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THE NATIONAL MISSION FOR MENTORING: A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) is a key mechanism for the continuous professional support of school educators. The NMM is a product of the National Education Policy of 2020, which calls for a structured, state-wide professional support system for teachers and recognizes their centrality to the process of educational transformation. This paper evaluates the NMM as a continuous professional support system by examining the policy elements, framework, institutional architecture, digital infrastructure, and the framework's applicability in the Indian context. The study mainly used a qualitative policy analysis approach with secondary descriptive data available through official and publicly available sources. These sources included the UDISE+ 2024-2025 data, the NCTE NMM portal, NCERT/DIKSHA resources, as well as several publications by UNESCO. The NMM is a professional learning system that, for the first time, has the potential to link expert mentors with teachers and school leaders, as well as numerous digital systems and learning supports. The author argues that the framework has a number of challenges, including the quality of mentors, equitable access, digital readiness, support in local languages, monitoring, and feedback cycles. NMM has the potential to be a sustainable CPD model by integrating contextual mentoring and evidence-planning within school-level communities of practice alongside national standards.

Keywords: *National Mission for Mentoring, Continuous Professional Development, School Education, Teacher Mentoring, NEP 2020, NCTE, DIKSHA*

1. Introduction

Teacher quality has a profound impact on numerous factors pertaining to learning and classroom environments. Consequently, it is widely accepted as one of the most important school-level factors by education officials and policymakers. In India, teacher quality has gained considerable attention, as a result of the National Education Policy, 2020, due to the numerous competencies Indian teachers are expected to operationalize. These include, the integration of technology and pedagogy for inclusive education, the teaching of literacy and numeracy within a global framework, as well as the use of formative assessments to

aid holistic development. These cannot be achieved through a one-off training. Instead, they require continual reflective and situated professional development throughout a teacher's career. This gives NMM a formal policy role in connecting national priorities with professional learning practices at the level of teachers and schools.Mentoring supports teachers by guiding them on how to articulate ideas; work through problems; and offer and receive feedback and reflection regarding their work in the classroom. Unlike traditional training, mentoring is relational, dialogic, reflective, and practice-oriented. A training program typically conveys a body of knowledge to a number of trainees within a specific time frame. The size and diversity of the Indian school system makes this model quite ideal to allow continuous professional development to evolve from a one time occurrence to a sustained professional culture. This paper presents the NMM and its potential to provide a frame for continuous school-based professional development. The focus is on the policy landscape, mentoring infrastructure, the data-based justification, and the opportunities and challenges for implementation. This paper argues that the NMM could be a groundbreaking model for CPD if its framework is perceived as an interrelated system of mentors, mentees, school heads, professional frameworks, and relevant technology, and is assessed and monitored for quality and impact.

2. Research Objectives and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to evaluate the National Mission for Mentoring as a model for the continuous professional development of school educators. This study attempts to analyze the placement of the Mission within NEP 2020, the linkage of the Mission to the professional standards of teachers and digital learning, and the applicability of the Mission to the professional learning needs of teachers in diverse school settings.The study is based on four guiding questions. The first asks: what is the rationale behind the establishment of a national mentoring mission in Indian school education? The second asks: in what way does the NMM contribute to the notion of continuous professional development instead of one-off teacher training? The third asks: what is the evidence available regarding the scale and operational relevance of the Mission? Finally, the fourth asks: which of the implementation requirements would render NMM fair, efficient, and sustainable?

3. Methodology

This study applies a qualitative policy analysis complemented by descriptive secondary data. The analysis draws on NEP 2020, documentation of NMM, NCTE public mission information, the National Professional Standards for Teachers, NISHTHA, and the digital CPD ecosystem of DIKSHA. Descriptive secondary data are used to indicate the magnitude of the Indian school education system and to assess the operational status of NMM mentoring sessions.The two tables and two charts are derived from the most recent official and/or

credible public datasets. UDISE+ 2024-25 data are used to display the extent of schools, teachers, students, and the gender composition of teachers, in Table 1 and Chart 1. Emerging mentoring and the digital CPD ecosystem are depicted in Table 2 and Chart 2, based on the NCTE NMM dashboard and UNESCO's DIKSHA case study. The nature of this analysis is interpretive, not causal. Thus, the data strengthen the discussion of policy and practice, and are used to support the discussion of policy and practice, and are not used to advocate for a specific learning outcome.

