



A Qualitative Inquiry into Pedagogical Styles and Teacher–Student Communication in Teacher Education Institutions of Meerut District

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the interrelationship between pedagogical styles and teacher–student communication within teacher education institutions in Meerut District, Uttar Pradesh. The research investigates how various teaching approaches, shifting from traditional lecture methods to learner-centred and facilitative models, manifest through verbal, nonverbal, and written communication practices in B.Ed. classrooms. Using a phenomenological case study design, the study draws upon in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to reveal how communication patterns shape student engagement, learning motivation, and perceptions of the classroom climate. The findings highlight three overarching themes: the authenticity of communication, the relational dimension of pedagogy, and communication's role in fostering student agency. The study underscores that effective pedagogical practice is inseparable from the quality of communication and emotional resonance between teacher and learner. The paper concludes with recommendations for enhancing teacher education through reflective communication training, mentorship, and integration of relational pedagogy principles aligned with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Keywords: Pedagogical styles, teacher–student communication, qualitative research, teacher education, classroom interaction, Meerut district

1. Introduction

Education is a deeply relational and communicative process, and nowhere is this more evident than in teacher education institutions, where future educators learn not only what to teach but also how to teach. In the context of B.Ed. colleges in India, particularly within the Meerut District, pedagogical style and teacher–student communication form the twin pillars upon which effective teaching-learning processes rest.

Pedagogical style encompasses the unique combination of beliefs, methods, and strategies that teachers employ to facilitate learning. Communication, on the other hand, is the medium through which pedagogy becomes visible—it translates the teacher's philosophy into daily classroom interactions. The way a teacher speaks, listens, provides feedback, and responds to students' needs embodies their pedagogical orientation.

In Indian teacher education, pedagogical transformation has gained momentum following the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes learner-centred, critical thinking, and dialogic learning. However, despite policy aspirations, many B.Ed. classrooms still rely heavily on lecture-based, transmission-oriented teaching. This tension between traditional and transformative approaches forms the backdrop for this study.

The central research question guiding this qualitative inquiry is

“How do different pedagogical styles manifest through teacher–student communication, and how do these interactions shape students’ experiences in teacher education institutions of Meerut District?”

This research question serves as the intellectual anchor of the study, capturing the dual focus on pedagogical approach and communicative practice within the dynamic environment of teacher education. It explores how variations in teaching styles ranging from traditional and directive to facilitative and reflective, are expressed through the everyday language, tone, and interactional behaviours of teacher educators. By focusing on the communication patterns that emerge from these pedagogical orientations, the study seeks to uncover how teachers’ beliefs, values, and instructional choices are transmitted, interpreted, and internalised by students within the B.Ed. classroom context.

This question further emphasizes the relational and experiential dimensions of teaching, shifting attention from pedagogy as a theoretical construct to pedagogy as a lived, communicative practice. It assumes that communication is not merely a medium through which teaching occurs but rather a constitutive element of pedagogy itself—the very process through which learning relationships, emotional connections, and classroom culture are continuously shaped and negotiated.

Rationale and Focus of Inquiry

By examining the lived experiences of both teachers and student-teachers in the Meerut district, this research seeks to illuminate how pedagogy and communication interact to construct the social and emotional fabric of teacher education classrooms. The inquiry is rooted in the understanding that every classroom interaction, whether a question, response, discussion, or silence reflects an underlying pedagogical stance. Teachers’ communicative choices convey not only content but also values such as empathy, openness, and respect, all of which profoundly influence the learner’s sense of belonging and engagement.

In this context, teacher–student communication becomes a powerful lens for understanding the hidden dimensions of pedagogy, the unspoken norms, relational cues, and affective undercurrents that define the quality of educational experience. The study therefore seeks to interpret communication as a pedagogical act that both reflects and shapes the educational ethos of teacher preparation programs.

The choice of Meerut District as the research setting adds contextual depth, as it represents a region where teacher education institutions embody a diverse blend of traditional and emerging pedagogical practices. This setting provides an opportunity to explore how communication styles vary across institutional cultures and how these variations affect the professional identity formation of student-teachers.

Moreover, by drawing upon the lived narratives of participants, the research moves beyond abstract theorisation to capture the authentic voices and experiences of those directly engaged in the teaching-learning process. Teachers’ reflections reveal how they perceive their own communicative roles and challenges, while students’ accounts provide insight into how these interactions shape their motivation, confidence, and sense of agency as future educators.

Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of communication as the heart of pedagogy, reaffirming that effective teaching is not solely determined by curriculum or content mastery, but by the

quality of human connection and dialogue established in the classroom. In doing so, it also aligns with the vision articulated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes learner-centered, dialogic, and relationship-driven approaches as the foundation of transformative education.

Ultimately, this inquiry aspires to uncover how pedagogical style and communicative practice intertwine to shape the culture, climate, and meaning of teacher education in India, offering insights that can inform future curriculum design, faculty development, and institutional reform in B.Ed. programs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pedagogical Styles and Educational Outcomes

Pedagogical styles are often classified along a continuum from teacher-centred to student-centred. Traditional approaches, characterised by authority and information delivery, contrast sharply with constructivist and facilitative approaches emphasizing learner autonomy and collaboration (Pratt, 2018). Studies in Indian teacher education contexts (Kumar & Rani, 2021) indicate that the dominance of lecture methods persists despite widespread recognition of the need for participatory approaches.

According to Darling-Hammond (2019), effective pedagogy involves responsiveness to students' needs and contexts, aligning with the idea that teaching is not merely instructional but inherently relational. The teacher's disposition as empathy, authenticity, and openness, significantly shapes learning experiences.

2.2 Teacher–Student Communication

Communication forms the backbone of effective teaching. Flanders' Interaction Analysis (1970) established that verbal interaction patterns directly affect student engagement. More recent research (Sultana & Rashid, 2022) reaffirms that communication clarity, tone, and nonverbal behaviour influence how students perceive teacher support and respect.

In the Indian teacher education context, communication takes on additional importance because B.Ed. students are themselves being prepared to model these skills in future classrooms. As Ghosh (2020) argues, communication in teacher education serves a dual role: facilitating learning and modelling pedagogical ethics.

2.3 Pedagogy, Communication, and Classroom Climate

The relationship between pedagogical style and communication is symbiotic. A student-centred pedagogy fosters open, dialogic communication, while an authoritarian approach limits interaction and discourages questioning (Bakhshi & Qureshi, 2023). Teacher warmth, immediacy, and clarity correlate strongly with student satisfaction and perceived competence (Pattnaik, 2021).

However, qualitative studies focusing on Indian B.Ed. classrooms remain limited. This research aims to fill that gap by providing context-specific insights from Meerut District, a region with a rich tradition of teacher training but varying degrees of pedagogical modernisation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, phenomenological case study approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers and student-teachers. The phenomenological aspect captures participants' subjective perceptions of communication, while the case study design enables an in-depth understanding of real classroom dynamics within specific institutional contexts.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted across three teacher education institutions in Meerut District—one government college and two self-financed B.Ed. colleges. Participants included:

- Three teacher educators with distinct pedagogical orientations (traditional, blended, and constructivist).
- Nine student-teachers, three from each institution, representing diverse academic performance and participation levels.
- Two academic heads who provided institutional perspectives.

Purposive sampling ensured that participants were information-rich cases capable of reflecting diverse experiences.

3.3 Data Collection

Three qualitative methods were employed:

- Semi-structured interviews with all teachers and students explored experiences of communication, motivation, and classroom interaction.
- Classroom observations over a four-week period captured authentic communicative behaviours and nonverbal cues.
- Document analysis of lesson plans, reflection journals, and feedback forms provided triangulation.

Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. Observations were non-participant, focusing on teacher talk time, questioning style, and response patterns.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process included familiarisation, coding, theme generation, and refinement. NVivo software aided in organising codes related to communication tone, authenticity, and student response. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents ensured credibility. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the participating institutions. Informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were maintained. Participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms.

4. Results and Findings

The data analysis led to the emergence of three interrelated themes that collectively highlight the centrality of communication in shaping teacher-student relationships and learning dynamics within B.Ed. programs. These themes include: (1) Authenticity and Emotional Resonance in Communication, (2) Communication as Relationship Building, and (3) Communication and Student Agency. Together, they illuminate how communication functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as an emotional and relational medium that sustains the entire educational experience.

4.1 Authenticity and Emotional Resonance in Communication

Across interviews and classroom observations, a recurring pattern was the profound value students placed on authentic and emotionally responsive communication. Learners consistently associated authenticity with feelings of trust, respect, and psychological safety. As one student, Shreya, reflected:

“When ma’am shares her own experiences and listens without judgment, I feel connected and confident to express myself.”

