

Teacher Resilience and Professional Efficacy in the Context of NEP 2020: Implications for Sustainable Educational Reform in India

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ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, teaching faces unprecedented challenges marked by rapid educational changes, heightened accountability demands, technological disruption, and increasingly diverse student needs. In India's context, these pressures are compounded by large classroom sizes, curriculum modifications, inclusive education mandates, and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. In response to these mounting stressors, there is an imperative need for educators who are psychologically resilient, professionally efficacious, and pedagogically skilled. This chapter examines teacher resilience and professional efficacy, their conceptual foundations, theoretical underpinnings, and mutual relationships. Drawing on international research and Indian policy frameworks, particularly the NEP 2020, this chapter discusses evidence-based strategies for enhancing resilience and efficacy at individual, institutional, and systemic levels. The chapter concludes by articulating implications for teacher education, school leadership, and educational policy in India, arguing that investing in teacher well-being and efficacy is foundational to achieving sustainable, high-quality education systems.

Keywords: *Teacher Resilience, Professional Efficacy, NEP-2020*

1. Introduction

Teachers occupy a pivotal position in shaping educational quality and fostering the holistic development of learners. Their responsibilities extend far beyond knowledge transmission to encompass emotional guidance, value development, curiosity cultivation, and inspiration for lifelong learning. In India's educational context, teachers navigate multifaceted and competing demands: serving simultaneously as classroom facilitators, curriculum designers, mentors, counselors, technology integrators, administrators, and community partners. The expansion of school reforms, digital integration, inclusive education mandates, and continuous assessment systems has substantially increased professional expectations for teachers.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) positions teachers as central to educational transformation, advocating for teacher autonomy, institutional trust, professional motivation, continuous development, and supportive working environments (Ministry of Education, 2020).

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The NEP emphasizes that empowered teachers, those who are confident, skilled, and emotionally balanced, are essential for achieving equity, quality, and innovation in Indian classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2020).

However, policy aspirations frequently diverge from ground-level realities. Teachers today encounter increasingly complex and demanding environments. Growing administrative workloads, high-stakes accountability measures, rapid curriculum changes, large class sizes, inclusive education responsibilities, parental expectations, technological demands, and social pressures create significant psychological strain. Recent research across India and internationally documents rising levels of teacher stress, emotional exhaustion, role ambiguity, and burnout, with studies indicating that 60-70% of urban teachers and approximately 55% of rural teachers experience moderate to severe burnout (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008; Gupta & Jain, 2020; Kaur & Kumar, 2018). These challenges have profound consequences, not only affecting teachers' well-being and job satisfaction but directly influencing classroom climate, instructional quality, student achievement, and learner mental health.

Within this demanding context, teacher resilience and professional efficacy emerge as critical psychological resources. Teacher resilience, the capacity to adapt positively, recover from difficulties, maintain professional commitment, and continue functioning effectively despite adversity, is not an innate trait but a dynamic capacity that develops through supportive organizational cultures, collegial relationships, meaningful recognition, mentoring, and systemic support (Beltman et al., 2011). Conversely, professional efficacy reflects teachers' beliefs in their capability to manage classrooms, engage students, and influence learning outcomes. Higher professional efficacy strengthens motivation, persistence, creative problem-solving, and willingness to adopt innovative practices, all critical for implementing the competency-based, learner-centered approaches advocated by NEP 2020.

In India's educational landscape, characterized by socioeconomic diversity, multilingual classrooms, rural-urban disparities, resource constraints, and evolving pedagogical expectations, building teacher resilience and professional efficacy is essential. Teachers who feel capable and emotionally supported demonstrate greater commitment, collaborative engagement, constructive problem-solving, and commitment to inclusive, student-centered learning. This chapter therefore explores how teacher resilience can be systematically nurtured and how professional efficacy can be strengthened through policy support, institutional practices, reflective pedagogy, mentoring systems, and comprehensive well-being initiatives. By examining theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and practical strategies within India's educational context, this discussion illuminates why investing in resilient and efficacious teachers is fundamental to transforming schools and ensuring sustained educational quality.

