
Embedding Child Protection Education in Teacher Preparation Programs: Nurturing Alert Teachers for a Viksit Bharat

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19485413>

Received on: 31/01/2026

Accepted on: 26/03/2026

Published on: 09/04/2026

Abstract:

This research paper examines the vital role of educators and the necessity of embedding child protection education and training into pre- and in-service teacher education programs to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 better. The Viksit Bharat 2047 is not just a vision; it is a roadmap for Bharat to create a better society to live in. The study primarily aimed to examine the current status of child protection education within existing national teacher education programs, along with a critical analysis of policy frameworks such as NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, and NCF-SE 2023. The novel and innovative practices recommended by NCTE for pre- and in-service teacher education programs were also explored. Qualitative content analysis of policy documents and curricular frameworks was conducted to achieve the study's objectives. The findings suggested equipping educators with adequate knowledge and skills to foster a safe, secure learning environment inside and outside the classroom. The study also argues that there is a persistent gap in child protection legislation regarding educators' preparedness, while government initiatives such as NISHTHA show meaningful progress. The NCTE guidelines mandate continuous professional development for educational stakeholders to cultivate a responsive, vigilant, and accountable educational community. There should be a robust monitoring, reporting, and accountability framework to develop a child-friendly school environment that safeguards children's rights and strengthens Vishvaguru Bharat's human capital.

Keywords: *Child Protection Education, Teacher Education Programs, Viksit Bharat, National Policies and Frameworks.*

1. Introduction

A child spends maximum time in school under the guidance of their teachers after their homes; therefore, the Teachers, as daily guardians of children, are uniquely positioned to identify and respond

to abuse, neglect, and discrimination (Walsh, 2011). Integrating child protection education into teacher preparation is essential for developing vigilant educators, a foundation for Viksit Bharat's vision of safe, inclusive schools. Ensuring that teacher training includes child protection equips educators with the skills and ethical awareness necessary to foster caring environments. National and international policies now mandate such integration, with evidence showing it enhances vigilance, reporting, and institutional responses. For Viksit Bharat, this approach enables holistic, just, and culturally responsive education, positioning trained teachers as vital agents of social development and protection for all children (Bhoi et al., 2024; Devi, 2024).

1.1 Background and Rationale

Indian literature highlights both advances and gaps in child protection education within teacher training programs. Legal mandates such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), 2012 Act and efforts like NISHTHA emphasise the need for safe educational spaces. However, teacher preparedness remains inconsistent, with many lacking formal training. Studies across state and school types show that while abuse awareness exists, over 65% of teachers have not had structured POCSO training, and most schools lack actionable child protection policies (PTI, 2025). Sociocultural barriers also deter reporting and open dialogue. Interventions, including targeted teacher training and student self-protection curricula, improve staff awareness and attitudes, especially when accompanied by ongoing professional development. However, resource and monitoring limitations continue to restrict progress, leaving many children vulnerable. Overall, suitable research calls for reforms in the curriculum, sustained teacher development, and stronger school-based support to empower educators as proactive child safety agents, which are vital for achieving Viksit Bharat's inclusive vision (NoMeansNo, 2025).

1.2 Vision of Viksit Bharat and the Role of Teachers

The vision of Viksit Bharat is to transform India into a developed, inclusive, and prosperous nation by 2047, emphasising economic growth, social advancement, environmental sustainability, and robust governance (Viksit Bharat, n. d.). Core pillars include youth empowerment, poverty eradication, women's participation, and the strengthening of farmers' roles to achieve equitable opportunities and high standards of living for all citizens. Education forms a crucial foundation, with the government seeking 100% access to quality schooling as a driver for holistic national development (Dhumne, 2025). Teachers play a vital role in realising this transformative vision. As architects of future generations, their capacity to integrate child protection education directly impacts the creation of safe, nurturing, and resilient learning environments. By championing child rights,

recognising vulnerabilities, and proactively addressing risks of abuse or neglect, teachers become vigilant protectors and key partners in the country's social progress. Comprehensive training programs empower educators not only to impart academic knowledge but also to foster emotional well-being and safeguard children's dignity, thereby guaranteeing that the educational system supports the overarching goals of Viksit Bharat (Babu, 2024).

1.3 Need for Child Protection Education in Teacher Preparation

Child protection education in teacher preparation is essential because teachers serve as frontline defenders of children's safety and well-being in schools. Despite robust laws like the POCSO Act, 2012 and greater awareness in recent years, teachers often lack practical skills and confidence to identify, report, or intervene in cases of abuse or neglect (NCPCR, 2020-21). This results in underreporting and missed opportunities to provide timely support for at-risk children. Structured, ongoing training in child protection empowers teachers to recognise warning signs early, respond appropriately, and collaborate with multidisciplinary support systems. Such professional preparation fosters environments where children's rights are respected, creating safe spaces for learning and development. In the context of Viksit Bharat's vision, integrating child protection education into teacher training is not just a legal necessity but a developmental imperative. It ensures that every educator is a vigilant guardian, able to nurture resilient, empowered students who are equipped to contribute to an inclusive and developed India by 2047. This approach aligns with India's long-term goal of providing holistic, safe, and equitable educational opportunities for all children (Celes & Carzon, 2017; Gaur & Gupta, 2025).

