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FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS WITH A NEW FOCUS AND MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The quality of instruction has a big effect on student learning outcomes, however, teacher education programs in India usually value theory over real life application. This study reviews India's pre-service teacher education system with a new focus on removing the gap between "theory and practice" through advanced reforms and globally accepted models. This discourse reviews the literature regarding highly effective teacher training, emphasising the importance of practicum and reflective practice in forming a teacher's identity (Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell, 2006). In India, some of the biggest problems include outdated curricula, insufficient connections between schools and colleges, and inefficient entry standards for trainees (National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE], 2019). By looking over comparative case studies from Finland and Japan, we examine effective components such as rigid selection processes, extended internships, and ongoing professional development. In light of these lessons and future modifications to the law (Government of India, 2020; UNESCO, 2021), we propose the following reforms: four-year integrated teacher education programs that include school internships, enhanced mentorship and career pathways, and the use of reflective journaling practices. We review these recommendations and look at their repercussions for policy and practice, suggesting that India's teacher education should be reformed to focus on practical application. The suggested solutions seek to ensure that future primary and secondary school teachers understand not just educational theories but also practical experience and reflective practice once stepping into the classroom.

KEYWORDS: future teacher, India, educational theory, reflective practice, educational goals, NEP 2020, Finland, Japan, training reforms, continuous professional development.

INTRODUCTION

An essential component of successful schools is exceptional instruction. Numerous studies indicate that a motivated and well-prepared educator can substantially enhance student motivation and performance (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006). Teachers are so pivotal to India's recent educational changed, including the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (Government of India, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). India's pre-service teacher education mostly focuses on theory-based courses, leaving new teachers inadequately equipped to address classroom difficulties (Kumar & Azam, 2018; NCTE, 2019). The "theory-practice gap" has been highlighted in policy discussions as a major shortcoming in teacher education: graduates may excel in academic assessments yet encounter difficulties in maintaining classroom discipline, lesson planning, and adapting their pedagogy to deal with diverse learners (Sharma, 2019; Korthagen, 2017).

Most high-performing systems encourage the seamless combination of theory and practice. Applicants go through intense, research-oriented training complemented by extended school-based placements in Finland and Japan, two educational systems usually acknowledged for their highly qualified teaching personnel (Sahlberg, 2010; Shimizu, 2013). Students display considerable autonomy, trust, and respect in these countries (Sahlberg, 2011; OECD, 2018). Their achievement indicates the possibility of extending this effect to India by enhancing teacher preparation in India by focusing on practical experience and reflective learning. This article examines the rebirth of pre-service teacher training in India, focusing on the transition from theory to practice. This paper highlights the challenges confronting India today, examines the academic and policy literature on teacher training, and evaluated the significance of practicum and reflection. Comparative insights are derived from case studies of India and international exemplars, particularly Finland and Japan. Later on, we address the consequences for policy and classroom practice, by providing specific modifications derived from NEP 2020 and UNESCO principles. We uphold a professional and academic tone constantly, and we reference current reliable sources. We aim to formulate a comprehensive strategy for teaching future Indian educators who will be capable and reflective practitioners.

Literature Review

Research on teacher education highlights a fundamental set of concepts universal to effective teacher education programs. Korthagen, Loughran, and Russell (2006) observed seven fundamental principles of teacher education in a meta-analysis of highly regarded programs

in three distinct countries. A key result is that theory and practice must be integrated for effective teacher and learning. Korthagen et al. (2006) state, p. 1021, "learning about teaching necessitates significant relationships among schools, universities, and student teachers", this implies that teacher candidates regularly implement their theoretical knowledge in actual classroom with appropriate management. They also underline the significance of horizontal links in fostering peer collaboration among trainees and the idea that information must be actively generated rather than passively acquired. Reflective, practice-based learning is essential, as this literature points out: learners must consistently evaluate their own practices with the support of educational theory, and vice versa.

According to Schon (1983), the literature on teacher learning is shaped by the concept of the "reflective practitioner". According to Schon, professionals develop their skills by converting real-world experiences into professional wisdom through reflection-in-action (during practice) and reflection-on-action (afterward). Reflective practice has demonstrated its effectiveness in assisting educators in developing a critical comprehension of the complexities of the classroom. Padmanabha (2023) said that "reflective journals are regarded as a valuable instrument for facilitating reflection among pre-service teachers", connecting theoretical concepts to real- world applications. Professional development is understood to require the ability to reflect, established in comprehensive educational philosophy (Dewey, 1933; Korthagen et al., 2006). The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009) in India clearly stated that teacher education programs must encourage reflective practices in aspiring educators, including practicum journaling. Research knows there are problems; without enough leadership, reflective journaling may not be enough and do not encourage real professional insight (Padmanabha, 2023).

