



## A comparative study of secondary teacher education programme in India and Finland

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### Abstract

Teacher Education is one of the key aspects of an effective Education system in a country. The purpose of a Teacher Education programme is to equip and empower teachers with the correct knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviour for teaching the learners to ensure their holistic development. The present research paper analyses the existing literature on teacher education programmes in Finland and India and aims to do a comparative study between India (a country in the global South) and Finland (a country in the global North) in terms of their teacher education programmes. The comparison aims to cover the aspects of entry requirements in teacher education courses at universities, the entry requirements to be a middle school and high school teacher, the curriculum, and the challenges faced by both systems of Teacher Education. An attempt has been also made to better understand how the governments of two different countries facilitate the teacher education programme. Additionally, it tries to highlight the different drawbacks in the Indian teacher education programme as India is still in its developing stage while Finland has already established a developed teacher education programme long ago. The study elucidates the current lacunae in the Indian teacher education system and throws light on potential reforms that can be adopted in the Indian teacher education system from the Finnish teacher education system such as the transformation from a rote-learning-based approach towards a research-based approach, making teachers' training more reflective and focused upon skill development, and giving teachers more autonomy to customize the curriculum as per the students' needs.

**Keywords:** teacher education, teachers, curriculum, pedagogy, NEP 2020

### Introduction

Teachers are the key stakeholders in the education ecosystem that directly affects the educational quality of a country. They hold the responsibility for the transmission of knowledge, information, and skills to the learners. As noted by OECD, 2008 report, globally one of the most important factors affecting the quality of education is the teacher quality (OECD, 2008) which directly impacts the students' learning outcomes (Panth and Tulivuori, 2021) <sup>[6]</sup>.

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, teacher education has been defined as the teacher training (pre-service or in-service) process that is designed to equip and empower the teachers with the right knowledge, behaviour, attitude, and skills required for teaching learners at an age-appropriate level. The NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) Act 1993 of India defined teacher education as programmes of education, research, or training of persons for equipping them to teach at pre-primary, primary, secondary, and senior secondary stages in schools, and includes non-formal education, part-time education, adult education, and correspondence education (NCTE Act 1993) <sup>[19]</sup>. Teachers are responsible for determining the quality of life in a community and a nation. The best strategies to produce qualified teachers in a dynamic and changing environment are, to begin with, a well-developed pre-service teacher education programme and pursuing career-long learning opportunities according to the World Education Report published by (UNESCO, 1998) <sup>[26]</sup>.

Thus, each society contains certain provisions for pre-service education and ongoing professional development to aid teachers in contributing to the advancement of society. There is a wealth of empirical studies to back up the claim that teachers' professional development significantly

impacts students' achievement. As noted by Bruns and Luque, teacher education and development are the main factor in the impact on student performance at the school level, and no other variable plays such a crucial role. (Bruns and Luque, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>.

The most important elements of any teacher education programme are curriculum and pedagogy. The term curriculum has its roots in Latin and it means 'a course or a track.' Since then, it has entered the realm of education and it is widely used by scholars and even by laymen.

The general perception of the term states that it is a framework that deals with all the subjects taught in schools and colleges or a particular course of study.

On the other hand, Pedagogy is defined as the method and practice of teaching an academic subject or a theoretical concept. It is the art and science of teaching (Egan, 1978) <sup>[13]</sup>. Pedagogy is a term used in both the fields of art and science. By the end of the 19th century, Pedagogy was starting to be viewed as a true science. It is now treated as a science whose ultimate objective is to guide the process of teaching leading to effective learning.

Depending upon the levels of schooling, teachers' education programs in Finland are categorized into five parts. These consist of - preschool or kindergarten teachers, classroom teachers who get recruited for comprehensive school for students till the age of 16 years, then comes the subject teachers who have subject-specific proficiency and teach upper secondary school students, apart from all these are vocational school teachers which get recruited for vocational schools. Similarly, Teacher Education in India is also level specific.

There are mainly four major types of teacher education program levels in India: Pre-Primary teacher education,

Primary Teacher Education, Secondary and Higher-Secondary Teacher Education.

Finland, a Scandinavian country of the Global North, takes pride in having a schooling rate of nearly 100% at all levels of compulsory education, preschool, basic education, and secondary education (Baskan *et al.* 2013) [8]. In Finland, the Government takes up the ownership of Education. Finnish teacher education curriculum is a broad-based curriculum that aims at developing knowledge along with both theoretical and practical skills. All teacher education programs in Finland have a similar set of core principles and are distinct when it comes to parts like pedagogical studies, personal study plans, language, communication, and ICT studies. On the other hand, India, the second most populous country in the world has a basic literacy at 77.7% according to the National Survey of India (Sharma, 2022) [23].

