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Teacher Education NGOs in India: Agents of Change in a Complex System

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ABSTRACT

The Indian education sector is striking in terms of its scale, complexity, and the diversity of actors involved, including NGOs. Many different types of NGO support the Government of India in its mandate to ensure the right to education. This paper focuses on a relatively new cohort of NGOs which support the right to education by providing teacher education. To understand them better, and as part of my Masters research, I interviewed staff members from nine teacher education NGOs to explore their perspectives on their role and to learn about the challenges they face. I found that teacher education NGOs value and pursue changes in teacher identity and lasting changes in practice, and they encounter significant and sometimes surprising challenges at all levels of the education system. I examine my findings with an ecological lens and show how the work and impact of these NGOs are limited by a complex and almost unyielding system. I argue that if NGOs are to assist the state in raising teaching quality, then they require accommodations to allow them to be effective.

KEYWORDS

Teacher professional development, NGOs, teacher education

Introduction

Every year, approximately 1.3 million people enrol in teacher education courses in India (Chudgar, 2015). However, these courses overemphasise theory and do not connect to everyday teaching (Srinivasan, 2016), and often fail to adequately prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom (Pushpanadham & Mammen Nambumadathil, 2020). After entering the classroom, teachers need Continuing Professional Development (CPD), but this too is limited and does not align with what teachers are actually seeking.

The Indian government has long recognised the need to improve teacher education (Verma, 2012), and indeed recommends that teachers have fifty hours of CPD per year (Government of India, 2020). Some of this CPD will likely be provided by *teacher education NGOs*, since public-private partnerships are increasingly common in education (Subramanian, 2018) and states will almost certainly need assistance in delivering the recommended hours of CPD.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are critical drivers of development across the world. In recent decades, NGOs have increased in size and number, have become more widespread, and receive more funds than before (Banks et al., 2018). The entire sector is considered "a major centralising force in mobilising activists across regions and cultures" (Ahmed, 2012:204). India has the most complex NGO landscape in South Asia (Kilby, 2019), perhaps due to its diverse states, regions, languages and cultures. Moreover, the government increasingly supports NGOs. First, it requires prosperous businesses to spend 2% of their profits on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which has increased the funds available for NGOs, with education being the most popular area for CSR (Mitra & Chatterjee, 2020). Secondly, public-private

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partnerships between state governments and NGOs are common (Jagannathan, 2001; Subramanian, 2018). This indicates that the government would like NGOs to support its education services.

Teacher education NGOs—which I define as those which provide any planned activity intended to support the professional growth of teachers, such as group training, observations and feedback, professional learning communities, and mentoring—are set to play an increasingly important role in supporting education quality in India. Despite their significance, little is known about the challenges they face and the values that guide their work.

This study, conducted as part of my Master's dissertation research, aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences and perspectives of teacher education NGO staff in India. My study was organised around two research questions:

1. What changes do teacher education NGOs prioritise in their work?
2. What challenges do NGOs face when providing in-service teacher education?

In this paper, I answer these questions, and theorise the role of teacher education NGOs, attempting to capture the complex interactions, pushes, pulls, dynamics and overall "messiness" of an emerging NGO landscape. I use an ecological metaphor proposed by Weaver-Hightower (2008) to theorise the work of teacher NGOs, and examine the framework within which they operate, revealing the challenges they face in navigating education systems and providing teacher education.

The findings from this research, and my analysis of them, may inform policies and practices that can enhance the effectiveness of teacher education NGOs and support their role in promoting educational equity and quality. While the study focuses on the Indian context, the insights gained may have broader implications for countries around the world that are increasingly relying on NGOs to supplement their education systems.

Methods

Data collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews with NGO staff to gain firsthand insights into their experiences and perspectives. This inductive approach allowed me to explore the complexities of their work, understand their challenges and priorities, and ultimately develop a comprehensive understanding of teacher education NGOs in India.

Interviews are a complicated form of data collection because they are essentially social spaces co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewee (Cohen et al., 2017). To mitigate potential challenges arising from the social nature of interviews, I implemented several strategies to standardise the process and maintain awareness of my positionality. When inviting participants, I clearly explained my role, the research purpose, and the expected contribution. I clearly communicated the principles of confidentiality and obtained explicit consent for recording. I began each interview with informal conversation to build rapport and used a semi-structured interview schedule to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to probe deeper.

