. An analysis of the mentor groups found that these fulfilled a range of social and professional functions (Parnham, Gholkar and Borg, 2018). Given the widespread use of WhatsApp in India (487 million users according to Statista, 2021) and its relatively modest requirements in terms of devices, data and bandwidth, it is clearly a social media platform with potential for supporting CPD among ELT practitioners in India.

TESS-India

TESS-India (Teacher Education through School-based Support in India – <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/index.php?categoryid=45>) is another example of non-government support for teachers of English. This was a partnership involving several organisations working with the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development to produce Open Education Resources to improve the classroom practices of primary school teachers in India. For primary English, the project produced modules on several topics including classroom routines, letters and sounds of English, early writing, storytelling and using the textbook creatively. The modules have also been made available in several regional languages. However, insight into the use and impact of such resources on what happens in English lessons in primary schools in India is lacking.

Teacher clubs

Another form of professional development available to teachers of English in India (particularly in Maharashtra) is the Teacher Club model (Padwad and Dixit, 2015; Padwad and Parnham, 2019). This is a form of teacher community of practice defined by:

... small, close-knit groups of teachers, characterised by friendliness, informality, an absence of hierarchy and a mixture of amateur and professional interests. They are essentially voluntary groups of teachers coming together to help each other address their concerns and improve themselves as teachers. (Padwad and Parnham, 2019:556).

Teachers are responsible for managing teacher clubs and deciding what group discussions will focus on. According to Padwad and Parnham, teacher clubs provide for individualised and personalised CPD and

enhance teachers' sense of autonomy. However, sustainability is one key challenge for teacher clubs, particularly because they are not officially recognised by the educational authorities. The informal nature of these CPD groups makes them hard to study in any systematic way; according to one of the authors here and who has been involved with English Teacher Clubs for many years, these groups continue to exist, though in Maharashtra where they originated, only about three or four of the original 20 groups remain active. There is, though, anecdotal evidence that Covid-19 has prompted the growth of a number of informal teacher development groups online.

Teacher associations

English teacher associations (ETAs) are another source of professional development. National ETAs such as AINET, ELTAI and FORTELL offer a range of CPD channels including conferences, courses, action research projects and publications. AINET, for example, supports teachers to develop as trainers, researchers, conference presenters and materials producers, in addition to capacity building in pedagogy and educational technology, through various initiatives. There are also numerous local, regional and university-based ETAs offering opportunities for CPD. However, there is hardly any systematically compiled data on the number, reach or impact of ETAs.

6.8.3 Teacher perspectives

Two of our teacher informants reflected on their experiences of CPD in India. One teacher who works in a government school felt that the pedagogical support she received from the national project (SSA) was very insufficient and the experts in the short-term training provided were not resourceful. She wanted more support in terms of techniques of teaching English to learners with low socio-economic backgrounds in a rich multilingual context. The second key informant worked in a private school, which sometimes organises training programmes for their own teachers by inviting external experts as resource persons. The teacher felt that even though the training they receive often recommends learner-centred pedagogies, parents and guardians are seen to prefer traditional methods such as teachers dictating notes that students copy and school authorities succumb to such pressures. This means that teachers are not able to use innovative ideas in their teaching. Two messages from these informants' experiences relate to (a) the importance of practical CPD content delivered by informed teacher educators, and (b) the need for post-training support that allows teachers to use in their classroom new skills and strategies they obtain through CPD.

7 Opportunities, challenges and future trends

One theme that has recurred throughout this analysis is *diversity*; the English education landscape in India is vast, multi-faceted and almost infinitely varied in a manner that largely defies, other than at the level of national policy, monolithic characterisation. The autonomy that states (and, particularly in the private sector, even schools) have in defining key features of English language education, together with the often-tenuous links that seem to exist between formal policy and actual practice in teaching, learning and assessment, are two factors that contribute to the sense that English education in India is defined by multiple forms of provision.

Tension is another word that captures many of the forces that shape the current English education landscape in the country. National policies compete with those at state level; well-intentioned mandates (such as Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) are at odds with the competences teachers possess; textbooks often assume levels of English that are beyond those learners (and probably, in many cases, teachers) have; and educational technology is promoted while teachers and learners lack the equipment and digital skills required to benefit from it.