2. Conceptualizing Teacher Resilience

2.1 Definition and Nature of Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience refers to educators' capacity to adapt positively, recover from stress, and continue professional growth despite challenges and adversities (Beltman et al., 2011). Resilience is not a fixed personality trait but rather a dynamic, developmental process shaped by the interaction of personal strengths and contextual supports (Day & Gu, 2014). In India's educational context, resilience is particularly relevant given contextual challenges including

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diverse student populations, resource constraints, multilingual learning environments, and frequent policy changes.

Resilient teachers demonstrate several key characteristics: emotional regulation and adaptive coping; reflective thinking and metacognitive awareness; optimism and solution-focused perspectives; and steadfast commitment to their professional values and educational mission (Day & Gu, 2014). Research from Kerala's post-pandemic context demonstrates that Indian teachers have exhibited remarkable resilience through adaptability, determination, and resourcefulness, successfully maintaining educational continuity despite unprecedented challenges (Pudukaden, 2025).

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience does not develop in isolation but emerges through dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments. Several theoretical perspectives illuminate how and why resilience develops and how it can be systematically strengthened:

2.2.1 Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Ecological Systems Theory explains resilience as resulting from continuous bidirectional interactions between individuals and their environmental systems. For teachers, resilience is influenced not solely by internal strengths but fundamentally by the systems surrounding them. The microsystem level, encompassing family support, student behavior, and classroom relationships, directly affects emotional stability and daily functioning. The mesosystem level, involving collaboration among colleagues, mentoring relationships, and leadership practices, shapes teachers' professional experiences and opportunities for growth. The exosystem level, including school policies, workload distribution, parental expectations, and community attitudes, exerts significant influence on resilience. Finally, the macrosystem level, comprising larger educational reforms, cultural beliefs about teaching, and national policies such as NEP 2020, shapes the broader context within which teachers operate.

From this perspective, resilience is strengthened when these systems function supportively rather than oppressively. Supportive school leadership, collegial collaboration, and positive community relationships enable teachers to cope effectively with daily classroom challenges within India's diverse educational settings.

2.2.2 Positive Psychology Framework (Seligman, 2011)

Positive psychology approaches resilience as the capacity to cultivate hope, optimism, purpose, and well-being even within stressful contexts. Rather than focusing exclusively on problems and deficits, this framework emphasizes conditions that help teachers thrive. Teachers develop resilience through building positive emotions, cultivating meaningful relationships, practicing gratitude, extending self-compassion, and experiencing a sense of purpose in their work. Encouraging reflective practices, celebrating professional achievements, promoting teacher recognition, and establishing emotional support systems enhance morale and sustained engagement.

In Indian schools where teachers frequently manage overcrowded classrooms and limited resources, positive psychology suggests that nurturing strengths rather than emphasizing deficits helps teachers sustain motivation and prevent burnout. Research on resilience among Kerala college teachers (Pudukaden, 2025) demonstrates significant correlations between

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positive thinking and resilience, highlighting the importance of fostering optimistic perspectives among educators.

2.2.3 Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001)

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model explains resilience in relation to the balance between job demands and available resources. Job demands encompass workload intensity, emotional labor, administrative responsibilities, and behavioral management challenges. When these demands become excessive without adequate support, teachers face substantial risk of stress, exhaustion, and burnout. Job resources, including autonomy in pedagogical decision-making, supportive leadership, adequate instructional materials, mentoring opportunities, professional development, and fair evaluation practices, function as protective buffers that prevent exhaustion and foster resilience.

In the Indian context, resilience improves significantly when schools provide realistic workloads, collaborative professional cultures, systematic training in inclusive and digital pedagogy, and meaningful recognition of teachers' efforts. Thus, resilience is not merely an individual psychological trait but fundamentally a product of supportive working conditions and organizational practices.