4. Policy Context: NEP 2020, NCTE and the Need for Mentoring

Teacher development is central to the National Policy on Education 2020, which describes the necessary conditions for improving school education. Teachers are expected to complete 50 hours of professional development every year, and this is considered a shift from the policy demanding compliance to the policy encouraging professional learning throughout one's career. NISHTHA and DIKSHA contribute to this shift by providing online modules and digital resources, while the NMM framework provides mentoring. NCTE's NMM framework situates mentoring in a profession culture of collaboration. The mission is to have a large community of excellent practitioners for the purpose of informing and guiding school practitioners. The National Professional Standards for Teachers increase the demand for the use of NMM. The NPST describes quality of teaching and levels of professional knowledge and classroom practices, including teaching ethics and growth, at different stages of a teacher's career. NMM could be a means to realize the standards. Where professional standards are referenced, mentoring could become a more structured, clear, and developmental process as opposed to informal advice giving. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 also serves as an impetus for more mentoring.

5. Conceptualizing NMM as a CPD Framework

Continuing professional development (CPD) requires sustainability, collaboration, integration with practice, and feedback. As a result, a mentoring-based CPD model comprises four key phases. The first is role clarification, which is where teachers identify gaps in their own professional skills, such as teaching practice and theories, subject and learner support, the use of teaching technology, and educational leadership, to name a few. The second is supported participation, which involves the mentor enhancing the teacher's learning through discussions, provision of materials, modeling, or engagement in critical reflection. The process is then followed by the teacher applying the new learning to their instructional practice. The final phase is reflective analysis, where both the mentor and the teacher determine the outcomes of the support, the challenges that were experienced in the process, and possible ways to enhance the support. NMM has the potential to fully integrate the model across the system because the combination of a national education

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policy, a digital learning system, and a mentoring expertise pool. In a federal system, the model is particularly important because different states can work with different teaching and learning contexts while meeting the national education objectives. The professional community built by mentoring diminishes isolation. Mentoring utilizes the expertise of not just teachers, but also school leaders, teacher educators, and subject specialists. Inclusion of these stakeholders helps build a profession that emphasizes knowledge, reflective practice, and teamwork.

6. Dataset 1: Scale of the School Education System and Mentoring Need

There are a variety of reasons that the first dataset indicates the need for a national mentoring framework. The size and scale of the schools, the teachers, and the students in the Indian school system pose a challenge for a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system that relies solely on scheduled workshops. The NMM framework calls for a combination of online learning, mentor crowds, group and individual mentoring, and professional learning communities within schools.

Table 1: Scale Indicators Relevant to NMM Implementation in India, 2024-25

Indicator	Latest reported value	Converted value for analysis	Relevance for NMM
Schools covered under UDISE+	14.71 lakh schools	1,471,000 schools	Large institutional base for mentoring outreach
School teachers	1.01 crore teachers	10,122,420 teachers (approx.)	Potential mentee base for CPD and mentoring
Male teachers	46.41 lakh	4,641,000 teachers	Gender-disaggregated planning for mentor representation
Female teachers	54.82 lakh	5,482,000 teachers	Strong female teacher base for leadership and mentoring
Students enrolled	24.69 crore students	246,932,680 students (approx.)	Indirect beneficiaries of improved teacher capability