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were included in this study:

1. To examine the current status of child protection education from a Global and Indian perspective.
2. To analyse policies and frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and guidelines of NCERT and SCERT for teacher capacity-building on child Protection.
3. To explore best practices of integrating child protection education recommended by NCTE into pre-service and in-service teacher training that aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

2. Review of Related Literature

The reviewed literature collectively emphasises the growing importance of integrating child protection education into teacher education as a strategic pathway toward achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Walsh et al. (2011) highlight the critical gap in pre-service teacher training in

addressing child safety and advocate for embedding child protection within professional standards. Studies by Gautam (2024) and Bhoi et al. (2024) align this agenda with national developmental goals, emphasising transformative teacher education as foundational to an empowered, safe, and developed India. The NCPCR (2020–21) report reveals that most teacher-training curricula inadequately cover child rights and protection content, underscoring the need for curriculum redesign. Gaur and Gupta (2025), Patel (2024), and Dua's Advocates (2025) underscore the legal dimensions of child safety, particularly the POCSO Act 2012, and the accountability of schools and teachers in preventing and reporting incidents. Celes and Carzon (2017) demonstrate how institutional child protection policies influence teachers' disciplinary approaches, fostering respectful classroom climates. National and international initiatives, such as ISO's global child-friendly standards (2025), the Keeping Children Safe guidelines, and NCERT's inclusion of personal safety education (2025), demonstrate emerging frameworks for child safeguarding. Complementary efforts by the Delhi government and organisations such as NoMeansNo enhance teachers' capacity through structured POCSO training. Overall, the literature converges on a unified vision: equipping teachers with ethical values, legal awareness, and proactive safeguarding competencies to ensure that every classroom becomes a safe space for children, thereby contributing meaningfully to the nation's developmental aspirations for Viksit Bharat 2047.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Qualitative Content Analysis

The study employs a qualitative research design, utilising document analysis, to systematically examine policies, frameworks, and educational guidelines related to child protection education at both global and national levels in India. The approach focuses on understanding patterns, themes, and policy orientations reflected in official and secondary documents.

3.2 Sources of Data (Policy Documents & Curricular Frameworks)

The documents reviewed include international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Keeping Children Safe Standards, and ISO guidelines on child protection. National documents, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, NCPCR Guidelines 2005, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, NCF-FS 2022, NCF-SE 2023, and NISHTHA teacher training modules. Supplementary resources such as research reports, training manuals, and Research publications.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Documents are selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those published between 2010 and 2025 that directly address child protection education or teacher training and are issued by recognised international or national bodies.

3.4 Data Organisation: Collected materials were categorised into two themes—Policy and Legal Frameworks and Implementation and Training Practices—and stored digitally for systematic analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

The following steps were included to interpret the data and identify patterns relating to child protection integration in teacher education.

- A. **Familiarisation:** Detailed reading of each document for relevance and context.
- B. **Coding:** Identification of recurring terms or ideas such as teacher preparedness, policy mandates, and reporting mechanisms.
- C. **Thematic Categorisation:** Grouped codes under themes like policy alignment, capacity building, institutional accountability, and pedagogical strategies.
- D. **Interpretation:** Comparative analysis of global and Indian contexts to highlight alignment with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Global and Indian Perspectives on Child Protection Education

4.1.1 Global Perspectives on Child Protection Education

- A. Based on the UNCRC, every child has the right to safety, protection, and a nurturing environment.
- B. International frameworks (e.g., Keeping Children Safe, International Taskforce for Child Protection) emphasise four pillars:
 - Policy – establishment of safeguarding guidelines
 - People—staff training and vetting
 - Procedures—transparent reporting and response systems
 - Accountability – monitoring and improvement mechanism
- C. International Organisations for Standardisation (ISO) guidelines encourage trauma-informed, multidisciplinary, and child-centred approaches to handling cases of child abuse.
- D. Education systems globally promote Regular teacher training in child protection.
- E. School safeguarding policies and transparent reporting mechanisms

- F. Community engagement to create protective environments
- G. Child participation is becoming increasingly central, ensuring that children's voices influence protective policies and practices (International Organisation for Standardisation, 2025; Keeping Children Safe, n.d.).