2.2.4 Career-Stage Perspective (Gu & Day, 2007)

The career-stage perspective views teacher resilience as dynamic, evolving across different phases of professional development:

- Early-career/novice teachers (0-3 years) often struggle with classroom management, teacher identity formation, and self-confidence, requiring intensive support through induction, mentoring, and collegial guidance.
- Mid-career teachers (4-15 years) frequently experience role overload while managing multiple responsibilities, yet often experience significant professional growth and can serve as mentors.
- Late-career teachers (15+ years) may emphasize stability, mentoring younger colleagues, and sustaining professional motivation, requiring recognition of their expertise and opportunities for continued growth.

Resilience evolves as teachers gain experience, develop increasingly effective coping strategies, and receive sustained institutional support. Mentoring systems, peer networks, and reflective professional learning communities are especially critical for supporting resilience across all career stages.

3. Understanding Teacher Professional Efficacy

3.1 Concept of Teacher Professional Efficacy

Teacher professional efficacy (also termed teaching efficacy or teacher self-efficacy) refers to teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to plan, organize, and execute instructional practices that produce desired educational outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Importantly, efficacy represents a belief system about one's capabilities rather than a direct measure of actual competence; however, these beliefs strongly influence motivation, persistence, instructional behavior, and willingness to undertake challenging teaching tasks.

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Teachers with high professional efficacy demonstrate greater willingness to adopt innovative practices, implement inclusive teaching strategies, manage diverse classrooms effectively, and support students with varying learning needs, expectations emphasized throughout NEP 2020 through its emphasis on learner-centered, competency-based education (Ministry of Education, 2020). Research indicates that teacher efficacy is significantly negatively associated with stress and burnout while being positively associated with job satisfaction, commitment, and student achievement (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

3.2 Sources of Teacher Efficacy Development

According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, teacher efficacy develops through four primary sources:

1. **Mastery Experiences:** Successful teaching experiences that reinforce confidence and competence. Incremental success with challenging instructional tasks progressively strengthens efficacy beliefs. Research demonstrates that providing teachers with opportunities for successful implementation of new pedagogies significantly enhances efficacy.
2. **Vicarious Experiences:** Observing and learning from effective peer teachers and mentors. When teachers observe colleagues successfully implementing strategies or managing challenges, they internalize the belief that they, too, can succeed. Mentoring relationships and collaborative observation of expert teachers serve this function.
3. **Social Persuasion:** Constructive feedback, encouragement, and support from school leaders, mentors, and colleagues. Authentic, specific feedback and genuine recognition of effort and improvement strengthen efficacy beliefs, whereas criticism without support undermines them.
4. **Physiological and Emotional States:** Teachers' physical health, stress levels, and emotional well-being significantly influence efficacy perceptions. High stress, exhaustion, or anxiety reduce efficacy beliefs, while good physical health and emotional balance enhance them.

Indian teacher education programs and in-service training initiatives, such as the NISHTHA program (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement), increasingly align with these efficacy sources by emphasizing experiential learning, mentoring, reflective practice, and collaborative professional communities (Ministry of Education, 2020).

4. The Relationship Between Teacher Resilience and Professional Efficacy

Teacher resilience and professional efficacy are conceptually distinct but mutually reinforcing psychological constructs. High efficacy beliefs enhance resilience by fostering a sense of control, competence, and purpose, enabling teachers to perceive challenges as manageable rather than overwhelming (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). When teachers believe they can influence student learning and manage classroom situations, they are more likely to persist through difficulties and maintain commitment despite setbacks.

Conversely, resilient teachers are more likely to sustain efficacy beliefs despite obstacles and systemic constraints. Teachers who can recover from failures, maintain perspective during

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difficulties, and access supportive relationships are better positioned to maintain confidence in their capabilities over time.

Empirical research demonstrates strong bidirectional relationships: teacher efficacy is negatively associated with stress and burnout while being positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and student achievement outcomes (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Recent Indian research (Pudukaden, 2025) confirms significant positive correlations between self-efficacy and resilience among college teachers, with teachers reporting higher self-efficacy also demonstrating higher resilience levels. In India's context, marked by diversity, resource constraints, and evolving pedagogical expectations, strengthening both resilience and efficacy is crucial for retaining motivated, committed teachers in public education systems and fulfilling NEP 2020's vision.