Comparative research universally shows the disparities in teacher education cultures. Kundu (2025) did a detailed comparison analysis of Finland, Japan, and India, showing that Finland's system is highly research-focused and selective. The majority of Finnish educators hold master's degrees, and their training includes both classroom instruction and long hours of research. The teaching profession in Finland has been determined by freedom and trust, employing the most talented individuals (Sahlberg, 2010). In Japan, strong community ties and continuous professional growth are highly valued. Japanese educators are seen as moral mentors closely tied to the objectives of the community. They take part in structured in-school training, more specifically via the application of lesson study (Takemura, 2018).

These cultures see teaching as a noble vocation and maintain a strong commitment to lifelong learning. India lacks behind in comparison: political involvement has compromised teacher's professional status, pedagogical approaches mostly prefer teacher-centred methods, and recruitment demands reflect significant variations (Kundu, 2025).

Global comparisons show that rigid admissions standards, an extended school-based practicum, reflective mentoring, and effective professional support networks are the primary factors affecting excellent teacher preparation. These findings have been confirmed by Indian study. Research shows that Indian Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs are often hampered by insufficient mentorship, limited school exposure, and traditional curriculum (Singh, 2025; Zaman & Mahanta, 2025). The disconnection of college-level method courses with the real obstacles of teaching in real classroom is another qualitative research results, indicating that trainee teachers mostly lack readiness for inclusive and diverse classrooms. Alumni showed dissatisfaction in this matter (Singh, 2025; Zaman & Mahanta, 2025).

Leading reports have called for immediate policy-level changes. Pre-service training must be remodified for India to meet its educational goals, according to UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India 2021: No Teacher, No Class, which put together lots of evidence and opinions of the stakeholders (UNESCO, 2021). The study argues for the redevelopment of curriculum and pedagogical approaches to focus on practical training, diversity, and essential skills. UNESCO points out "supporting communities of practice" and "restructuring pre- service professional development while enhancing curricular and pedagogical alternation" in its policy calls for action. These correlate with the literature's recommendations for continuous professional learning networks and practice-oriented training, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 helps in the change from memorisation to experience, inquiry-based learning, underlining that future educators must be "encouraging, supportive, and kind facilitators" (Government of India, 2020).

The literature indicates an ongoing difference in India between the present classroom realities and the theoretically focused teacher training of previous years. Globally, effective programs combine challenging teaching with more fieldwork and reflective practice. Changing admission criteria, revised curriculum, and including structured reflective practice into teacher programs are important to address the variations in India (Korthagen et al., 2006; Padmanabha, 2023; Singh, 2025; Zaman & Mahanta, 2025). The following sections explain these findings by looking at India's recent challenges and providing evidence for

practice-oriented methodologies.

Key Challenges in Current Indian Teacher Training

The pre-service teacher training system in India has various interconnected challenges. Initially, there are significant difference in quality and admission criteria. Until recently, the two-year B.Ed. program had almost zero central admission requirements, allowing any graduate to apply. UNESCO has seen that important number of teacher candidates possess not enough subject-matter knowledge and communication skills. In certain states, a high percentage of B.Ed. positions are filled by candidates who lack required science qualifications, and most of the candidates show a lack communication skills and self-confidence (UNESCO, 2020). In some areas, a decrease in student enrolment is occurring as individuals choose for alternative professional courses (Sharma, 2022), resulting in the shortage of educators. These issues jeopardise the development of instructors who fulfil certification criteria yet lack required intellectual and pedagogical preparation.

Secondly, an ongoing gap still exists between teaching and understanding. Various studies have showed that B.Ed. and related programs primarily focus on theoretical dimensions. Official analyses have showed that the curriculum has not kept up with changes in educational developments. According to Singh (2025), Indian teacher education mostly lacked alignment with actual teaching requirements, resulting in a gap between theory and practice. Coursework typically focuses educational psychology and regular methods, such as technology integration and student-centred pedagogy, rather than focusing on modern instructional strategies or practical teaching skills. As a result, trainers may have a lot of extensive knowledge of texts yet lack practical skills in engaging with actual students or presenting lesson plans under supervision.