This reflection captures the essence of relational authenticity, where teachers communicate with openness and empathy rather than authority or distance. Teachers adopting facilitative pedagogical styles often used personal anecdotes, humour, and reflective storytelling to make lessons more relatable and humanised. Such interactions

transcended mere content delivery; they transformed the classroom into a space of shared experiences and emotional resonance.

In contrast, classrooms led by directive or authoritarian teachers tended to emphasize procedural communication focusing primarily on giving instructions, maintaining discipline, or completing syllabus goals. These environments, while structured, often limited opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, and affective connection. Students in such settings reported feeling hesitant to share personal thoughts or seek clarification, perceiving communication as one-sided and evaluative rather than collaborative.

The data thus suggest that authentic communication acts as a catalyst for trust-building, enhancing both emotional comfort and intellectual engagement. When teachers express genuine interest in students' perspectives, use inclusive language, and exhibit emotional sensitivity, they lay the foundation for a communicative culture that nurtures confidence, curiosity, and belonging.

4.2 Communication as Relationship Building

The second major theme underscores the role of communication as the core of relational pedagogy. For teachers who prioritise connection over compliance, communication becomes a bridge that unites the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning. As one teacher eloquently described:

"I see communication as a bridge not just for teaching content but for understanding my students' moods and needs."

This metaphor encapsulates how communication transcends transactional purposes; it becomes relational, dynamic, and human-centred. Classroom observations reinforced this finding, revealing multiple non-verbal and verbal strategies used by such teachers to sustain engagement—eye contact, nodding, affirmative expressions, humour, and inclusive questioning. These micro-interactions signalled attentiveness and respect, thereby reducing student anxiety and encouraging active participation.

Students in these relational classrooms consistently reported a stronger sense of belonging and emotional safety, both of which are essential prerequisites for learning. The classroom atmosphere was described as interactive, collaborative, and non-threatening, where mistakes were treated as opportunities for growth rather than as failures. Teachers who maintained this approach were seen as approachable mentors rather than distant authorities.

Moreover, this theme resonates with the principles of relational pedagogy, which view teaching as a fundamentally interpersonal act grounded in mutual understanding and care. The study found that when communication is infused with respect, empathy, and relational intent, it not only enhances learning outcomes but also contributes to the social-emotional development of student-teachers. It prepares them to emulate similar communicative behaviours in their future professional practice, thereby extending the ripple effect of relational pedagogy into future classrooms.

4.3 Communication and Student Agency

The third theme that emerged from the data highlights the role of communication in empowering student agency—the capacity of learners to take initiative, make choices, and co-construct their own learning experiences. In classrooms guided by constructivist and participatory pedagogies, teachers deliberately structured communication to promote dialogue, collaboration, and reflection. They encouraged students to share opinions, engage in peer discussions, and design micro-teaching activities that reflected their personal understanding of pedagogy.

As one participant expressed:

"When we are asked to design micro-lessons and discuss them openly, I feel my ideas are respected."

This statement reflects how dialogic communication transforms students from passive recipients of information into active contributors in the learning process. The teacher's role in such contexts evolves from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator or co-learner, guiding discussions, validating diverse perspectives, and nurturing a spirit of intellectual independence.

Conversely, in teacher-centred classrooms, communication was observed to be predominantly unidirectional, characterised by lecturing, note dictation, and minimal feedback exchange. Students in such environments displayed limited confidence and a greater tendency toward passive compliance rather than inquiry or innovation. Their interactions were governed by fear of evaluation or perceived hierarchy, which stifled curiosity and reflective engagement.

The findings clearly indicate that the style and intent of communication directly influence students' self-efficacy and sense of agency. Empowering communication, rooted in mutual respect and open dialogue, enables student-teachers to envision themselves as capable, creative, and responsible educators. In contrast, restrictive communication perpetuates dependence and conformity, traits counterproductive to the goals of modern teacher education envisioned in the NEP 2020 framework.

Summary of Key Insights

Collectively, the three themes reveal that communication in teacher education is far more than a means of instruction; it is a pedagogical, emotional, and ethical act. Authenticity enhances trust, relational communication builds belonging, and empowering communication fosters agency. Together, these dimensions create the conditions necessary for transformative teacher learning, aligning with the broader vision of reflective, learner-centered, and empathetic pedagogy.