5. Factors Influencing Teacher Resilience and Efficacy

Research identifies multiple, interconnected factors that shape teacher resilience and professional efficacy across individual, institutional, and systemic levels:

5.1 Individual-Level Factors

Personal Resilience Resources:

- Emotional regulation capabilities and adaptive coping strategies
- Strong professional identity and sense of purpose in teaching
- Reflective practice orientation and growth mindset orientation
- Personal values and commitment to educational mission
- Self-efficacy beliefs and sense of personal agency

Development of Efficacy: Mastery experiences, internal motivation, reflective thinking, and professional self-concept all contribute to sustained efficacy beliefs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

5.2 Institutional and Organizational Factors

School Culture and Leadership:

- Supportive, instructional school leadership that fosters trust and psychological safety
- Collaborative school cultures emphasizing collegial support and shared mission
- Reasonable workload expectations with role clarity and realistic performance standards
- Autonomy in pedagogical decision-making while providing guidance and support
- Recognition and celebration of teacher achievements and efforts

Professional Learning Structures:

- Mentoring and induction programs for novice teachers
- Professional learning communities (PLCs) for peer collaboration and knowledge-sharing
- Instructional coaching and constructive feedback systems
- Access to continuous professional development aligned with practice needs

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5.3 Sociocultural and Policy-Level Factors

Societal and Professional Context:

- Societal respect for teaching as a profession and social valuation of teachers
- Policy coherence and realistic, supportive accountability systems
- Comprehensive continuous professional development opportunities (as mandated in NEP 2020)
- Job security, fair compensation, and professional recognition
- Clear pathways for career advancement and leadership roles

Systemic Supports:

- Adequate educational resources and appropriate infrastructure
- Access to mental health and well-being services
- Technology and digital resources supporting pedagogy
- Supportive policies enabling work-life balance

6. Evidence-Based Strategies for Building Teacher Resilience

Research identifies multiple evidence-based strategies operating at different systemic levels for building and sustaining teacher resilience:

6.1 Individual-Level Strategies

Mindfulness and Stress-Management Practices: Mindfulness training enables teachers to develop present-moment awareness, reduce rumination, and build capacity for emotional regulation. Research by Roeser et al. (2013) demonstrates that mindfulness training for teachers enhances emotional stability and reduces burnout. Studies on Indian teachers (Pudukaden, 2025) indicate that teachers practicing acceptance and mindfulness exhibit greater resilience and more effectively manage stress during challenging periods.

Reflective Practice and Professional Growth: Structured reflective journaling, goal-setting, and purposeful reflection on teaching practice strengthen professional identity, support learning from experience, and build adaptive coping capacity. Teachers who engage in systematic reflection develop deeper understanding of their practice and identify constructive responses to challenges.

Developing Adaptive Coping and Problem-Solving Skills: Training in cognitive reframing, problem-solving approaches, and adaptive coping strategies builds teachers' capacity to respond constructively to adversity rather than experiencing helplessness or resignation.

Strengthening Professional Identity and Values: Consciously articulating and recommitting to core professional values, sense of purpose, and educational mission provides meaning and motivation that sustains commitment through difficult periods.

6.2 School-Based Strategies

Mentoring and Induction Programs: Structured mentoring for novice teachers, providing guidance, emotional support, and validation, is one of the most effective strategies for building early-career resilience and preventing burnout. Mentors provide both instrumental support

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(curriculum guidance, classroom management strategies) and emotional support (validation, encouragement, perspective-taking).

Collaborative School Cultures and Peer Support: Schools characterized by genuine collegiality, shared mission, and mutual support create psychological safety and reduce isolation. Professional learning communities where teachers regularly collaborate, share practice challenges, and develop solutions together strengthen both resilience and efficacy.

Instructional Coaching and Feedback: Regular, respectful feedback focused on instructional improvement, emphasizing what teachers are doing well alongside areas for growth, enhances efficacy through mastery experiences and social persuasion.