Lack of mentorship and facilities worsen this dilemma. Rao (2024) states that various teacher education institutions (TEIs) have gaps in the resources they need, including old teaching aids, limited libraries, and limited access to modern educational technologies. The present field practice is mostly poorly supervised. Zaman and Mahanta (2025) state that partner schools in various B.Ed. programs have very less experienced mentor teachers. Mentoring teachers may bear substantial workloads or lack formal experience in supervision, while partnering institutions may lack the means or incentives to accommodate interns. Consequently, engaging in teaching practice may prove to be a fruitless endeavour with restricted opportunities for feedback. The practicum experience is hindered by logistical

challenges (travel, time) and "inconsistent supervision practices", according to the same study (Zaman & Mahanta, 2025). Ultimately, the cooperation between schools and colleges, which should underpin practicum experiences, is frequently "fragmented and unsupervised", so reducing on-the-job training.

Third, challenges related to professional and academic culture hold back reform. Historically, teaching has not consistently been seen as a valued profession in India, optimal candidates have been excluded by inadequate remuneration and negative public perception. The quality of teachers may decline in areas where political appointments or demanding hiring examinations are prevalent. India's education system is afflicted by significant corruption, diminishing respect for teachers, and escalating political interference-elements that undermine morale and attract top talent, says Kundu (2025). Prejudiced mindsets can continue in teacher education institutions, where lecture-based instruction and rote memorization prevail over inquiry and reflective practice (Singh, 2025). Many educators hold to outdated methodologies ignorant of a culture of continuous enhancement, so replicating the same "theory-dominant" framework that reform leaders object to.

Ultimately, innovation gets hindered by structural limitations. Despite the establishment of consistent regulations by state councils (SCERTs) and India's central regulatory authority (NCTE), administrative inflexibility and capacity constraints prevent progress. Singh (2025) states that despite prior reform initiatives, challenges like as inflexible curricula and a lack of educators "persisted". The increasing number of private B.Ed. colleges, some of questionable quality, complicates standardization (Sharma, 2022). Implementing the extensive reforms outlined in NEP 2020- such as the updated National Professional Standards for Teachers and integrated B.Ed. degrees- across a large and diversified system is a significant job (Government of India, 2020).

In conclusion, issues related to candidate quality, the theory-practice divide in the curriculum, inadequate school interactions and mentoring, as well as structural and cultural inertia, are all limitations of India's existing teacher training system. These issues must be resolved before new teachers may be adequately equipped for classroom life. The subsequent section explores how these deficiencies can be remedied by enhancing the practicum and reflective practice.

Role of Practicum and Reflective Practice

All agree that the practicum, a systematic school-based experience, is the most crucial component of pre-service teacher education. It transforms theoretical knowledge into practical abilities within operational systems. Korthagen et al. (2006) state that for a practicum to be effective, educational institutions must establish "close connections". This involves placing trainees in actual classrooms under the guidance of a university supervisor and a mentor teacher. The practicum instructs trainees in classroom management, facilitating varied learners, and the preparation and delivery of programs. The involvement with the real world enhance their understanding of academic theory.

Reflection improves the importance of the practical. Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) highlight that practitioners understand their assumptions and obtain knowledge through reflection and action. Methods such as reflective journaling and video feedback sessions provide teacher candidates a chance to look at their teaching style. Pre-service teachers enhance the relationship between theory and practice by documenting their experiences, as proven by research (Padmanabha, 2023). In addition, journaling "educates pre-service teachers to examine past experiences for significance, connecting theory to practice", as stated by Padmanabha. Regular reflection on assignments, whether weekly or daily (e.g., "What was effective in my lesson and why?"), fosters deeper learning compared to just repeating lectures in a well-structured program.

Additionally, reflective practice promotes adaptability. Educators in India schools have to constantly adapt to the diverse origins and varying resource levels of their students. New teachers can recognize obstacles (disciplinary issues, learning deficiencies) and implement solutions through organised reflection. A trainee may document in a journal that students struggled with a mathematical concept and subsequently seek an alternative exercise for the next session. The discipline of "reflective thinking" evolves into a professional advantage over time.

However, there are obstacles in integrating practice with reflection in India. Practicums are usually limited by time and undertaken at local urban schools, providing just a brief overview of learning contexts. Reflection is underutilized; many courses necessitate a final "report" yet fail to provide students with clear instruction in reflective methodologies (Rao, 2024; Zaman & Mahanta, 2025). Mentors or teachers may occasionally fail to exhibit reflective dialogue.

To take advantage of the potential of practicum and reflection, programs must be strategically designed. Essential elements include:

1. **Extended internships:** Trainees ought to collaborate with schools for months rather than weeks, maybe in progressive phases (e.g., observation, co-teaching, leading mini-lessons).
2. **Professional mentorship:** Each trainee requires a qualified mentor teacher who provides regular feedback and shows best practices. This requires a relationship between schools and colleges (institutions must evaluate and train mentors).
3. **During seminars and workshops:** University supervisors can set up debriefing sessions in which trainees exchange their classroom experiences and engage in collaborative reflection.
4. **Tools for reflection:** Guide notebooks or portfolios may be employed for arranging trainees' reflections on teaching objectives, obstacles, and achievements. Rubrics, such as the Sparks-Langer et al. (1990) framework, can assess the quality of reflection, beyond simple description.
5. **Course integration:** Assignments from theory classes should be immediately implemented in practicum. A lesson plan template used in class may be employed by trainees in school and thereafter analysed during feedback sessions.