Much excellent work has taken place, through several national and state-wide projects designed to support teachers of English in various ways and which have been delivered through local educational authorities and bodies, often in partnership with external partners. However, there is little sense of co-ordination and of a framework within which this body of activity creates a coherent whole. This is, perhaps, not wholly surprising given the scale and complexity of India's educational system. The lack of state-level or national policies (such as for teacher professional development) may at times be blamed for this situation, but even where policy and related curricula frameworks do exist (such as for pre-service teacher education or primary education curricula), there is limited evidence that these have assured quality in teaching, learning, assessment and teacher preparation. This suggests, then, that the formulation of policy is not the fundamental problem here and that establishing new policies will not in itself resolve many of the challenges we have highlighted. Thus, for example, while NEP 2020 has mandated that pre-service teacher education move towards a new four-year integrated model, it cannot be assumed that re-designing programmes to meet the new requirements will automatically improve the quality of graduates and of the subsequent teaching they provide. This is perhaps one of the conceptual challenges that needs to be addressed at higher levels of the system; the mistaken belief that new policy will automatically lead to changes in entrenched ideas and practices.

On a practical level, based on our analysis, there are several key themes in English education in India that provide opportunities for further inquiry, deeper understanding and evidence-based interventions. The point about *understanding* is key here because, despite large volumes of activity in English in basic education in India, evidence of its impact remains scarce. Without such insight it is difficult to isolate particular barriers to quality and to suggest appropriate interventions. The following issues merit particular attention:

1. **Curricula for English:** In government schools, curricular decisions are made at state level, based on a national framework, but these amount largely to decisions about which textbooks to use or, where these are produced locally, how to design textbooks. It is commonly (but largely anecdotally) noted, though, that the level of English in the textbooks used in many basic education classrooms is too high for their users. This issue needs to be investigated more closely and if corroborating evidence is found, then a closer analysis of the factors leading to this discrepancy between teacher and learner competence and curricular expectations should be undertaken. Learners who work with curricula that are well beyond their competence will inevitably become demotivated; teachers whose levels are not sufficiently high will also inevitably prioritise pedagogical strategies (such as translation-based text analysis) that fail to optimise the learning of English.
2. **The private sector:** Around 50 per cent of primary school students in India attend private schools. This is a substantial component of India's educational provision, but one that is both less regulated (for example, in terms of textbooks, teacher recruitment and the use of EMI) and sometimes overlooked (for example, government-mandated CPD provision is often not extended to these teachers). There is clearly a need to better understand the private sector and how English education unfolds there; this can highlight effective policy and practice that might be transferrable to government schools, as well as identify limitations in how English is taught and learned in the private sector that need to be addressed. Partnerships between private and government schools also have much potential for supporting English education nationally.