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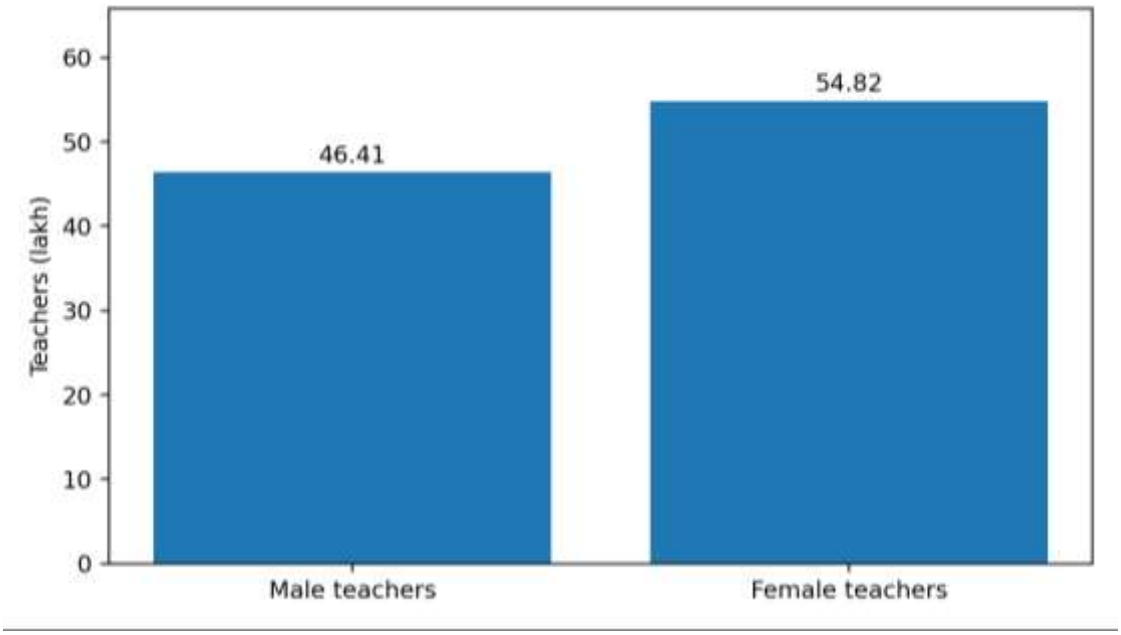
Source: UDISE+ 2024-25 dashboard/report data released by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education. Values are rounded for presentation.

Interpretation of Table 1: The table illustrates that the NMMs potential reach is huge. With teacher development in the school system reaching more than one crore, almost 24.69 crore students could benefit indirectly as a result of this development. Looking at the gender distribution, teacher mentorship design might consider representation, security, leadership, and flexible engagement for both male and female teachers and students. Also, a lot of schools show that the mission cannot depend on only centralised workshops. Thus, it calls for a decentralised, technology-enabled and school-connected approach to reach teachers in different geographical and institutional contexts.

Chart 1: Gender Composition of School Teachers in India, 2024-25



Source: UDISE+ 2024-25 dashboard/report data. Values are presented in lakh teachers.

Interpretation of Chart 1: The chart shows that female teachers comprise a slightly greater proportion of the total teaching population, which has serious implications for the NMM. The mentoring pool must comprise a sufficient proportion of women, while addressing women's issues, including mobility, session timing, digital access, avenues to leadership, and the provision of safe professional spaces. The chart also shows that men and women teachers represent large populations, so mentoring must be broad, scalable and flexible, as opposed to being focused on an elite or a small number of participants.

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7. Dataset 2: NMM Sessions and Digital CPD Infrastructure

The second dataset addresses the NMM's new operational base and the broader digital CPD context. NMM session data indicate that the mission uses group and one-on-one mentoring formats. DIKSHA data indicate the range of digital learning infrastructures available to support the professional development of teachers through courses, content, and multiple languages. In combination, these data suggest that India is building both relational and digital models of continuous professional development.

Table 2: NMM and DIKSHA Indicators Relevant to Continuous Professional Development

Platform / programme	Indicator	Latest available value	CPD significance
NMM	Completed mentoring sessions	1,426	Shows active use of mentoring sessions
NMM	Completed group sessions	1,346	Supports scalable peer learning
NMM	Completed individual sessions	80	Supports personalised professional guidance
NMM	Upcoming sessions	38	Indicates continuing calendar-based engagement
DIKSHA	Courses available	19,698+	Provides structured digital CPD content
DIKSHA	Course enrolments	182.3 million	Shows large-scale participation capacity
DIKSHA	Course completions	145.7 million	Shows completion-oriented digital learning base
DIKSHA	Supported languages	36 Indian languages	Supports multilingual CPD access

Sources: NCTE NMM session dashboard accessed on 3 June 2026; UNESCO DIKSHA case study. Values are rounded where required.