I also reflected on my researcher positionality, which affects how researchers carry out and report on their work (Holmes, 2020). I reflected on my positionality as both an insider, due to my experience with Indian NGOs, and an outsider, due to my UK upbringing, and considered how this mixed positionality might influence the interview and my interpretation of it. This awareness informed my approach of emphasizing active listening and open-ended questioning to elicit participants' perspectives without imposing my own.

Interviews took place on Google Meet or Microsoft Teams and lasted up to an hour. Interviews were recorded, and then transcribed using Otter.ai. To ensure accuracy, the transcripts were checked and edited manually.

Participants

I carried out desk research to identify Indian NGOs providing in-service teacher education. I generated a list of 51 NGOs. Teachers education NGOs were selected using purposive sampling. The sample included small and large organisations, both new and more established. Table 1 presents the NGOs I interviewed. Before contacting organisations, I obtained ethical approval after reviewing the BERA guidelines for educational research.

Table 1
NGO characteristics, and pseudonyms of participants interviewed at NGOs

Pseudonym of organisation	Description of organisation	Sector	Size of teacher education program	Role of interviewee(s)	Interviewee pseudonyms
Gyan Foundation	Contributing to teacher professional development as part of its wider activities. Newly established.	Low-fee private schools	< 100 schools	Co-founder	Tara
Sudharna	Carrying out a range of education support activities. A few years old.	Low-fee private schools	< 100 schools	Program managers	Maya and Akshay
Bodh Institute	Working across multiple states to support socioemotional learning. More than a decade old.	State	> 1000 schools	Associate Director	Veda
Kalam	Supporting school improvement. A few years old.	State	< 100 schools	Director	Riya
Pustak	Supporting teachers to improve foundational literacy and numeracy. A few years old.	Low-fee private schools	< 100 schools	Communications Manager and Senior Manager	Sana and Vinay
Unnati	Offering CPD for teachers. A few years old.	Low-fee private schools	< 100 schools	Founder	Tarun
Kitab	Supporting literacy teaching. Over a decade old.	State	> 1000 schools	Senior Program manager	Amaara
Teachers Academy	Working to improve academic and socioemotional learning. Over a decade old.	Private and state	> 1000 schools	Managers	Faiz and Ronit
Pragati	Supporting overall school development. A few years old.	State	< 500 schools	Founder	Dev

Analysis

While the interviews provided valuable insights, it was initially challenging to discern clear themes. To address this, I employed a thematic analysis (Flick, 2014) to identify key patterns. I read the transcripts and generated codes for meaning in the data that related to my research questions. All transcripts were then finally coded against these 21 codes in NVivo. Thematic analysis revealed three key themes representing the changes that interviewees valued, and eight themes representing the challenges they faced in providing teacher education.

Findings

In this section, I present the key findings of my thematic analysis. The first part addresses my first research question, i.e., "What changes do teacher education NGOs prioritise in their work?" I identified two key themes, which show that teacher education NGOs value changes in teacher identity and lasting changes in practice. The second part of the findings addresses my second research question, i.e., "What challenges do NGOs face when providing in-service teacher education?" Here, I identified six challenges, which are discussed in detail.

What changes do teacher education NGOs value?

Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that teacher education NGOs value changes in teacher professional identity, and lasting changes in practice. These goals were so important, and so difficult to attain, that they felt they needed to resist pressure to scale in order to achieve them and they sought partnership with the state.

Changes in teacher identity

Often, teachers have low commitment to their role—as teachers often have poor professional habits such as a lack of planning and commitment (Raval et al, 2012), as well as low recognition and status (Srinivasan, 2016). Therefore, interviewees valued changed that showed a shift in identity, such as when teachers gained confidence through participation in a program:

> They were recognised, they were certified by us as mentors so that also brought about a lot of confidence. (Amaara)

Interviewees were most excited about the collegiality and peer learning that arose from the professional learning communities that NGOs created. Teachers got the rare opportunity to reflect together, and learn together:

> It's a platform where we express as a collective, express their emotions, express their frustrations and concerns, and we facilitate that. (Veda)

> The learning platform goes beyond just sharing things or enjoying our space for discussion … teachers could start learning from each other. (Maya)

It makes sense that teacher education NGOs would value increased teacher collaboration, since it is understood to be key to improving teaching and learning (Akiba and Liang, 2016).