When practice and reflection are solid, they can facilitate the resolution of other issues. For example, if trainees acquire knowledge about diverse educational institutions (urban, rural low-resourced), they become culturally educated and adaptable. Reflective practice encourages critical evaluation. Gaps between the instruction presented in the literature and the actual experiences of students, which stimulate innovation. Korthagen et al. (2006) believe that this immersion allows trainees to "cross the gap between what is encompassed in teacher education and what aspiring educators require for their future endeavours practice".

In Finland and Japan, practicums are included into the curriculum from beginning to end. Finnish teacher training includes comprehensive fieldwork supervised by educational institutions and universities (Sahlberg, 2010). Japanese student teachers dedicate considerable time to schools, sometimes as early as their second year of study. Both methods incorporate reflection within the process. Japan's lesson study culture can be used in pre-service teachers, where trainees engage in collaborative lesson design and later reflection (Cole et al., 2019). The Japanese Ministry of Education defines lesson study as a "means to develop teachers

through collaboration among universities, schools, and educational boards" (MEXT, 2018). They foster a professional culture of continuous learning.

In India, there have been gradual advancements in strengthening the practicum. The NCFTE 2009 and its 2021 draft both proposed extended teaching internships and reflective components. The NEP 2020 explicitly mandates internships and case-based, learner- centred training (Government of India, 2020). However, the implementation has been inconsistent. Practicum remains seen as a mere checkbox (e.g., fulfilling 30 days of practice teaching) rather than being completely integrated into the curriculum at most universities. In the future, teacher must prioritise practicum and reflection as central components of learning, rather than marginal elements. This is crucial for the integration of theory and practice in the authentic professional competence of future teachers in India.

Case Studies: India, Finland, and Japan

This section presents examples case studies of teacher education in India and two additional countries, models from Finland and Japan. The cases highlight varying practices and facilitate potential modifications in India.

In India's traditional framework, teacher training is mostly provided in independent Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) institutions. These state or privately administered institutes typically operate separate from multidisciplinary universities. The degree typically follows the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), integrating subject methodology, pedagogy, and school placements. However, we have noted the deficiencies, limited practical, theory- centric courses, and variable quality.

Example: A change from this model is outlined in the National Education Policy 2020. Integrated Teacher Education Programs (ITEP), a four-year integrated bachelor's degree is recommended by NEP (perhaps along with a master's degree) for educators (Singh, 2025). ITEP pilot projects (with organisations like NCERT and state institutions) are starting to concentrate on concurrent work in educational institutions. Some of the most recent B.Ed. programs, for instance, incorporate weekly school placements into the degree rather than putting them in line during the previous year. In these experiments, a student participated might spend one day a week at a partner school before stepping up to two days, making up for less time spent on classes on campus during those days. Although these pilot models

are still being developed, the first feedback indicates that trainees who participate consistently throughout the year are better prepared for the classroom.

Reflective portfolios are another new practice in India. Some teacher training institutions have started asking their trainees to keep digital portfolios consisting of lesson plans, student work samples, and self-assessments. These portfolios are reviewed by faculty mentors on a regular basis, encouraging ongoing reflection. Research shows that trainees who kept a reflection journal became more flexible with their teaching skills (Bhattacharya et al., 2021; Dixit, 2020). Institutions such as Azim Premji University and TISS are formally adding these practices into their B.Ed. programs, even though it's just a bit.

Additionally, there are additional programs for mentoring in elementary schools. For example, the Kendriya Vidyalaya (central school) system has been adding teacher trainees from allied colleges in pairs of interns for many years. Similarly, most of the states train already practicing teachers to supervise B.Ed. students (Kerala's SCERT, for example). These programs are similar to international initiatives that connect beginners with more experienced educators. However, there isn't enough training for mentors to provide effective supervision, and coverage isn't consistent.

India's "case study" has become one of transformation. While policy-initiated experiments and innovations, such as integrated courses with longer internships, and emerging mentorship networks, are on the horizon, traditionally based teacher training remains largely unchanged. Although they are still in their infancy, these efforts aim to reolicate accomplishments found abroad. One important issue is how to scale up (given the constraints of policy and resources).