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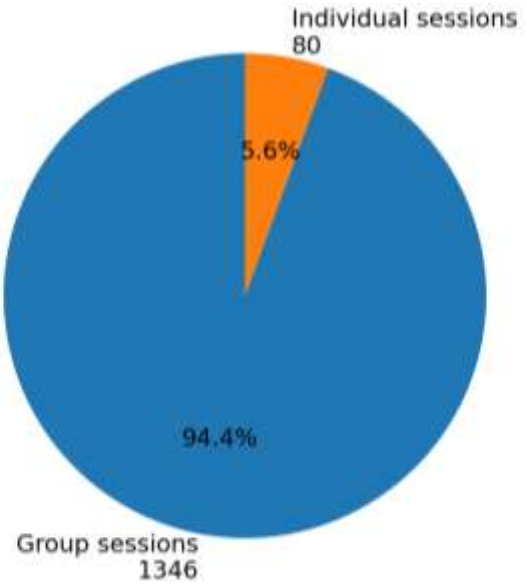
Interpretation of Table 2: The table shows NMM and DIKSHA can be mutually beneficial. NMM involves mentoring interactions, whereas DIKSHA involves offering digital courses. The number of completed group sessions shows that group mentoring is the most common format. This is beneficial to scale, especially in addressing core areas like classroom assessment and planning, digital and inclusive education, NEP, and mentoring clusters of teachers. On the contrary, the number of individual sessions shows that NMM must work on strengthening the individual mentoring component. With DIKSHA, mentoring is further supported with its massive numbers in enrolment and course completion, indicating a solid digital infrastructure. This can also support NMM through structuring the mentoring sessions and linking them to relevant courses, resources, and assignments and reflection activities.

Chart 2: Completed NMM Mentoring Sessions by Mode



Source: NCTE NMM session dashboard, completed sessions as of 2 June 2026.

Interpretation of Chart 2: The chart indicates that group sessions nearly make up the entirety of completed sessions under NMM. This trend makes sense at early scaling stages as group sessions enable one mentor to teach multiple teachers and stimulate peer-to-peer conversations. However, mentoring should not be reduced to a webinar-like practice. An NMM model in its developed state incorporates individual and/or small group mentoring to address specific needs of the teachers, while group sessions provide an overview and foster a community of practice. Such a model is likely to keep the mission scalable and meaningful professionally.8. Discussion: Strengths of NMM as a CPD ModelThe NMM shows CPD framework strengths, MSR, and LE. There is a distinct advantage for NMM in the NMM being directly related to NCTE and NEP 2020, with

direct institutional assurance. Progress in teacher training can be developed within a continuum. Short-term projects tend to fragment teacher training. A national mission addresses this problem by providing a framework for the establishment of common points and standards within the system. Flexibility is an additional strength. The third strength is professional standards. NPST brings structure to teacher quality and career progression. NMM can operationalize these standards by assisting teachers to comprehend the evidence of professional growth, competency in the classroom, professional ethics and reflective improvement. DIKSHA and NISHTHA have oriented many teachers to online professional learning. NMM can draw on this groundwork and connect mentoring to online courses, recorded resources, lesson exemplars, discussion boards, and reflective portfolios

9. Implementation Challenges

The success of NMM will largely depend on overcoming some challenges. One of the challenges is mentor quality. More than seniority or subject knowledge is needed when it comes to being a good mentor. Good mentors listen, are ethically sensitive and empathetic, provide constructive and critical feedback, and know about and understand the realities of the school. Without the right preparation, mentoring can be prescriptive and disconnected from the practice of teaching.Equitable access is another challenge. Mentoring can be difficult to access for teachers in rural and remote schools, in tribal areas, aspirational districts, and in areas with poor connectivity. Heavy workloads and a lack of digital teaching aids can also create barriers. Therefore, NMM must include online mentoring along with local support, opportunities to access sessions that have been recorded, multilingual services, and an accommodating approach to scheduling. Equity must be one of the main goals, as opposed to an afterthought.A challenge must be overcoming the tension between scaling and depth. Data from the sessions show that there is a strong preference for group mentoring sessions. While this is conducive to mentoring a lot of people, the mission must also avoid becoming another lecture style training platform. In order to be effective, mentoring must include interaction and engagement, as well as the fostering of trust and the serving of many different functions. NMM must incorporate smaller group mentoring that is structured, as well as mentor-mentee pairings, follow-up tasks, reflection journals, and evidence of teaching and learning.