Meaningful, sustainable changes

Interviewees were concerned about how to ensure that the changes they promoted would endure—they wanted to bring about deep changes which would last even after their program ended. They did this by trying to embed the new practices into existing structures. For example, some teacher education NGOs tried to transfer ownership of programs to school staff.

> We try and identify teacher leaders in the school, or we try and get the school leader involved in the whole process so that … once we leave the school the structures stay in place. (Akshay)

Recognizing the limitations of their traditional approach, one NGO sought to create more sustainable change by expanding its efforts to include collaboration with the state on curriculum development and assessment, in addition to its teacher education initiatives.

> Training the teachers … will not bring about a sustainable change unless and until you bring about a systemic change. So, we also work with the government in changing the assessment … the textbooks. (Amaara)

Some organisations talked about the inherent tension between scaling their work and ensuring the quality and sustainability of their impact. They valued a slower, more deliberate approach, emphasizing the importance of ensuring deep and lasting change even if it meant losing donor support. In the words of Riya from Kalam:

> We said … we're not going to do scale teacher training, right now we're going to focus on [our] learning, we're going to understand what it means to build centres of excellence in the government space. We know that in the short term it's going to hurt us, possibly in terms of funding, possibly in terms of opportunity. (Riya)

This is interesting because one common concern about NGOs is that they face a lot of accountability pressure and donor pressure (Banks et al, 2015) which diminishes their ability to effect real change—here we see someone risking funds by opposing a donor.

While some interviewees felt that sustainability could be achieved by staying small, most interviewees thought their teacher education efforts needed to become part of the state system.

> The moment it was a state-owned programme, there is lot of sustainability. Otherwise, the moment we leave the state, the programme also winds up …. It's a government programme and we are just facilitating. Then of course it will work well because it's owned by them. It's not owned by an external team. (Veda)

While NGOs valued engagement with the state to become scalable and legitimate, and to support system reform, they were cautious. They explained that establishing a collaboration with the state was a long process dependent on a personal relationship with an officer, upon whose transfer the partnership may break down. On the other hand, 'younger' NGOs had to engage patiently with individual education functionaries to develop relationships that might lead to partnership.

These activities—relationship building, patiently developing partnerships, negotiating with donors—go beyond the strict definition of teacher education, and show how complex NGO work really is.

What challenges do teacher education NGOs encounter?

Challenge 1: Teacher education NGOs find themselves supporting teachers with challenging roles and complex motivations

Almost all interviewees found their beneficiaries—the teachers—challenging to work with. The teachers supported by the NGOs faced numerous challenges, including low pay, excessive workload, ineffective training, and a lack of recognition and autonomy. Interviewees felt that these factors made it hard for teachers to accept new ideas and practices. Some teachers harbored the belief that students from deprived backgrounds were incapable of academic success—a misconception that can hugely affect teaching and learning (Hamre and Pianta, 2006).

> Teachers also believe that these students come from slums, so [teachers say] 'nothing will happen … we are all doing a formality'. (Tara)

Interviewees felt that teachers' low pay and status prevented them from committing to their teaching role.

> A huge challenge is the salary and prestige issues in the profession … we're working with teachers who are sometimes paid as little as 2000 rupees. (Vinay)

Interviewees felt that teachers faced excessive demands, not only in terms of large class sizes, but also because of the additional duties given to teachers which diverted them from teaching:

> The government has released a circular about how I need to go around in the neighbourhood and talk about mosquito breeding ….. show [Prime Minister] Modi Ji's seminar on Yoga Day, and I have to spend two hours just showing kids that ... run elections… [distribute] rations …. [run] covid vaccination centres. (Riya)

Riya also felt that government teacher training was not only ineffectual but demotivating, with 500 teachers in one room listening to long, repetitive, outdated presentations, without an opportunity to participate or ask questions.