3. **Pre-service teacher education:** Changes promoted by NEP 2020 will be phased in over the next few years, but it is important for this work to be based on an understanding of the features of current initial teacher education programmes that limit their effectiveness. While extending the length of pre-service teacher education will create space for improved teacher learning, the simple allocation of more time will not necessarily generate benefits. It is important to ensure that prospective teachers experience high-quality learning and this must be based on well-designed and delivered curricula, with space for the development of practical teaching skills and clear connections with the realities of schools and classrooms (as opposed to theoretical programmes taught by lecturers with limited knowledge of what classrooms are like). The development of graduates' English language skills also needs to be addressed much more substantially, as the quality of English education is seriously compromised if teachers themselves only have basic English skills. There also needs to be much more emphasis on the development of teacher educator competences, informed, for example, by frameworks such as that developed by the British Council (2022).
4. **Continuing professional development:** There are no national or state-level CPD frameworks and thus provision for teachers generally is uneven and sporadic across the country. Existing provision (for example, by RIEs, DIETs and bodies similar in function to the Regional Academic Authority in Maharashtra) is also not systematically evaluated and reviewed. There are clear opportunities here, therefore, for research that maps current provision at state level, examines its rationale, strengths, limitations and impacts, and works towards understandings of good practice in CPD for primary school teachers of English in India. NEP 2020 advocates a move away from top-down cascade models of in-service training; this is a significant shift and CPD providers at state and district level will benefit from opportunities to develop their understanding of what this means in practice for the design and delivery of CPD. Some of the projects implemented by, for example, the British Council that have used community of practice models may be instructive in this regard. Displacing persistent notions among teachers that CPD equates to formal training courses will be an important part of the changes NEP 2020 is seeking to bring about.
5. **Teacher educator development:** Those who facilitate CPD for teachers of English will also benefit significantly from opportunities to enhance their competences as teacher educators; they are often academically well qualified and hold postgraduate qualifications in ELT, but may not have had opportunities to develop the kinds of competences specific to teacher educators. Given the increase in online CPD, trainers would also benefit from opportunities to develop their skills as online teacher educators.
6. **Teacher competence:** Insufficient information is available about what teachers of English do in basic education classrooms and of the skills and knowledge they need further support with. The range of competences (including as skilled users of English) effective teachers of English require is broad, yet the limited focus on teaching English many basic education teachers will have experienced in their pre-service teacher education most likely means there are significant gaps in how effectively they are able to support the learning of English. For example, the multilingual nature of Indian classrooms means that teachers will benefit from competences that allow them to exploit multiple languages effectively without detriment to any of them. Assessment is another important competence basic education teachers need yet little is known about the processes through which English is assessed in basic education. Teachers, though, are expected to play a central role in the process and to use continuous and formative assessment. The extent to which this occurs, the exact assessment strategies teachers use and the assessment literacy they possess as teachers are all issues where more evidence is required and where interventions will be of value. General observations about the largely didactic nature of teaching in India (UNESCO, 2021) will apply equally to English, and while the limitations of pre-service programmes partly explain this, deeper analyses of the factors responsible for the continued widespread use of teacher-centred pedagogies are needed.
7. **Societal pressures:** Insights provided by our key informant teachers suggest that schools come under external pressure, particularly from parents or guardians, to persist with conventional modes of instruction that focus on rote learning, and that this influences what happens in classrooms. This is an interesting issue to examine in the context of broader analyses of the factors that shape the pedagogical choices of basic education teachers of English. If, for example, teachers must follow

directives issued by headteachers who are in turn influenced by parents, an important dimension of teacher professionalism is being eroded. This may have implications for the kinds of professional support needed by school leaders so they can educate guardians, protect teachers and enable them to improve classroom practices.

8. **Educational technology:** There has been a very visible drive by the government of India to promote wider use of technology in education, including online, in response to Covid-19. Various NGOs have also partnered with educational authorities to support these efforts. Questions remain, though, about the extent to which teachers and learners have access to the skills, confidence, equipment and software they need to make effective use of technology to support English language education, and this merits closer study. There is evidence, too (Borg, 2022), that teacher education departments in India were largely unprepared to move online during the pandemic and it is thus also important to explore teacher educators' needs regarding online delivery and to establish appropriate support mechanisms. Partnerships with NGOs and the private sector are likely to be an important part of efforts to support the wider and more effective use of educational technology by teachers of English and English language teacher educators.
9. **English as medium of instruction:** Here, too, the impression that emerges from this review is one of substantially varied and insufficiently co-ordinated practice regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction in basic education. In the private sector especially (see Erling et al., 2016), EMI is often adopted for the prestige it is seen to bestow on schools (i.e. EMI is used as an indicator of quality). This assumption is often unquestioned and influences the choices and expectations of parents. The development of strategies that make informed advice available to parents and guardians regarding the role of English in the education of primary school children in India is thus another measure that can be recommended here.
10. **Teacher evaluation:** The 2020 NEP has stimulated the development of new professional standards for teachers. Again, while the availability of such standards is positive, their formulation must be viewed as an initial and relatively unproblematic step in reforming teacher evaluation practices across the country. In addition to ongoing discussions of what these generic standards mean specifically for teachers of English, there is much work to be done to bring about change in established ideas about what good teachers know and can do, about the purposes and processes of

teacher evaluation, and of the role teachers can play in the process. Unless these issues are systematically addressed by educational authorities, it is unlikely that policy will lead to any practical change.

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This report provides an overview of how English language teaching, learning and assessment are currently situated within school-level education in India. The report provides up-to-date contextual information, exploring policies and practices. The authors draw on policy documentation, research studies and a small number of interviews and focus groups to provide an overall picture of the current scenario. They provide commentary on the status of English within the curriculum, classroom practices, how teachers are supported to develop their skills and knowledge and the opportunities, challenges and future trends that the authors have extrapolated from their research.

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