



# **AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF THE INTEGRATED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME (ITEP) AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS: A STUDY ON TEACHER EDUCATION REFORM**

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## **Abstract**

*The Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) aims to reform teacher education in India by integrating multidisciplinary knowledge into pre-service teacher training. Despite its significance, awareness and perception of ITEP among senior secondary students remain limited. This study explores these factors among students in Sitamarhi district, Bihar, focusing on differences based on location (rural/urban), gender (male/female), school type (government/private), and academic stream (science/arts/commerce). A descriptive survey research design was employed, collecting data through questionnaires from a sample of senior secondary students. Findings reveal that urban students, especially those in government-funded schools, had higher awareness compared to their rural counterparts and those in private-funded schools. Female students exhibited a more positive perception of teaching as a career. The study underscores the need for targeted awareness campaigns, enhanced career counseling services, and policy interventions to promote ITEP. These findings aim to inform policy decisions and encourage greater participation in ITEP, enhancing its accessibility and effectiveness in shaping the future of teacher education in India.*

**Keywords:** Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), Awareness, Perception, Senior Secondary Students, Teacher Education, Educational Reform,

## **INTRODUCTION**

Teacher education is a fundamental pillar for ensuring quality education and achieving long-term educational reform. In India, the significance of transforming teacher education has gained momentum with the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which proposes a shift from the fragmented structure of teacher training towards a more integrated and professional approach. One of its landmark initiatives is the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)—a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate program designed to equip future teachers with both subject knowledge and pedagogical competence from the beginning of their academic journey (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Unlike the conventional two-step path of a Bachelor's degree followed by a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), ITEP seeks to streamline the teacher preparation process through a holistic curriculum. The goal is to nurture reflective, skilled, and motivated educators who can meet the evolving needs of 21st-century learners and classrooms. However, the success of such a reform hinges significantly on the awareness and acceptance of the program among its prospective applicants—senior secondary students.

Previous studies suggest that career decisions among adolescents are shaped by multiple interrelated factors such as parental expectations, societal norms, peer influence, availability of information, and perceived career prospects (Ray et al., 2020). Without targeted awareness initiatives, even well-designed programs like ITEP may suffer from low enrollment, especially in under-resourced regions where access to career counseling is limited.

This issue is particularly relevant in states like Bihar, where the teacher-pupil ratio is below national standards and educational inequities persist. Sitamarhi district, classified under the Aspirational Districts Programme by NITI Aayog, reflects these challenges—characterized by a shortage of trained teachers, low academic achievement, and poor dissemination of information about new educational policies (NITI Aayog, 2021). In such contexts, awareness about career opportunities like ITEP remains confined mostly to urban and privileged groups.



Moreover, gender continues to play a critical role in career preferences in India. Research indicates that many female students perceive teaching as a desirable profession due to its compatibility with societal expectations and better work-life balance (Bhattacharya, 2021). However, these perceptions often operate within the boundaries of traditional gender roles, which could limit broader, merit-based participation in teaching careers.

Motivational factors influencing the decision to pursue teaching also vary. According to Sardana, Verma, and Singhanian (2021), students are attracted to teaching based on factors such as social contribution, personal interest, job security, and perceived teaching ability. Yet, these motivations can only translate into action when students are aware of programs like ITEP and can assess their value in comparison to other career options.

Given this backdrop, the current study seeks to examine the awareness and perception of ITEP among senior secondary students in Sitamarhi district, Bihar. The study aims to explore how variables such as school type (government vs. private), location (urban vs. rural), gender, and academic stream (science, arts, commerce) influence students' understanding and acceptance of ITEP as a career pathway. Insights drawn from this research can inform policy efforts, outreach campaigns, and school-level career guidance strategies to ensure that future teacher education reforms are inclusive, equitable, and well-communicated.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marked a paradigm shift in India's education system by proposing a more integrated, multidisciplinary, and holistic approach to teacher education. One of its flagship initiatives is the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP), a four-year degree that seeks to merge disciplinary knowledge with pedagogical training from the outset (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), in response to the NEP, launched ITEP in 57 institutions across the country from the academic session 2023–2024 to restructure and strengthen the teacher preparation pipeline (National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE], 2023).