> So demotivating … teachers in that system get zero acknowledgement … Honestly for me, I feel like it's an insult, you keep showing me the same presentation every year. I'm not allowed to ask questions. (Riya)

But though NGO staff members hoped their own training might be well received, some teachers were resistant to it, particularly when it was provided by young NGO staff members. They questioned their credibility as trainers and mentors.

> What's your experience? What do you know? We've been teachers for 25 years—you're gonna tell us how to teach? (Riya)

Overall, while interviewees' tone and choice of words conveyed considerable empathy for teachers, they found that the challenging professional situations of teachers made their work very complex.

Challenge 2: Inconsistent and/or incoherent government policy

Most interviewees reported difficulty within an inconsistent or unclear policy environment in which partnerships were subject to political changes, and in which program goals could easily be undermined by officials. Moreover, instead of relying on formal agreements with the state, engagement between the NGO and the state often depended on personal relationships with officials. That meant that when an officer was transferred, the role of the NGO had to be re-established, and sometimes, the partnership collapsed all together. As Amaara explained:

> When there is a shift in … the top management at the government level … it is like starting from the very beginning. (Amaara)

> It shouldn't have to be [relationship-dependent] … Because we don't have visions, and they don't have a system around how improvement will happen and how teachers will get developed … every time a person changes, everything goes with that person. (Dev)

Furthermore, NGOs and schools sometimes had little say about where or how the NGOs worked, meaning that NGO interventions were not always placed appropriately.

> It's the district officials that decide, which are the schools that needs to take training, it's not the school head, or the teacher deciding. (Faiz)

Finally, education officers sometimes issued instructions based not on policy or principles of learning but on their personal preferences. Amaara recounted an instance where a teacher, after being trained on the concept of a "print-rich environment"—which emphasises surrounding children with text through various means such as books, colorful posters, and wall text—enthusiastically implemented these strategies to support literacy, only to be subsequently reprimanded by an inspector. The teacher said:

> I know that print-rich environment is very important. But one day one of my supervisors came into my classroom and he saw these posters and all in the class. And he said, 'Why have you just made these walls dirty? I've just got them painted. Why have you done this?' (Amaara)

> However much I believe that this is very important, I will never put these posters back in my classroom, because I never know when he comes back, and he scolds me for that. (Amaara)

Interviewees felt that NGOs, school leaders and teachers were all frustrated by official decisions that hampered their efforts to serve students.

Challenge 3: Balancing their own goals with the expectations of their donors

NGOs and their donors often hold different views of the best ways to achieve change (Ahmed, 2012), and indeed, most interviewees discussed the challenge of balancing donor expectations with their own goals. Older organisations tended to have longer-term relationships characterised by trust and mission alignment, but younger organisations experienced tension between creating a deep impact and achieving the kind of scale donors expected.

> We are finding it difficult because a lot of donors are looking for scale … scale and learning outcomes. (Tara)

Tara stressed the word 'and', indicating that both scale and learning outcomes were important to donors. Younger organisations like Tara's had to work hard to justify their approaches to potential donors. This is a delicate situation to navigate; but two interviewees talked about educating their donors on the compromises to be made between scale and impact.

> We do get constantly questioned on it … 'You've only worked at seven schools? How do you think your solutions are scalable, why you've never done it before?' and we have done it, and we learned that it's not really … creating any real dent in the education… one of our key directives as an organisation has been donor education … about what it means to make real change. (Riya)

This is an interesting NGO response to well documented problems of NGOs facing pressure to scale too quickly and generate results quickly (Banks et al, 2018), and shows again, how the work of a teacher education NGO goes beyond teacher education—it involves managing and even educating donors.

Challenge 4: Other NGOs

Some interviewees felt that there were too many NGOs working with schools. For example, four interviewees said that the presence of multiple NGOs risked overloading schools and teachers with different

inputs. One explained, perhaps with a little exaggeration, that:

> In one school, there are six NGOs. One is giving one framework, the other is giving one framework, the teachers is like 'I know what to fill in for any framework, [if] they want me to fill a framework, I will fill it for them'. (Tarun)

This indicated that teachers might find the support offered to them redundant and even contradictory. Frameworks and other NGO resources might become tasks to be completed, rather than worthy ideas to integrate into their practice.