Recognition of Teacher Efforts and Achievements: Meaningful recognition, whether through formal acknowledgment, leadership opportunities, or simply genuine appreciation, strengthens motivation and emotional well-being. Research demonstrates that lack of recognition is a significant contributor to burnout, while appropriate recognition significantly enhances resilience.

6.3 Systemic and Policy-Level Strategies

Integration of Resilience and Well-Being in Teacher Education: Pre-service teacher education programs must move beyond technical skill development to explicitly develop emotional competence, resilience-building capacity, and self-awareness. Programs should model resilience-building practices (mindfulness, reflection, peer support) that beginning teachers can implement in their own practice.

Reducing Administrative Burden: Streamlining non-instructional paperwork, reducing unnecessary accountability reporting, and protecting instructional time from administrative encroachment significantly reduces stress and preserves energy for teaching quality.

Providing Access to Mental Health Resources: Schools should ensure that teachers have access to counseling, psychological support, and mental health resources, reducing stigma around help-seeking and ensuring that teachers struggling with stress, anxiety, or depression receive appropriate support.

Leadership Development Aligned with NEP 2020: Leadership training should emphasize trust-based leadership, psychological safety creation, support for teacher autonomy, and shared decision-making, all factors identified as critical for building resilient, efficacious teacher workforces. Research on school leadership demonstrates that supportive, distributed leadership styles are far more effective in building teacher resilience than directive, controlling approaches.

7. Enhancing Professional Efficacy Through Professional Development

Research consistently demonstrates that professional development enhances teacher efficacy when it is continuous, context-specific, collaborative, and focused on implementation in actual classrooms (Desimone, 2009). NEP 2020 mandates minimum 50 hours of continuous professional development (CPD) annually for all teachers, emphasizing reflective practice, peer learning, and technology integration (Ministry of Education, 2020). Recent research on professional development under NEP 2020 (Sharma & Gupta, 2022) identifies technology-

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driven, reflective, and mentorship-based training models as essential for sustainable teacher growth and improved student outcomes.

Effective professional development approaches that enhance efficacy include:

- **Mentoring and Peer Coaching:** Observing expert teachers and receiving feedback from skilled mentors provides vicarious experience and social persuasion, key sources of efficacy development. Instructional coaching where teachers receive ongoing support implementing new strategies significantly enhances both practice and efficacy.
- **Action Research and Reflective Communities:** Teachers engaging in systematic inquiry into their own practice, identifying questions, collecting data, analyzing results, and implementing improvements, develop mastery experiences and ownership of change. Professional learning communities built around shared inquiry strengthen both efficacy and collaboration.
- **Digital Professional Learning Communities:** Online platforms enabling teachers to connect across geographical distances, share resources, engage in discussion, and access expert-led webinars extend access to professional development opportunities. Digital PLCs are particularly valuable in India's context of geographical dispersion and rural-urban teacher distribution.
- **Competency-Based Professional Development:** Professional development explicitly aligned with NEP 2020's emphasis on competency-based learning and learner-centered pedagogy helps teachers develop capacity to implement these approaches, thereby enhancing efficacy beliefs about their ability to meet contemporary educational expectations.

8. Implications for Teacher Education and School Leadership

8.1 Teacher Education Implications

Teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, must evolve to develop not only technical teaching skills but also emotional competence, resilience capacity, and efficacy beliefs. Pre-service programs should:

- **Integrate Well-Being and Resilience Content:** All teacher education programs should include content on stress management, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and resilience-building. These should be taught experientially, not merely theoretically, modeling the practices teachers should implement.
- **Provide Mentoring and Induction Support:** Teacher education programs should include structured mentoring components, pairing beginning teachers with experienced mentors during their induction period (first 2-3 years).
- **Emphasize Reflective Practice:** Programs should develop teachers' capacity for ongoing reflection on practice, systematic self-observation, and continuous improvement, using reflective journals, peer observation, and mentoring conversations.
- **Build Professional Learning Communities:** Programs should help teachers understand and participate in professional learning communities, experiencing the benefits of collegial collaboration and shared inquiry.