4.1.2 Indian Perspectives on Child Protection Education

- A. Child protection education in India is reinforced by laws and social awareness, notably through the POCSO Act, 2012.
- B. NCPCR, 2005 guidelines mandating school child protection policies and teacher training.
- C. Implementation challenges include a limited teacher-training structure, Resource constraints, and cultural barriers to the disclosure of abuse.
- D. Positive progress through NISHTHA teacher training modules, integrating child safety education.
- E. India is moving toward global alignment, focusing on preventive and responsive approaches in teacher education.
- F. These Efforts support Viksit Bharat's vision of safe, inclusive, and equitable schools. Ongoing priorities include continuous professional development for educators, Strengthened policy enforcement, and Long-term cultural and systemic reforms within education (Mehta, 2025).

4.2 National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 Provisions for Teacher Capacity-building on Child Protection

NEP 2020 emphasises universal access to schooling and aims to achieve a 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio by 2030 through improved infrastructure and tracking of student attendance and learning, with support from counsellors and social workers. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a significant focus, with a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework planned for children up to the age of 8, involving ministries such as HRD, Women & Child Development, Health, and Tribal Affairs for joint implementation. Teacher education programs are guided to incorporate child protection themes, inclusive pedagogy, and early screening for learning disabilities into their curriculum and pre-service/in-service training modules. NEP 2020 recommends employing training frameworks (e.g., NISHTHA modules) for teachers, enabling them to identify, prevent, and address child abuse, neglect, and discrimination within schools. It requires continuous professional development, the use of assistive technology, and flexible curricula to accommodate different learning needs, with an emphasis on early support for children and fostering teacher preparedness. Policy alignment stresses the importance of vigilance, reporting mechanisms, and accountability within schools, outlining institutional roles and responsibilities for ensuring child safety and protection in

line with India's vision of Viksit Bharat (NEP 2020, Bal Raksha Bharat 2024, & Kumari 2025). The ECCE stage (ages 3–8) is integrated into India's formal education system, prioritising holistic, play-based learning linked to child psychology and development. Quality ECCE is mandated for all students entering Grade 1 (Patel, 2024). NEP 2020 drives equitable and inclusive education, particularly for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including gender minorities, castes, tribes, and people with disabilities. Special educators, resource centres, and full participation for children with disabilities are mandated. Strengthened cross-sectoral collaboration and the establishment of special funds/zones for marginalised and vulnerable children are proposed, enhancing safeguards and enabling a protective school environment (Ganguly, 2024).

4.2.1 Role of NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) for Teacher Capacity-building on Child Protection

NCERT integrates child protection themes into school textbooks and curricula to build foundational awareness among students (e.g., Personal Safety education in Grade 4 EVS). It collaborates with NGOs to design age-appropriate, child-centred safety content and supports the development of teacher training materials on child protection. The NCERT also conducts teacher-training workshops and research to promote inclusive and safe learning environments (NCERT, n.d., & Free Press Journal, 2025).

4.2.2 Role of SCERTs (State Councils of Educational Research and Training) for Teacher Capacity-building on Child Protection

SCERTs are primarily responsible for curriculum development, training, and capacity building within states, including the integration of child protection and safety into teacher education programs. They develop localised training modules and conduct workshops for in-service and pre-service teachers aligned with national policies on child safeguarding.

The NEP 2020, NCERT, and SCERTs recommend that Teacher education programs must include training on legal duties under the POCSO Act, 2012, mandatory reporting, and child-sensitive practices, ensuring educators are vigilant and responsive to signs of child abuse and exploitation. Guidelines encourage teachers to proactively prevent abuse, foster safe school environments, and support affected students by providing them with knowledge of their legal rights and protection mechanisms. The integration of POCSO-related curriculum into pre-service and in-service teacher training is a key step toward building accountable, child-protective teacher communities for Viksit Bharat. Schools are required to establish clear reporting protocols, awareness workshops, and support

systems aligned with the POCSO and NCPCR guidelines for effective implementation (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015; Dua, 2025).

4.3 Best Practices recommended by NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) for child protection in Pre- and In-Service Teacher Training

NCTE is the apex regulatory body responsible for setting teacher education standards, designing curricula, and accrediting teacher training institutions. It has issued explicit guidelines for integrating Child Protection Education and POCSO awareness into teacher education programs as part of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). NCTE runs multiple professional development programs, including modules on child safeguarding, mandatory reporting, and creating safe learning environments. These are incorporated in pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula. The NCTE has piloted the implementation of standards in government and private teacher training institutes to equip teachers with the competencies to recognise and act on child protection issues (NCPCR, 2020-21)—the NCTE advocates following the NEP 2020, which mandates a zero-tolerance policy towards CSA. The following are the key NCTE guidelines regarding CSA.