Previous studies have established that teacher education in India has long been criticized for its fragmented nature, lack of integration between theory and practice, and its disconnect from classroom realities (Batra, 2005; Kumar & Agrawal, 2021). The ITEP aims to address these challenges by incorporating subject expertise, pedagogy, and internships into a single, continuous framework, aligning with successful international models such as those in Finland and Singapore (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Totto et al., 2018).

Despite its ambitious design, the effectiveness of ITEP depends largely on the level of awareness and perception among prospective teacher candidates. Senior secondary students, especially those in rural or educationally backward regions, are key stakeholders whose choices will determine the program's reach and sustainability. Research shows that a lack of awareness about new education policies can hinder students' ability to make informed career choices (Desai & Bhattacharya, 2021). Moreover, career choices are strongly influenced by parental expectations, socioeconomic background, school environment, and access to career counseling (Khanna & Kaur, 2019; Nanda, 2020).

Studies focusing on awareness of NEP 2020 and ITEP are still emerging. However, surveys conducted by Sharma and Kaul (2023) in Haryana indicate that only a limited proportion of Class 12 students had heard of ITEP, and even fewer understood its structure and benefits. Awareness was significantly higher in government schools affiliated with CBSE or state boards that had formally issued circulars on ITEP implementation. In contrast, private unaided schools, particularly in rural areas, lagged in dissemination and counseling efforts (Thomas et al., 2023).

Gender and academic stream have also been found to influence students' perceptions of teaching as a career. Female students, especially in rural contexts, show a greater inclination toward teaching due to its perceived job security, social respectability, and compatibility with domestic responsibilities (Rani, 2019; Verma & Yadav, 2020). Arts stream students are more likely to consider teaching careers compared to those in Science and Commerce, who often aim for engineering, medicine, or business fields (Patel & Shah, 2021).

In the context of Bihar—a state marked by deep educational disparities and a chronic shortage of trained teachers—raising awareness of ITEP is particularly important. Sitamarhi district, categorized as an Aspirational District by NITI Aayog (2021), reflects such disparities, where rural students face systemic disadvantages in accessing career guidance, educational resources, and information on policy reforms. Research by Rao (2022) indicates that despite national-level reforms, district-level implementation remains inconsistent, leading to poor awareness among intended beneficiaries.

Furthermore, international evidence emphasizes the importance of early exposure to teaching pathways. Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that quality teacher education systems depend not only on curriculum design but also on students' motivation, perception of teaching as a viable career, and support structures guiding them from secondary school onward.

In summary, the literature underscores the need to examine senior secondary students' awareness and perception of ITEP, especially in marginalized and underrepresented districts like Sitamarhi. Existing studies reveal a gap in information dissemination and uneven access to guidance based on school type, gender, location, and stream.

Addressing these disparities is essential for the successful implementation of NEP 2020 and for fostering a competent and diverse teaching workforce.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the level of awareness among senior secondary students regarding the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)?
2. How do students perceive ITEP as a career pathway, and what factors influence their perception?

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the awareness level of senior secondary students about the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP).
2. To analyze students' perceptions of ITEP as a professional teacher education program.
3. To examine the differences in awareness and perception based on demographic factors such as locality, gender, school type, and academic stream.
4. To provide recommendations for improving the dissemination of information and accessibility of ITEP among senior secondary students.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to assess the awareness and perception of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) among senior secondary students in Sitamarhi district, Bihar. The methodology outlines research design, sample selection, data collection tools, and analysis procedures.

### Research Design

A descriptive survey approach was chosen to systematically analyze students' awareness and perception of ITEP. This method is appropriate for capturing quantitative data and comparing responses across different demographic variables.

### Population and Sample

The target population comprises senior secondary students (Classes 11 and 12) in Sitamarhi district of Bihar. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representation based on: Locality: Rural and Urban, Gender: Male and Female, School Type: Government-funded and Private-funded, Stream: Science, Arts, and Commerce

The total sample size is 100 students, distributed as follows:

Category	Number of Students (n = 100)
Location	Rural (50), Urban (50)
Gender	Male (50), Female (50)
School Type	Government (50), Private (50)
Stream	Science (34), Arts (33), Commerce (33)

Table 1. Details of the Sample distribution

### Research Tool

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure students' awareness and perception of ITEP. The questionnaire consists of three sections: First, Demographic Information – Including locality, gender, school type, and academic stream. Second, Awareness of ITEP – Multiple-choice and Yes/No questions assessing students' familiarity with ITEP, its objectives, and structure. Third, Perception of ITEP – 5-point Likert-scale items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) evaluating students' attitudes toward ITEP, interest in teacher education, and perceived advantages or barriers.