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study reaffirm that pedagogical style and communication are not separate entities but interdependent dimensions of the teaching-learning process. The way a teacher communicates is inherently shaped by the pedagogical philosophy they adopt. Teachers who employ facilitative, reflective, or blended pedagogies demonstrate higher levels of communicative empathy and adaptability, thereby establishing classrooms characterised by mutual respect, trust, and cognitive engagement. Such teachers use dialogue not merely as a method of instruction but as a tool of connection and co-construction of knowledge. This observation resonates strongly with Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that learning is fundamentally a social act, nurtured through interactions, conversations, and shared meaning-making between teacher and learner.

Within the Indian teacher education context, particularly in B.Ed. institutions, the findings carry a nuanced significance. Many teacher training programs in India still operate within a framework of traditional and theoretical instruction, focusing primarily on content mastery and assessment rather than on reflective dialogue or student-centred engagement (Pandey, 2022). The empirical evidence gathered from institutions in Meerut highlights that teachers who consciously integrate open-ended and dialogic communication strategies experience more meaningful interactions with their students. This approach strengthens relational bonds, enhances student motivation, and promotes self-efficacy, as learners feel acknowledged, valued, and intellectually stimulated.

Another significant dimension that surfaced in this study is the role of communication authenticity. Authenticity manifested through tone, emotional warmth, empathy, and active listening emerges as a key determinant of student engagement and participation. When communication is authentic, learners perceive the classroom as a psychologically safe space where they can express doubts, share perspectives, and learn collaboratively. This sense of

safety nurtures creativity and curiosity qualities that align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which calls for a transformative and humanistic pedagogy. The NEP emphasizes fostering critical thinking, inquiry, and collaboration, which can only thrive in environments sustained by genuine, reflective, and empathetic teacher-student communication.

Furthermore, the findings carry crucial implications for teacher educators themselves. In teacher education programs, communication serves not only as a means of instruction but also as a model of professional behaviour. The way teacher educators interact with student-teachers becomes a live demonstration of pedagogical values. When educators practice dialogic, reflective, and empathetic communication, they set a precedent for their trainees, who in turn carry these habits into their future classrooms. Thus, communication functions as a pedagogical inheritance, shaping the next generation of educators and influencing the larger ecosystem of schooling.

Finally, this study underscores that pedagogical innovation must go hand in hand with communicative sensitivity. No matter how advanced the curriculum or technological integration may be, the quality of interaction between teacher and learner remains the most decisive factor in educational effectiveness. Pedagogical reforms, therefore, must integrate communication competence as a central pillar of professional teacher development, not as a peripheral skill.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This qualitative exploration establishes that effective teaching in B.Ed. programs extends far beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. It is a relational, dialogic, and transformative process, sustained through authentic communication and reflective pedagogical practice. The study concludes that pedagogical style and communication are mutually constitutive each shaping and reinforcing the other to create classroom environments that are intellectually stimulating and emotionally supportive. The essence of effective teaching lies not merely in “*what*” is taught, but “*how*” it is communicated.

When teachers engage students through empathy, respect, and authenticity, they create conditions conducive to deeper learning, self-expression, and confidence building. These outcomes mirror the vision of NEP 2020, which envisions Indian teacher education as holistic, learner-centered, and deeply rooted in values of inclusion, reflection, and collaboration.

Recommendations

1. *Integration of Communication Training in Teacher Education Curriculum:*

B.Ed. programs should formally embed comprehensive modules focused on interpersonal communication, empathy, non-verbal cues, and reflective dialogue. These should be treated as core professional competencies, not optional soft skills, ensuring that future educators develop both intellectual and emotional literacy.

2. *Faculty Development Workshops:*

Regular professional development programs must be organised for teacher educators to engage in self-assessment of their communicative behaviour. Workshops focusing on facilitative teaching techniques, emotional intelligence, and dialogue-based instruction can enhance the overall pedagogical climate of the institution.

3. *Peer Observation and Reflective Practice:*

Teacher education institutions should institutionalise peer observation frameworks where educators can observe each other's teaching sessions, reflect on communication patterns, and exchange constructive feedback. Such practices foster self-awareness and inclusivity in classroom communication.

4. Institutional Support for Relational Pedagogy:

College administrations should actively create and sustain a relational teaching-learning culture that values openness, emotional intelligence, and mutual respect. Institutional policies should encourage dialogue, collaborative reflection, and recognition of teachers who demonstrate excellence in communicative engagement.

5. Policy Alignment with NEP 2020:

The insights from this study support the implementation of NEP 2020 by advocating for communication training and relational pedagogy as integral components of teacher education programs. Policymakers should ensure that future B.Ed. curricula are structured to promote holistic, learner-centered, and communicatively rich educational environments.

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