Other interviewees observed that complex NGO networks were problematic at the state level, explaining that one state government had tried to limit the number of NGO interventions. But sometimes officers did not honour that agreement.

> Government has come up with guidelines … that in a particular district, you're supposed to have one training for those teachers. That is what the district officials are supposed to do … But many times—it could be various reasons—you can have elected officials, elected representatives, saying that, you know, no, let's have this training because of this thing and all that. (Faiz)

> Again, things become even more complicated when governance becomes driven by personal relationships. Maharashtra struggles with this … there are a million NGOs, and everybody has somebody's ear. (Dev)

While interviewees did not feel directly threatened by competing NGOs, they acknowledged that the presence of multiple organizations could lead to confusion and inefficiency for schools and teachers, potentially diluting the impact of their support or even causing unintended negative consequences.

Challenge 5: High levels of teacher turnover

Teacher turnover was very frustrating for NGOs trying to change school culture. One staff member explained that teachers were sometimes transferred with little notice.

> We have no control of the joining, hiring, firing, recruitment, transfers... We have zero knowledge of that. We could go to school tomorrow and get news that a teacher's being transferred and a new teacher's coming in. (Riya)

This meant that the NGO had to continually integrate new people into their programming and culture and adapt to the loss of others. In one area, the teacher attrition rate seemed so high as to be unworkable.

> One of the things that we constantly face is attrition of teachers. There's nearly 40% attrition every year… We can't do much about it. (Tarun)

This is borne out in the literature which describes that in low-fee private schools, teacher attrition rates were high due to low teacher salaries (Sharma, 2023). The instability of teacher cohorts was difficult for NGOs because they often had to 'start over' when the staff changed.

Challenge 6: Parents who are uneasy with non-traditional learning

Parent perceptions of the teacher education NGOs were important and influenced programme success. Two organisations mentioned that parents worried when learning did not look the way they expected.

> A lot of school principals have said that when we don't give homework, then parents start complaining, 'why is my child's books not [filled]?' (Tara)

This would be very worrying to any parents who used homework and exercise books full of notes as markers of academic activity. Consequently, school leaders and NGOs had to find ways to align parents with the work they were doing.

> But then [principals] feel that sort of pressures from parents, and then we get these calls, okay, 'you guys need to come and then do this orientation with parents really, like make them understand the importance of this.' (Sana)

Tuition teachers further influenced the acceptance of one NGO. Tuition teachers are people paid to provide homework support and reteaching to students after school, and they are an accepted element of schooling in India (Sujatha, 2014). They were uncomfortable with the new and unfamiliar forms of learning introduced to the local schools.

> Something that came to a head a little bit is the tuition teachers in these communities. That was quite a challenge to work through … that the child is going to [the tuition teacher] after school and the parents are holding these tuition teachers responsible for making sure the child does well at school. (Sana)

Therefore, the tuition teachers expressed their concerns to parents, who then exerted pressure on the school leader. This meant that parents needed support to understand what the NGO was trying to do, showing again that teacher education involves so much more than the teacher alone.

Discussion

An ecological metaphor for analysing teacher education NGOs

One might assume that teacher education happens within a self-contained environment with only a few actors or stakeholders—namely the teacher, the NGO staff, and a gatekeeper providing access to the teachers (i.e. a state official or school leader). My findings indicate a more intricate reality involving a larger number of participants, as illustrated in Figure 1.

But of course, the reality is even more complex, since these actors are intertwined, and their approaches are influenced by a complex web of political, cultural, social, and economic factors.

As introduced earlier, the ecological metaphor proposed by Weaver-Hightower (2008) provides a valuable lens for comprehending the intricate landscape in which teacher education NGOs operate. This metaphor maps the actors, environments, and processes within a complex system, akin to a natural ecology with predators, prey, and various ecosystem components. By examining the relationships and environmental factors influencing these NGOs, we gain insights into their challenges and strategies for navigating this complex system. This can guide researchers, donors, policymakers, and the NGOs themselves in navigating and even improving the world of teacher education.