The questionnaire was reviewed by subject matter experts for content validity and pilot tested with 10 students to ensure clarity and reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Likert-scale items was **0.80**, indicating good internal consistency.

### Data Collection

The survey was conducted in selected government and private schools in Sitamarhi district. The questionnaire was administered in person, with prior permission obtained from school authorities. Students were given clear instructions and adequate time to complete the survey.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from senior secondary students were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Percentages and frequency distributions were used to summarize students' levels of awareness and perception regarding the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP).

## RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the collected data. The results are analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Awareness of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP)

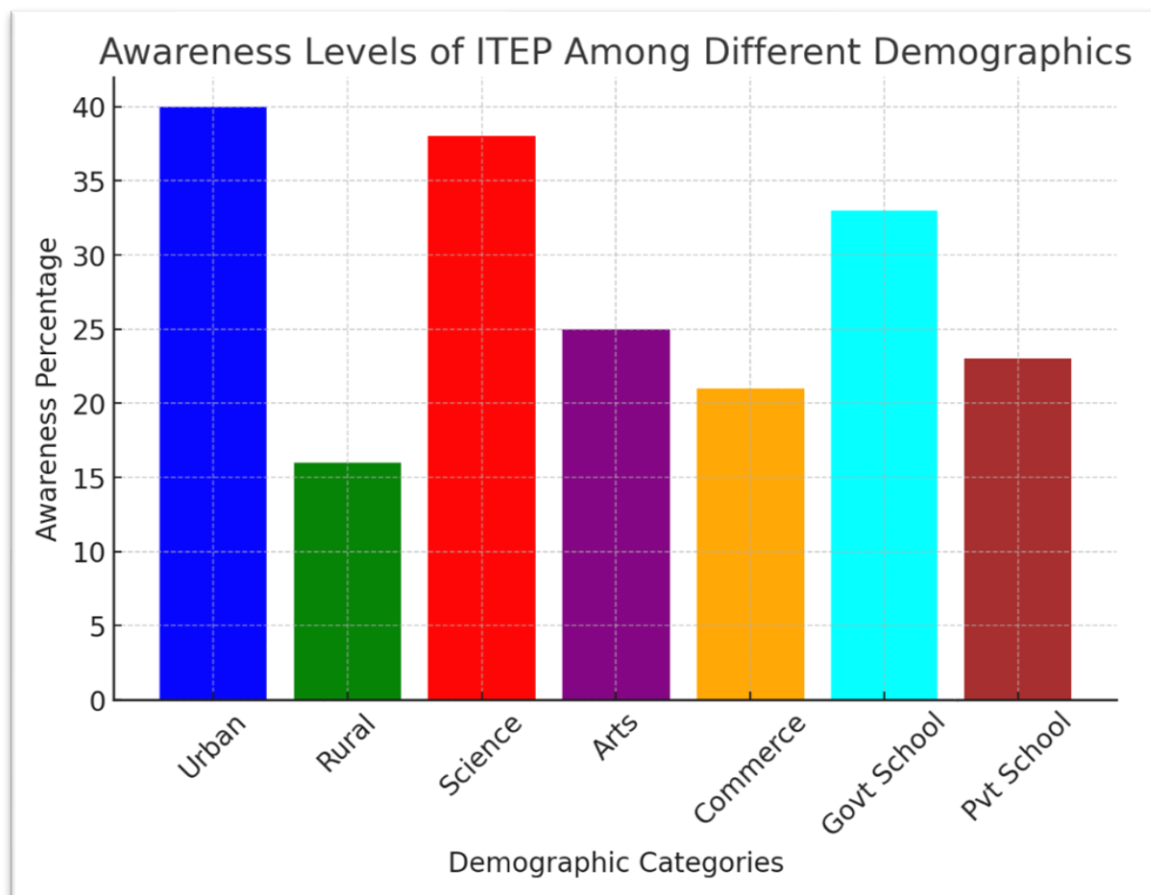
(Objective 1: To assess the awareness level of senior secondary students about the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP).)