Finland. The rigorousness and cohesion of Finnish teacher preparation have been extensively studied. Every teacher in Finland, from elementary school through secondary school, holds a master's degree in education or a related field (UNESCO, 2021). Universities and research centres serve as the foundation for teaching training. Only 10% of students are admitted for elementary teacher training each year in Finland due to the country's fierce competition (Sahlberg, 2010). Excellent high school results, especially the best scores on the Finnish matriculation exam, and successful motivation and interpersonal skills interviews are requirements for admission (Sahlberg, 2010). Hiring only those who are thought to be both academically capable and genuinely passionate about teaching is the rationale for this.

There is a good balance in the curriculum. It integrates pedagogical theory, instructional practice, and subject-matter expertise. The program lasts five to six years for applicants aspiring to become primary teachers, with a three-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's degree first earned. Fieldwork is spread out over time; students usually begin their practicum in schools in their sophomore year and progressively assume more responsibility. Notably, cooperating teachers receive formal release time and mentorship training, and practicum placement rates are high (Korthagen et al., 2006). Teacher educators and school mentors work together closely at the university. According to one study, "over 80% of the cooperating teachers participated in training courses… provided by teacher educators" in the Utrecht (Netherlands) program (similar to Finland), and they were paid to help trainees for years (Korthagen et al., 2006).

Teachers in Finland also have great social standing and self-assurance. Although salaries are competitive, "teaching is always the most respected profession" in Finland, according to Sahlberg (2010). Teachers are motivated by professional devotion rather than just money as a result of this ethos. Political interference in education is quite limited because schools are free to adapt the national curriculum to suit their needs. Additionally, instructors continue to learn after graduation by conducting research, attending seminars, and perhaps earning doctorates. In general, Finland's approach stresses quality at every level, from lifelong learning to reflexive, iterative practice and selective hiring.

Japan. The arrangement of teacher education in Japan exhibits both variations and commonalities, in its focus on Finland. Admission to teacher education is not determined by a singular national standard. Assessment; rather, prospective educators engage in university education programs adhering to the norm, university admission exams. They pursue a double major, typically in their chosen field of study subject and a teaching licensure program. Teacher education typically spans four-year (akin to India's prior three- year B.Ed. or four-year ITEP). In 2010, Japan reformed its teacher education curriculum which aims to offer enhanced flexibility and content (MEXT, 2019), although Fundamental attributes endure robust practical training and values teaching.

Japanese trainees invest considerable time in educational institutions through an intensive internship referred to as 教育実習 (teaching practicum). A secondary trainee may reside at a practice school for an entire semester, gradually assuming responsibility for classes under

the guidance of a master teacher. This approach helps students understand how to use all they have acquire in their real life and get used to the way school works. Newly graduated teachers start an in-service induction phase that includes mentoring and collective reflection sessions. A well-known Japanese approach is lesson study. Even though most of the time only teachers use it, some parts are also taught to new trainees. In lesson study, several teachers work together to design a class, one instructs while the others observe carefully, and subsequently, the group meets to look at the results and provide adjustments. Lesson study is a systematic approach for teachers to work together to enhance their teaching skills: "Lesson studies…provide opportunities for teachers to learn together to improve practical teaching skills by observing one another's lessons" (JICA, 2018). This collaborative idea exemplifies Japanese tradition.

Japanese teachers are culturally respected as moral instructors, despite facing career pressures, including extended working hours and promotion based on seniority. Teacher development is continuous: a complex professional development system exists, typically mandated by regulations for in-service training for seasoned educators (NIER, 2020). The government invests in teacher centres and promotes research on classroom practices.

Consequently, Japan exemplifies a paradigm in which collective thinking and progressive practice are central.

Comparative Analysis. Upon comparison of various examples, certain patterns begin to manifest. Finland prioritises academic excellence and trust, Japan emphasises collaborative practices and communal ideals, whereas India is presently contending with issues of scale and consistency.

Aspects	**India (current)**	**Finland**	**Japan**
Selection/Entry	You can get into B.Ed. after getting your bachelor's degree; there is no standard test, and the quality varies (Singh, 2025).	Very picky: only the best candidates are accepted; they need to do well in high school and pass interviews (Sahlberg, 2010).	University entry; competitive education departments; moderate selectively (MEXT, 2019).