Figure 2 presents my findings within this ecological metaphor. The actors are depicted in hexagons. Direct relationships between actors are shown by solid arrows, and indirect or less formal relationships by dotted arrows. Global and state contexts are represented by circles, and key political, social, and economic factors are depicted as clouds.

Figure 1
A simple view of the people affecting teacher education

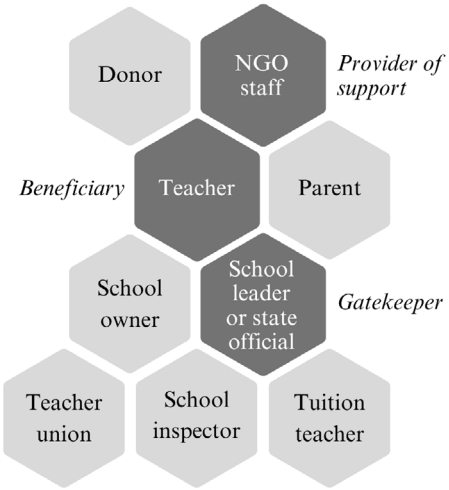
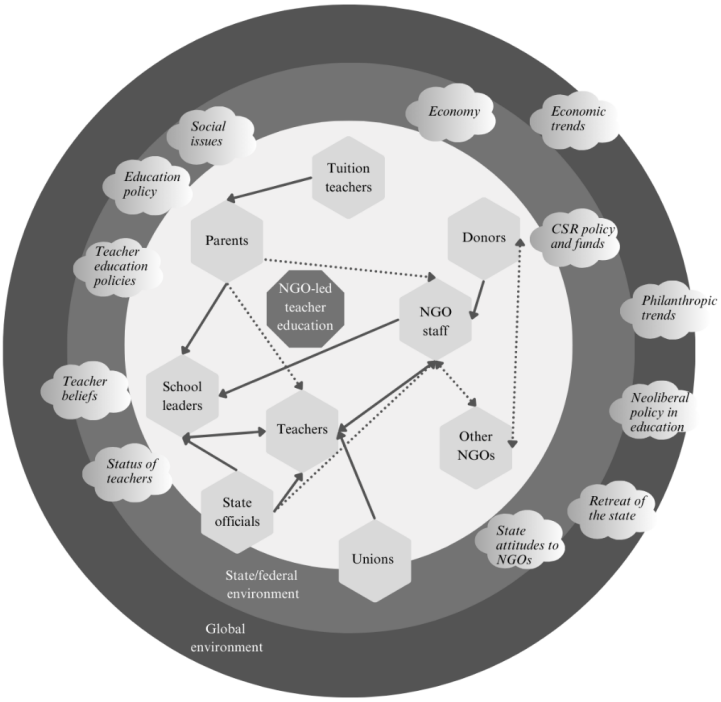


Figure 2
An ecological model of teacher education NGOs



Relationships and interactions within the ecosystem

This ecological metaphor reveals a variety of relationships between the actors, including competition, in which actors compete for scarce resources; cooperation, where actors deliberately work together for a common goal; symbiosis, where 'actors work independently for gain to all actors but without intention' (Weaver-Hightower 2008:166); and predation, in which actors wield power to take resources from others.

For example, when NGO staff struggle to gain the attention and commitment of donors and state officials, this is competition. When NGOs and school leaders work together to educate parents about

unfamiliar modes of teaching and learning, this is cooperation. When NGOs lobby the government to be involved in education reform, even though they do this independently of one another, they incrementally normalise NGO engagement as an acceptable and feasible way to improve education quality, which benefits other NGOs - this is symbiosis. These relationships all hint at some of the reasons why India is considered to have such a complex NGO landscape (Kilby, 2019).

Environmental factors shaping NGO work

Besides the actors and their relationships, the environment is also worth considering in light of my findings—again using ecological terms. Looking at the inner circle of Figure 2—the immediate world of the teacher NGOs—we can observe three things. First, there are many niches and roles. We can imagine that the emergence of teacher NGOs may disrupt niches and roles, and that the NGOs might then need to manage this—as we saw when one NGO unsettled the tuition teachers who have a peripheral but accepted role in schooling (Sujatha, 2014). Second, many actors in this ecology have agency; the power is not just top-down. For example, parents of students may exert pressure on the school leader, who may in turn exert pressure on the NGO—and teachers, too have agency to reject the PD offered to them, which can complicate the work of NGOs, as has been observed by others (Raval, 2012). And third, there are limited inputs or resources available, for example, teacher time is limited and not always within the control of the teachers, and certainly not the NGO.