10. Proposed Framework for NMM-Based Continuous Professional Development

A robust NMM-based CPD framework comprises five interlinked layers. The first, national policy alignment, connects NMM with NEP 2020, NPST, NCF-SE 2023, NISHTHA, DIKSHA, Samagra Shiksha, PM SHRI schools, and the state's teacher education institutions. Policy alignment avoids duplication and ensures that mentoring aligns with and strengthens the reform agenda.Mentor preparation and certification is

the second layer. Preparation should include mentoring ethics, adult learning and teaching, mentoring psychology, digital mentoring, inclusive mentoring, diverse feedback, and professional documentation. Certification should not be considered an administrative formality. It is essential that they (mentors) are sufficiently prepared to engage with teachers in a respectful and professional manner.The need-based mentee pathways, provides teachers the opportunity to select areas of mentoring based on their professional aspirations. Teachers may select pathways focused on foundational literacy and numeracy, pedagogy, assessment, multilingual education, inclusion, social-emotional learning, digital competency, educational leadership, community engagement, and career pathways. This layer engages teachers by focusing on the specific professional needs of teachers, as opposed to generalized training.The blended delivery, integrates live mentoring, small group sessions, one-on-one mentoring, resources, asynchronous participation, DIKSHA courses, and school-based communities of practice. This approach accommodates teachers' varying needs related to time, connectivity, language, and level of professionalism. Blended delivery is critical in a country with a wide digital divide.The fifth layer is evidence-based reflection. Teachers ought to be prompted to keep basic professional learning portfolios that hold mentoring notes, classroom trials, student work samples, assessment designs, reflections and feedback.

11. Policy Recommendations

To start off with, NMM needs to design a structured mentoring competency framework at the most basic level. This framework needs a definition of mentoring, alongside the skills of mentoring including ethical behavior, confidentiality, and inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication. The framework should also include the distinction between mentoring, supervision, mentoring and training.As a second step, the mission needs to expand large group mentoring by including and strengthening both individual and small group mentoring. Large group mentoring is mainly meant for covering a large audience, but for meaningful professional development, greater involvement is needed. For instance, a national webinar could introduce a topic, a state or district webinar could offer contextualization, and a school cluster could provide a space for application to the classroom.The third step is a structured integration of NMM, DIKSHA, and NISHTHA. This integration could enable mentoring sessions to recommend specific digital modules. This integration could also enable digital courses to include prompts for mentoring discussions. This integration would avoid disarray and fragmentation and sustain a continuum of learning for an engaged classroom.As a fourth step, states and union territories should be invited to create mentoring communities in their local language. Professional development initiatives are more impactful when the participants are able to discuss their reality.As a last step, NMM should evaluate the evidence of quality. Feedback from mentees should be

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collected, and participation in mentoring should be documented. Successful cases should be documented and monitored to see how mentoring is impacting teaching and learning in the classroom..

12. Conclusion

The National Mission for Mentoring can transform the framework for the continuous professional development of teachers in Indian school education. The mission offers solutions to the emerging policy gaps arising from NEP 2020, the National Professional Standards for Teachers, and the shift to competency and inclusion in education. The mission understands that teachers need continuous professional support and not the periodic trainings.The evidence analyzed in this paper reaches the same conclusions regarding scale and design. UDISE+ data indicate that teacher development is an urgent national issue given the scale of India's school system, which has over 1 crore teachers and nearly 24.69 crore students. Teacher development has an immediate impact on the quality of education. NMM dashboard data confirm the large-scale group mentoring sessions. DIKSHA data indicate that continuous professional development (CPD) is possible through course-based and multilingual professional learning. These developments show the potential for the blended CPD system.

NMM will need to balance the wider reach of the framework with the professional depth of mentoring so that highly skilled mentors, pathways for mentees that are driven by need, access (both digital and community-based), evidence-based support, and small groups or individual mentoring are available. NMM has the potential to bring about the much-needed culture of continuous professional development for teachers in India, strengthening the professional identity of teachers and promoting agency and reflective practice.

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