Academic Requirement	2 years of B.Ed. after a 3-year degree (around 5 years total); proposals for a 4-year integrated ITEP (Singh, 2025).	A master's degree is the least amount of education needed to become a teacher (5-6 years total) (UNESCO, 2021).	A four-year college program and a bachelor's degree are usually required to get a teaching credential.
Practicum/Internship	Limited field experience (like 4-8 weeks of practical teaching); typically broken up because of logistics (Kundu, 2025).	Long-term, spread out across years; mentors were taught and given time off; partnerships were important (Korthagen et al., 2006).	Very broad: internships over the completer semester, structures co- teaching, and required in-service training (JICA, 2018).
Reflective Practice	Emerging focus; some usage of journals in advanced programs; often underemphasised (Bhattacharya et al., 2021).	High: The program has research projects, instructor inquiry, and assignments for reflection.	High: Lesson study and working together on lesson plans make reflection a part of school life (JICA, 2018).
eacher Status/ Autonomy	Mixed: A lot of workers, but they are often not safe; they don't get the respect they	A lot of trust and respect; teaching is seen as a prestigious job (Sahlberg, 2010).	People generally regard them, especially in their own communities. Their function as

	ire (Kundu, 2025)		moral educators is important (NIER, 2020).
Continuous PD	Not very organised; mostly one-time in-service courses; not a strong culture of continuing professional development yet. NEP 2020 says that everyone must do 50 hours of work each year (Singh, 2025).	Systematic CPD: lots of chances to take in-service courses, work together on research, and get advanced degrees.	Formal framework for in-service training, such as 10-year refresh training and continuous workshop requirements (TIMSS & PIRLS, 2016).
Curriculum Emphasis	Mosty theoretical (child psychology, methodology); gradually transitioning to learner-centred behaviours (Singh, 2025)	Constructivist, student-centred teaching; curriculum collaboratively designed by universities and schools.	Moral and civic education are combined; lessons are gradually becoming more student-centred thanks to insights from lesson study.

This comparison indicates multiple insights for India. Initially, increasing academic standards, according to Finland's approach, could draw more dedicated candidates; but, India must concurrently solve existing shortages. Secondly, enhancing and prolonging practicum experiences, as demonstrated in Finland and Japan, appears essential; Indian initiatives such as ITEP seek to expand internship durations (Singh, 2025). Third, cultivating a reflective culture through instruments such as lesson study or notebooks may facilitate the connection between theory and practice. Ultimately, enhancing teacher status and support (including incentives, career trajectories, and community involvement) may foster quality and retention (Kundu, 2025).

Proposed Reforms and Strategies

Based on the problems and insights from case studies, we propose a series of changes and methods to enhance India's pre-service teacher education. These criteria seek to integrate practice, reflection, and professionalism into teacher training.

1. Implement Integrated Four-Year Teacher Education (ITEP).

The NEP 2020 views a four-year integrated Bachelor of Education program as essential (Singh, 2025). This comprehensive curriculum should be stringent, accepting only eligible individuals immediately following secondary education. An extended duration facilitates more profound subject comprehension and increased school involvement. Evidence from Finland and other OECD nations indicates that early recruitment of high-achieving students (e.g., through integrated programs) enhances teacher quality (Sahlberg, 2010). The ITEP program must integrate interdisciplinary knowledge with teaching, alternating coursework in educational psychology, subject mastery, and inclusive practice with extended internships. According to Singh (2025), ITEP "seeks to attract highly qualified candidates… and furnish them with interdisciplinary exposure, pedagogical foundation, and practical classroom involvement". This program ought to be provided by multidisciplinary universities instead of standalone Teacher Education Institutions, thereby fostering a comprehensive intellectual environment and research prospects.

2. Strengthen and Expand Practicum Experiences.

The practicum must evolve from basic requirement to a significant component to the training. We recommend for progressive internships: commencing with observational phases, transitioning to co-teaching, and concluding with independent teaching parts. The total duration of the internship must be no less than one year throughout the program, with trainees placed in schools for 1 to 3 days per week. It is essential that mentor instructors in educational institutions obtain formal training and incentives. Policy may offer honoraria or academic credits to cooperating instructors and require designated time for mentor meetings, as previously implemented in the Utrecht model (Korthagen et al., 2006). Systematic cooperation between schools and colleges, including joint workshops as proposed by Korthagen et al. (2006), should be established.

3. Embed Reflective Practice and Action Research.

Every trainee must uphold a reflective portfolio that records lesson plans, reflections, and evaluations of students work. Teacher educators are required to evaluate these portfolios and facilitate reflection. Incorporating modules on "teacher as researcher" would equip trainees to undertake little action research projects within their classrooms (e.g., implementing an

intervention and analysing outcomes). This corresponds with Korthagen's (2006) principle od "teacher research" and Japan's focus on inquiry. Academic credit ought to be awarded for reflective activities to guarantee their serious consideration. Faculty require training in promoting reflection, such as crafting appropriate prompts for journal entries and facilitating reflective seminars.