4.3.1 Mandatory Curriculum Content: All teacher education programs (from foundational to secondary level) must include modules on child sexual abuse prevention, legal frameworks (especially the POCSO Act), mandatory reporting responsibilities, and recognising possible indicators of abuse.

4.3.2 Zero Tolerance Policy: NCTE aligns its guidelines with national frameworks (POCSO Act, NCPCR manuals), emphasising zero tolerance toward any form of child sexual abuse and mandatory intervention and reporting by teachers and all adults in educational settings.

4.3.3 Identification and Intervention: Teacher trainees are trained to recognise signs of sexual abuse—such as unexplained bruises, behavioural changes, withdrawal, or aggression—and intervene appropriately with confidentiality and sensitivity.

4.3.4 Ethical and Legal Responsibilities: Ethical conduct, respect for children’s privacy, maintaining strict confidentiality, and adhering to reporting protocols are stressed in both coursework and practical training.

4.3.5 Child-Safe Environments: Teacher training curriculum covers strategies to create physically and emotionally safe schools and classrooms, with preventive measures such as clear lines of sight, restricted access to vulnerable areas, and explicit dos and don’ts regarding conduct around children.

4.3.6 Monitoring, Policy Enforcement, and Support: Guidelines require educational institutions to have clear safeguarding policies, monitoring systems, and support mechanisms for victims, like counselling, referral, and rehabilitation pathways.

4.3.7 Committee Participation: Preparing future teachers to participate in and co-lead school complaints committees, anti-bullying squads, and periodic safety audits as part of professional roles.

4.3.8 Integration Across Levels: The content is not isolated but placed throughout the curriculum at foundational, elementary, and secondary levels to reinforce the zero-tolerance stance.

These measures by NCTE advance India's goal of building vigilant, empathetic, and professionally responsible teachers who uphold the highest standards of child safety and protection in the pursuit of Viksit Bharat (NCERT, n. d.; NCTE, n. d.; NCERT, 2022; NCPCR, 2021; And Project CACA, 2025).

5. Educational Implications

5.1 For Teachers

After reading this research paper, teachers will be able to master essential child protection principles, recognise early indicators of abuse, and apply inclusive, ethical teaching practices mandated by national frameworks. They will gain practical skills in reporting, classroom safety, and fostering respect for diversity—helping them create secure and nurturing learning environments for every child.

5.2 For Students

After engaging with this research, students will be empowered to understand personal safety, boundaries, and their own rights in a supportive classroom. Participatory and activity-based learning approaches, as advocated in the frameworks, will help them confidently seek help when needed and foster a safe and inclusive atmosphere.

5.3 For Parents and Guardians

This paper empowers parents to become active partners in safeguarding their children's well-being both at school and at home. They will understand institutional child safety measures, be well-informed about reporting mechanisms, and collaborate with schools to build a robust protective ecosystem.

5.4 For School Management and Administration

School leaders and administrators, after studying the paper, will be able to implement effective child protection policies, ensure staff training, create transparent reporting systems, and maintain a culture of accountability and safety in accordance with NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023.

5.5 For Policy Makers

After reading the research, policy makers will be able to refine educational policies by enforcing mandatory child protection modules in teacher training, developing certification and monitoring processes, and linking these reforms with the vision for a developed, vigilant Bharat

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating child protection education into teacher education programs is pivotal to advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047—a vision grounded in inclusivity, justice, and holistic child development. This research unequivocally demonstrates that well-trained teachers are indispensable as vigilant guardians within schools, capable of recognising, preventing, and responding to abuse, neglect, and discrimination. National mandates, such as NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, NCF-SE 2023, and NCTE guidelines, represent significant policy progress; however, their transformative potential depends on effective, system-wide implementation supported by continuous professional development and robust institutional accountability. The study identifies that national policies, such as NEP 2020, NCF-FS 2022, NCF-SE 2023, and NCTE guidelines, collectively emphasise teacher capacity building, continuous professional development, and the mandatory inclusion of child protection themes across curricula. These frameworks underscore the role of teachers not only as academic instructors but as proactive guardians ensuring child safety, dignity, and holistic development. The research also finds that the effective integration of legal mandates, such as the POCSO Act, into teacher training strengthens teachers' abilities to identify, report, and prevent abuse within schools, thereby contributing to a child-friendly educational ecosystem. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement, including parents, school management, and policymakers, in establishing robust child protection mechanisms and promoting institutional accountability. The paper also highlights how international standards and global best practices inform Indian policies to foster trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, and child-centred educational settings. Overall, the findings consolidate that empowering teachers with specialised knowledge, skills, and ethical practices in child protection is a critical strategy for realising an inclusive, developed, and socially just India by 2047, thereby ensuring that every child's right to safety and holistic growth is upheld.

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