The survey results indicate that awareness levels about ITEP among senior secondary students in Sitamarhi district are generally low. Out of the total 100 respondents:

- ✚ 28% of students were aware of ITEP, while 72% had never heard of it.
- ✚ Among those aware, 15% had only a basic understanding, while 13% had a moderate to good knowledge of the program.

When analyzing awareness by demographic categories:

- ✚ Urban students (40%) showed higher awareness compared to rural students (16%).
  - ✚ Science stream students (38%) were more aware than Arts (25%) and Commerce (21%) students.
  - ✚ Government school students (33%) had higher awareness compared to private school students (23%).
- These findings suggest that ITEP has not been widely promoted among senior secondary students, particularly in rural areas and non-science streams.



**Chart. 1.** A bar graph illustrating awareness levels among different student groups: Urban vs. Rural, Science vs. Arts vs. Commerce, Government vs. Private Schools

### Perception of ITEP as a Career Pathway

(Objective 2: To analyze students' perceptions of ITEP as a professional teacher education program.)

Students' perceptions were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The key findings are:

- ✚ 50% of students viewed teaching as a respected profession, but only 35% saw ITEP as a viable career option.
- ✚ 42% of students believed ITEP could provide a stable career, while 30% were unsure about its job prospects.
- ✚ Students from rural areas (27%) were less inclined towards ITEP compared to urban students (43%).
- ✚ Female students (46%) were more positive about ITEP than male students (29%).

These results indicate that while teaching is generally respected, there is hesitation about choosing ITEP due to a lack of clarity on job security and career growth.

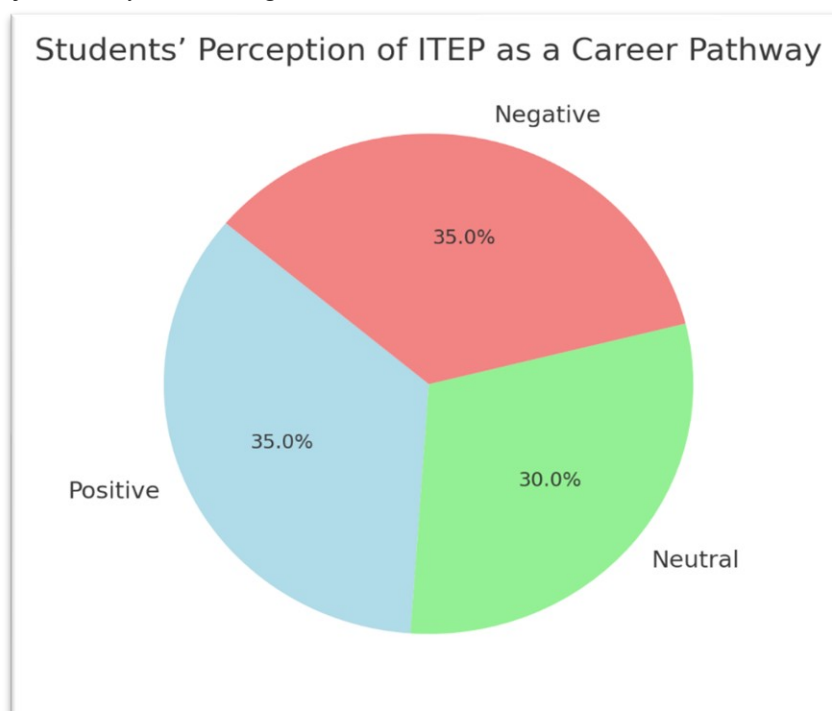


Chart. 2. A pie chart showing students' interest in ITEP, divided into positive, neutral, and negative responses.

### Differences in Awareness and Perception Based on Demographics

(Objective 3: To examine the differences in awareness and perception based on location, gender, school type, and academic stream.)

**Location (Rural vs. Urban) :** - Urban students demonstrated significantly higher awareness and positive perception of ITEP compared to rural students. This may be due to better access to career counseling and digital information sources in urban areas.

**Gender (Male vs. Female) :-** Female students showed greater interest and positive perception of ITEP. This aligns with previous studies that suggest teaching is often perceived as a suitable career for women due to job stability and work-life balance.

**School Type (Government vs. Private) :-** Students from government-funded schools had higher awareness (33%) than those in private-funded schools (23%). However, perception did not significantly differ between the two groups.

**Academic Stream (Science, Arts, Commerce) :-** Science stream students had the highest awareness of ITEP (38%), followed by Arts (25%) and Commerce (21%). However, perception towards choosing ITEP as a career was more positive among Arts students (40%) compared to science (32%) and Commerce (28%).