4. Selective and Robust Admissions.

India should implement strong admission standards similar to those in Finland to assure qualified candidates. This may entail standardised entry examinations (both subject-specific and pedagogical) in conjunction with interviews evaluating motivation and communication skills. Several states currently implement B.Ed. admission examination; this practice should be enforced at the national level for all programs. Top performers, such as those in the highest percentile of secondary examinations, may be awarded scholarships or prioritised placement, so recruiting high achievers. Aligning recruiting with the ambitions of teaching, such as emphasising career growth, may help enhance status. India should promote exemplary teacher role models, such as Ranjitsinh Disale and other worldwide teacher prize finalists, to alter perceptions (ResearchGate, 2025).

5. Revise Curriculum to Focus on Competencies.

Curricula have to move from rote memorization to competency-based results. The NEP promotes for redesigned teacher education curricula that promote learner-centred and constructivist pedagogy (Singh, 2025). Courses should effectively instruct educators in inclusive methodologies, multilingual education, and the integration of technology, in accordance with national initiatives such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM. Practical teaching courses ought to incorporate case studies, micro-teaching laboratories, and simulation exercises. Consistent alignment between courses and classroom reality is essential: instructing a course on "assessment techniques" should directly correlate with trainees developing and implementing formative evaluations during their internships.

6. Establish National Professional Standards and Licensing.

The draft National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) in India need final approval and implementation. These standards encompassing topic understanding, pedagogy, ethics, and leadership would establish a unified framework for program accreditation, entrance and exit examinations, and licensure. A national licensing examination (revised CTET/NET) can guarantee that all graduating educators fulfil essential professional competencies. Integrating this with obligatory Continuous Professional Development (e.g., 50 hours annually as suggested by NEP) establishes a framework for accountability and advancement. Promotions

and advanced training possibilities could be linked to accrued CPD credits, such as systems in Japan (MEXT, 2019).

7. Professional Mentoring and Career Pathways.

A National Mentoring Mission, as proposed by NEP 2020, should be established, partnering each early-career teacher with a seasoned mentor for minimum of five years. This mentoring should encompass classroom observation, feedback loops, and collaborative reflection sessions. Certain Indian states, such as Andhra Pradesh, have implemented induction programs that received favourable feedback. Furthermore, well-defined career trajectories (e.g., teacher-mentor-coordinator jobs) would acknowledge and compensate master educators. Professionalising these jobs enhances the appeal of teaching as a career by providing opportunities for promotion (Bhattacharya et al., 2021).

Investment in Infrastructure and Resources.

Successful reform necessitates investment. Training schools must enhance resources (laboratories, libraries, information and communication technology) to ensure that theoretical learning integrates contemporary instruments. Digital platforms like DIKSHA and NISHTHA ought to be comprehensively employed to enhance classroom learning. For instance, institutions may implement video-conferenced lessons to enable trainee teachers in faraway locations to view master educators. The government must guarantee that each DIET/college has access to a model school or virtual resource centre for practical training (UNESCO, 2021).

8. Promote Communities of Practice.

In accordance with UNESCO's advice, networks of educators, encompassing both pre-service and in-service professionals, should be cultivated (UNESCO, 2021). Teacher education programs can establish online forums or regional clusters for trainees and mentors to exchange lesson plans, reflect on problems, and commemorate triumphs. These communities facilitate collaborative problem-solving and mitigate isolation, particularly for trainee instructors in rural assignments.

9. Align Policy and Practice.

Ultimately, all reforms necessitate cohesive policy backing. Regulatory agencies (NCTE/NCERT) should expedite the approval process for new program models (e.g., ITEP colleges) and promote collaborations with high-achieving international universities. States ought to be motivated to implement optimal practices (e.g., by correlating financing with the

quality of teacher education). Bureaucratic rigidity must concurrently be diminished; institutions require flexibility to innovate (e.g., examining fresh practicum schedules or assessment methodologies) without heavy permissions.

Each of these reforms has been supported by evidence from both India and international sources. The support for integrated programs and internships exemplifies Finland's achievements in master's level education (Sahlberg, 2010; UNESCO, 2021) and Japan's extensive experience with practice-oriented instruction (JICA, 2018). Highlighting introspection and mentorship responds to the identified needs in India (Bhattacharya et al., 2021; Dixit, 2020). Collectively, they constitute a cohesive plan to develop Indian educators as proficient practitioners rather than only theoretical graduates.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The suggested modification had considerable consequences for both policymakers and practitioners. Establishing a practice-oriented teacher education system necessitates coordinated efforts across many levels of the Indian education ecosystem.