The curriculum of the Indian education system has faced several criticisms throughout these years and is under

continuous changes and developments. The latest development in the field is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which introduces major changes to the pre-existing curriculum and pedagogical studies to render an effective education system for the country's future.

Therefore, it is imperative that Indian teacher education programmes need reforms in order to bring a transformation toward an effective teacher education system. The further study compares Finland's Education in terms of approach and its intrinsic nature.

The identification of these drawbacks leaves room for future research aiming at formulating policy reforms in the system.

**1. Entry Requirement**

The entry requirement for teacher education programs is an essential part of the curriculum that helps to determine the competency of the program.

**Table 1**

Parameter: Entry Requirement	Finland	India
1. The entry requirement for enrolment in the Secondary Teacher Education Programme	Entry into the Secondary Teacher Education Program is through a joint national selection system. The joint national selection system has two phases. A common national academic examination is followed by an aptitude test of the preferred University. The test is taken in an interview format and it is based on written material given to applicants.	Entry into the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (B.Ed.) requires the candidate to pass the Bachelors/Master's Degree with a minimum of 55% marks Additionally, admission to the Teacher Education course is based on the marks obtained in the qualifying exam or by an entrance test conducted by the university/State Government as per the policy mandate of the University/State Government to which the Teacher Education institute is affiliated.
2. Entry requirement to be a middle school teacher (in India)/ (classroom teacher in Finland).	Middle school teachers in Finland fall in the category of classroom teachers. They teach students belonging to the age group of 7 to 16. The classroom teachers need to have a master's degree in educational science with a ECTS (Education credit transfer system.) of 300 credits.	For middle school (classes 6th to 8th) teaching, candidates should clear graduation with a minimum of 50% - 60% marks from a recognized university and must obtain a B.Ed. or Bachelor of Education degree. As per the recent amendments in NCTE Regulations, 2021, the eligibility to be a middle school teacher is graduating with at least 50% marks and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) or Post-Graduation with a minimum 55% marks or equivalent grade and three-year integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed.
3. Entry requirement to be a high school teacher (in India)/subject teacher (in Finland).	Subject teachers are required to complete master's degrees in their preferred subject to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject with 300 credits	For high school (classes 9th to 12th) teaching, candidates should be a post-graduation from a recognized university with at least 50%-60% aggregate marks and must also possess a B. Ed degree.

As a result, it is evident from the analysis of the norms and regulations in both nations discussed above that admission to Finnish Teacher Education programme is extremely competitive and selective as compared to the Indian Teacher Education Programme. According to the studies conducted by Niemi and others, less than one-fourth of the applicants get selected for the universities (Niemi *et al.*, 2011) [9]. A key difference between the entry requirement of the Indian teacher education Program with the Finnish teacher education program is that it lacks a common entrance test. The absence of a common entrance exam for students entering the teacher education program in India makes it non-competitive to become teachers. Students in India thus

choose the career path of becoming teachers as part of their secondary or tertiary ambitions because the admittance requirement isn't competitive. Thereby a set of teachers entering the classrooms responsible for entering the classroom are either not oriented towards the teaching profession or do not regard their profession. This indicates that the candidates who are would-be teachers or the future change makers of the country have not been rightly evaluated upon their potential, skills, and capabilities concerning the teaching profession, thereby ultimately deterring the quality of the teaching profession.

**2. Curriculum for Teacher Education**

**Table 2**

Parameter: Curriculum	Finland	India
O Objectives of the curriculum	In Finland, the significant focus of the Teacher Education Programme is on training. The teaching practicum includes a minor portion of basic teaching skill practice and a major portion of required teaching practice at schools and universities. (OECD 2015).	The vision for teacher education in India was suggested to be in line with the new school curriculum philosophy as follows: The primary objective of teacher education is a reflective practice. Opportunities for self-learning, introspection,

		reflection, and articulation of new ideas ought to be made available to student-teachers. Provision of self-directed learning and ability to think, be critical and work in a group
Content of the curriculum	According to the OECD Education Policy outlook 2015, the curriculum of Finnish Teacher Education focuses upon the following key points. 1. strong theoretical content along with practical content 2. A research-based approach towards teacher education and research. 3. Its emphasis on developing pedagogical knowledge (OECD 2015).	According to National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009), the curriculum for teacher education has been broadly identified as: 1. The Foundation of education includes contemporary, learner, and educational studies. 2. Curriculum and pedagogy that includes curriculum studies, and pedagogical studies. 3. School Internship to equip the teachers with professional teaching skills.
Recent Developments	To maintain a progressive teacher education plan, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture launched a Finnish Teacher Education forum in 2016 (Ministry of Education and Culture report, 2016). The education forum aimed at formulating a development program for teacher education. The development program covers all the pre-service and in-service teacher education and also ensures continuous professional development. According to the program, the teachers must focus on three distinct goals to achieve effective teacher education. concrete basic knowledge of the subject and its pedagogy accommodating the diversity among the students. teachers must have competencies to develop individual and school expertise by ensuring effective collaboration and communication with other stakeholders	The latest developmental reform in India’s teacher education program is that which comes in with National Education Policy 2020. As noted by Seema Dahiya, The NEP 2020 suggests drafting new guidelines for National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education or NCFTE 2021. Its primary aim would be to guide pre-service teacher education and training. The NCFTE will prescribe the best pre-service and in-service education/training practices for teachers working in Academic, vocational, and other unique education streams. (Dahiya, 2022)