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- **Address Diversity and Inclusive Pedagogy:** Comprehensive preparation in inclusive education, cultural responsiveness, and support for diverse learners builds efficacy for implementing NEP 2020's inclusion mandates.

8.2 School Leadership Implications

School leaders play a critical role in creating conditions for teacher resilience and efficacy through:

Trust-Based Leadership: Leaders who trust teachers, provide autonomy in pedagogical decision-making, and avoid excessive control or surveillance create psychological safety and foster intrinsic motivation. Research demonstrates that teachers experiencing autonomy and trust demonstrate significantly higher efficacy and lower burnout.

Psychological Safety Creation: Leaders who explicitly acknowledge challenges, welcome questions and concerns, respond supportively to difficulties, and avoid blame or punishment create environments where teachers feel safe being authentic, asking for help, and taking intellectual risks.

Shared Decision-Making: Involving teachers in decisions about school policies, curriculum approaches, professional development, and other matters affecting their work increases engagement, ownership, and commitment.

Supportive Accountability: Leaders should establish clear expectations while providing the support, resources, and feedback teachers need to meet those expectations. Accountability that includes support and assistance differs fundamentally from punitive accountability that creates fear and defensiveness.

Recognition and Appreciation: Regular, specific acknowledgment of teacher efforts and achievements, through formal recognition, leadership opportunities, or simple genuine appreciation, strengthens motivation and emotional well-being.

Professional Development Support: Leaders should actively support teacher participation in meaningful professional development, protect time for collaborative learning, and help teachers implement new learning in their classrooms.

9. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite growing recognition of teacher resilience and efficacy importance, significant challenges persist:

Measurement and Assessment Challenges: Resilience and efficacy are complex constructs that are difficult to measure precisely. Most existing measurement tools were developed in Western contexts and may not fully capture how these constructs function in India's diverse educational settings.

Contextual Diversity: India's extraordinary educational diversity, across urban-rural contexts, socioeconomic levels, language communities, and educational settings, means that resilience and efficacy factors may operate differently across contexts. Interventions effective in urban schools may require substantial adaptation for rural or tribal settings.

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Implementation-Policy Gaps: While NEP 2020 articulates important principles regarding teacher autonomy, professional development, and supportive conditions, actual implementation frequently falls short. Many schools lack resources, leadership capacity, or systemic support necessary for translating policy into practice.

Research Gaps: Future research in India should employ longitudinal and mixed-method designs to examine how resilience and efficacy develop across teachers' careers and in different educational settings. Research should also explore:

- How resilience and efficacy develop across career stages in Indian contexts
- The relationships between resilience, efficacy, and student outcomes in Indian schools
- How to effectively build resilience and efficacy for inclusive education implementation
- The roles of digital pedagogy and emerging technologies in teacher resilience and efficacy
- What systemic factors (policies, leadership, resources) influence resilience and efficacy development

10. Conclusion

Teacher resilience and professional efficacy are foundational to sustainable, high-quality education systems capable of achieving India's educational aspirations. In alignment with NEP 2020's positioning of teachers as central to educational transformation, strengthening these psychological resources requires collective responsibility across multiple levels: teacher education institutions developing resilience and efficacy from teachers' earliest preparation; schools creating supportive cultures that foster these capacities; leaders demonstrating trust, autonomy, and psychological safety; and policy frameworks providing resources, realistic accountability, and continuous professional development opportunities.

By deliberately investing in supportive environments, meaningful professional development aligned with practice needs, comprehensive well-being initiatives, and school conditions supporting autonomy and collaboration, India can empower teachers to navigate increasing complexity, sustain professional commitment, and contribute effectively to national educational goals. Such investment in teachers ultimately benefits all stakeholders, teachers experience greater well-being and satisfaction, schools develop stronger collaborative cultures, and students benefit from more engaged, effective instruction and inclusive learning environments. Teacher resilience and efficacy are not luxury investments but foundational necessities for realizing educational equity and quality in India.

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