Policy Implications: The Ministry of Education and the governments of the states need to authorize and keep an eye on these steps. According to NEP 2020, authorities should stop 2-year B.Ed. programs and instead use the 4-year integrated model. To improve the qualifications of faculty, more money is needed, such as for doctoral research for teacher educators to strengthen the research base of programs. The NCTE Act may be changed by law to require national standards (NPST) for program accreditation. Policies must also set minimum standards for mentor training and practical hours. The government can use existing programs, like Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, to give money to schools that train teachers in poor areas. Additionally, data systems need to be improved. For example, a single Management Information System for practice placements, internships assessments, and test results will make it easier to keep improving (NCTE, 2019).

Institutional Practice: Teacher training institutes and universities need to change their rules and the way they teach. This means hiring more teacher educators who have worked in schools and are good at teaching, as well as retraining present teachers in interactive methods (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Schools need to build close relationships with local schools. For example, formal Memoranda of Understanding might spell out what each partnering teacher is responsible for and make sure that students are getting safe mentorship. To provide

students more time in the classroom, college programs should be able to change the schedules of classes and school visits. Some schools may need to change their academic calendars to match school terms. Institutions should create internal mentorship programs that connect experienced trainees with novices. Moreover, teacher educators should demonstrate reflective practices by engaging trainees in research projects or assessing trainee journal entries (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006).

Classroom Practice: Over time, classrooms will change. Competently trained teachers in Indian schools will use new methods including interactive learning, formative evaluation, and differentiated instruction. Indian schools might use collaborative lesson study programs, where groups of teachers and students work together to plan and think about lessons. This would help teachers feel less alone in their work (Lewis, 2016). The increased presence of student-teachers in monitored classes may require initial adjustments, such as alternate co-teaching schedules, but should ultimately improve the quality of instruction.

Equity Considerations: Policymakers need to think about fairness. As admission standards becoming stricter, steps need to be taken to make sure that talented people from poor backgrounds aren't left out. Scholarship programs and prior training, including bridge courses in teaching, can be helpful. Also, while urban institutions may be more likely to adopt innovative models, rural TEIs should not be ignored. Providing technology, such as remote mentoring through video and online courses, can help close the gap between different parts of the world. NEP 2020's push for multilingual and inclusive teaching in schools will make sure that future teachers are aware of India's diversity (NEP, 2020).

Continuous Evaluation: In the end, a full evaluation is necessary when improvements are made. Pilot programs like the first ITEP institutions should be looked at to get ideas. Success indicators may include the contentment of the trainees, their scores on licensing exams, and, lastly, the progress of their students in school. Regular evaluations might be done by independent commissions, which could be part of NCERT or NIEPA. International alliances, such as UNESCO or bilateral Memoranda of Understanding, may incorporate external evaluative expertise (UNESCO, 2021). India may gradually improve its teacher education system by making changes based on evidence.

In the final analysis, the recommended strategies- if executed effectively will align policy incentives with optimal behaviours. The objective is a systematic transformation: seeing

teaching as a profession acquired via classroom experience and continuous reflection. Accomplishing this will enhance the effectiveness of educators and facilitate the attainment of India's major educational objectives as outlined by NEP 2020 and global commitments, including Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNESCO, 2015).

CONCLUSION

To get India's future teachers ready, they need to move from learning about theory to using it in real life. This paper reviews literature and case studies to demonstrate that conventional Indian teacher education, marked by theory-dominant curricula and insufficient school connections, is insufficient for contemporary issues (Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006). On the other hand, global models encourage tough selection, extensive field training, reflective mentorship, and a higher professional standing (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sahlberg, 2010). Based on these findings and India's reform strategy (NEP, 2020; UNESCO, 2021), we have suggested changes that integrate both classroom experience and reflection in every stage of teacher development.

Key proposals encompass the creation of a four-year integrated B.Ed. program with embedded internships (National Education Policy, 2020), the training of expert mentor teachers, and the integration of reflective practice (through journals, portfolios, and group reflection) as a core component (Korthagen et al., 2006; Loughran, 2002). We stress the need for updated curricula, higher professional standards, and clear career paths to help the teaching profession go forward. The collaboration of policymakers, institutions, and educators can expedite the reform of India's teacher education system. The outcome will be educators equipped with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, reflective practices, and the confidence to adapt to varied learning environments.

In the end, the stakes are high: well-prepared teachers are the most important part of a good education system. By connecting theory and practice, India can train a group of teachers who can help achieve the goals of quality, equity, and innovation set by NEP 2020 and other global education plans (UNESCO, 2021). This paper has given a full plan based on facts and comparisons. To make these suggestions a reality, schools, policy makers, and researchers will need to work together in the future. India's teacher education may go beyond tradition and completely equip teachers for the class room of the future if it stays focused and keep moving forward.

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