The broader environment of a teacher education NGO, shown in Figure 2 as the next circle out, also significantly impacts its work. Factors like teacher beliefs, the low status of teachers, poorly implemented teacher education policies, decisions of donors, and the willingness of the state to collaborate and support NGOs all influence what teacher NGOs do. Well-intentioned NGO interventions can be undermined by sudden policy shifts or the personal biases of officials. And donors, trying to optimise their funds, can cause NGOs to spend time and energy managing them - instead of their intended beneficiaries, as others have observed (Banks et al., 2015; Ahmed, 2012).

Moving further out in Figure 2, we can imagine that global trends in education policy and philanthropy indirectly impact NGOs by shaping state-level conditions and expectations. For example, shifts in global funding priorities or policy trends, such as the current emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy (Evans and Hares, 2021), might have cascading effects on state-level environments—in this case, potentially requiring teacher education NGOs to align with the global trend, in order to secure support.

Implication

The ideas from this ecological metaphor can be abstracted and applied beyond the context of teacher education NGOs in India to education development in general. First, the metaphor suggests that though people and NGOs make a difference, their impacts are limited by the system. Second, NGOs constantly evaluate, adjust, and manage their environment to attain the change they want. This adaptive work is revealed by the ecological metaphor but is usually not visible. NGOs may seem slow or ineffective because of the time they spend on hidden, adaptive work—but in fact, the constant process of adaptation and accommodation is the work. This is not to say that an NGO's work and choices must be unconditionally accepted—just that there are aspects of it that are hidden and complex and generally overlooked, which are made clearer by applying the ecological metaphor. Third, the metaphor explains why NGOs struggle to achieve their intended outcomes, by showing how they interact with and are bounded by a complex, sometimes unpredictable system.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the gap in knowledge about teacher education NGOs in India, highlighting the complex and challenging landscape in which they operate. These organisations find themselves at odds

with the prevailing education system. They do not slot neatly into existing arrangements for schools and teachers; they must carve out a niche, which requires them to carry out unusually extensive roles within an unaccommodating system.

The findings of this study may be of particular relevance to stakeholders involved in teacher education, such as donors, policymakers, government officials, program evaluators, and NGOs. Below, I present recommendations based on my findings:

- **Donors:** The work of teacher education NGOs extends far beyond teacher training—multiple actors are involved and the work of NGOs is constrained by structures and environments that are hidden from those not 'on the ground.' Therefore, donors would ideally (1) budget time, finances, and staff energy to attend to matters like relationship-building and parent education; (2) determine metrics of success that represent the full role of teacher education NGOs.
- **Policymakers and officials:** Teacher education NGOs attempt to provide sustainable and meaningful experiences to supplement state teacher training experiences. These NGOs also serve as a testing ground for state policy by showcasing innovative models of CPD. To support these efforts, policymakers must explore ways to reasonably integrate teacher education NGOs into the existing system. Furthermore, policymakers can foster improved understanding between NGOs and education officers.
- **Evaluators of teacher education programs:** Because 'teacher education' is but one part of the work of teacher education NGOs, it is important to consider the ecological metaphor presented here and look at how successfully the NGO engages with the rest of the ecosystem. During the initial stages of work, particular attention should be paid to the NGO's involvement in seemingly peripheral activities such as relationship-building. These activities are valuable and should be evaluated as they serve as foundational elements for achieving long-term goals such as improved teaching practices and enhanced student outcomes.
- **NGOs:** Teacher education NGOs, and arguably, education NGOs more broadly, have many common challenges and values. It can therefore be beneficial to collaborate with other organisations to navigate the challenges involved and advocate for accommodations to allow NGO work to be more effective.

In summary, there is a clash between the intentions of NGOs and the system, and NGOs constantly accommodate to the system. I argue that in fact NGOs require accommodations—from several actors—if they are to assist the state in raising the quality of education.

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