Variable	Awareness (%)	Positive Perception (%)
Urban	40%	43%
Rural	16%	27%
Male	30%	29%
Female	42%	46%
Government Schools	33%	36%
Private Schools	23%	34%
Science Stream	38%	32%
Arts Stream	25%	40%
Commerce Stream	21%	28%

Table 2: Comparison of Awareness and Perception by Demographic Factors



## DISCUSSION

The results of this study underscore a critical concern: the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) remains insufficiently recognized among senior secondary students in Sitamarhi district, Bihar—particularly those from rural backgrounds and non-science streams. This limited awareness presents a barrier to ITEP's potential as a transformative teacher education reform under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020).

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting how access to career guidance and structured information dissemination significantly influences students' knowledge and interest in new educational programs (Sharma & Kaul, 2023; Desai & Bhattacharya, 2021). In rural and aspirational districts, where access to digital resources and policy communication is limited, awareness gaps are more pronounced (Rao, 2022; Thomas et al., 2023).

Gender-based variations in perception were also observed, with female students displaying a more favorable attitude toward teaching as a profession. This observation aligns with earlier findings by Rani (2019) and Kumar and Joshi (2021), who noted that societal expectations and the perceived work-life balance of teaching make it a more appealing career option for female students, especially in conservative or rural settings.

Interestingly, while science stream students showed relatively higher awareness of ITEP, they were less inclined to pursue it compared to their counterparts in arts and commerce streams. This mirrors Verma and Mehta's (2022) conclusions, suggesting that science students often prioritize fields like engineering or medicine, which are seen as more lucrative or prestigious.

The disparity between urban and rural students in terms of both awareness and perception reinforces the importance of equitable access to information. Urban students benefit from better exposure to policy-level changes, academic counseling, and digital resources (Narayan & Sahu, 2021). In contrast, rural students, particularly those in government or under-resourced schools, often lack such support mechanisms (Pathak & Kumar, 2023).

These findings collectively suggest that while the structural and pedagogical reforms promised by ITEP are substantial, their success is contingent upon grassroots-level engagement with students. Without strategic efforts to build awareness and address misconceptions, ITEP risks remaining an underutilized initiative.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the awareness and perception of the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) among senior secondary students in Sitamarhi, Bihar—one of India's aspirational districts under the NITI Aayog initiative. The results indicate a low overall awareness of ITEP, with significant variations by academic stream, gender, school type, and geographical location.

Urban students, science stream learners, and those from government schools demonstrated higher awareness than their rural, private school, or non-science counterparts. However, awareness did not necessarily translate into favorable perception. Concerns about job security, limited information about career prospects, and societal stereotypes continued to influence students' hesitation toward opting for ITEP. Female students showed a comparatively positive inclination toward teaching, suggesting gendered patterns in career preferences.

These insights highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions—including career counseling, orientation sessions, and awareness campaigns—to promote ITEP effectively among students. Policy-level implementation must be complemented with localized strategies to ensure equitable outreach and participation. Future research should explore similar patterns in other aspirational districts and examine the role of teachers, parents, and school administrators in shaping students' understanding of new educational policies.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve awareness and perception of ITEP:

### ✚ Targeted Awareness Campaigns

Organize workshops, seminars, and awareness programs in schools to educate students about ITEP, particularly in rural areas and among non-science students and Utilize digital platforms and social media to disseminate information about ITEP to a broader student audience.

### ✚ Strengthening Career Counseling Services

Schools should integrate career counseling programs that provide guidance on ITEP, its benefits, and career prospects in the teaching profession and Involve educational experts and alumni from teacher education programs to share their experiences with students.

### ✚ Government and Institutional Initiatives

The government should actively promote ITEP through school outreach programs and awareness drives in collaboration with educational institutions and Incentives such as scholarships, stipends, or guaranteed employment opportunities should be introduced to encourage student participation in ITEP.



### **Enhancing Perception Through Policy Advocacy**

Clarify the career growth opportunities and job security aspects of ITEP through official channels to address students' concerns and Develop partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions to create a seamless transition for students interested in the program.

Implementing these recommendations can significantly improve awareness and perception of ITEP, ensuring that more students consider it as a viable career pathway and contribute to strengthening India's education system.

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