Although significant changes were made over the past years, teacher education in India is still not imparted to the students as a whole but rather alone, with no inter-relationship among the other educational disciplines being taught (Kauts & Kaur, 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>. Additionally, Finnish teacher education focuses largely on research-based learning and approach. According to Toom *et al*, the research-based approach focuses upon a systematic analysis of education, making all teachings research-based, ensuring that the activities focus on promoting argumentation, decision-making, and justification, lastly, it focuses upon the incorporation of formal research skills during studies (Toom *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[3]</sup>.

The Teacher Education Programme of Finland promotes decision-making, discussion, and argumentation which is rarely observed in the curriculum of Indian teacher education. Finnish teacher education aims at meeting the 21st-century needs of the students and is always under regular reforms to ensure the effectiveness of the programme concerning the contemporary world. On the contrary, India is observing its latest reforms in education policy, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 nearly after 34 years replacing the National Policy on Education, 1986. As stated by Dahiya, the teacher education institutes and the curriculum followed in teacher education have very little focus on new trends in education (Dahiya, 2022) <sup>[24]</sup>.

**3. Challenges faced in the system In India**

The significant expansion of teacher education institutions in the last decade reflects the current state of teacher education. As a result of national primary education initiatives like Operation Blackboard, the District Primary Education Program, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and others, there has been an increase in the number of schools and student enrollment (Singh, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>. More demands have

been placed on teachers as a result of the universalization of elementary education, and the universalization of secondary education. The study by Dipak Chowdhury noted that although there has been a significant expansion in the number of institutions offering teacher education over the past decade, the quality standards have been neglected in the process (Chowdhury, 2021) <sup>[7]</sup>. As a result, the newly appointed student teachers exhibit poor quality, a lack of accountability, and a lack of needed qualities and dedication (Kumar & Azad, 2016) <sup>[22]</sup>. Some of the major challenges or flaws with the teacher education system in India are:

▪ **Flaws in the selection process**

The selection process for teacher education programmes in India is not very stringent which results in the deterioration of the quality of teachers (Kumar & Azad, 2016) <sup>[22]</sup>. In the article by Kumar and Azad, 2016 <sup>[22]</sup> they state that including test subjects like General knowledge, and school subjects, to assess the candidate’s intelligence, aptitude, interest, and attitude using the right approaches in conjunction with interviews would be beneficial for the selection process in the teacher education programme.

▪ **Inadequate subject knowledge**

The teacher education curriculum places little emphasis on understanding the essential subject. Thus, it should make sure that both teaching abilities and subject matter knowledge are developed because, without subject knowledge, the teaching practice will continue to be just marginally effective.

▪ **Inappropriate teaching strategies**

In India, poor use of ICT skills and modern teaching practices in the classroom are among their weaknesses. The findings by Kaur showed that although Indian teachers have a favourable attitude toward using ICT, there is still

insufficient ICT utilization in classrooms due to a lack of effective training, a rigid curriculum and timetable, and a lack of competencies and motivation on part of teachers, with limited access to modern technology and infrastructure (Kaur, 2019) <sup>[15]</sup>.

### In Finland

In a study by Kansanen, he points out that though the Finnish teacher education program focuses on research-based learning, less extensive elaboration is provided on what is research and what is its approach. (Kansanen, 2003) <sup>[21]</sup>.

The autonomy provided to universities and their teachers to customize the program according to their student's needs, also makes it essential for teachers to have the potential for education innovation and coming up with innovative ideas. (Lavonen, 2020) <sup>[11]</sup>. Since the individual capabilities of universities and their teachers may vary largely throughout the country, the possibility of non-uniform teacher education practices and pedagogical methods increases which ultimately can lead to disparity in teacher education in different parts of the country

In primary research done by (Susan Maria Wiksten, 2018), she quotes Erik, a professor of specialized teacher preparation said “teachers need to have a strong theoretical foundation and to be well-versed in research practices to withstand the crossfire of sometimes unreasonable expectations under which teachers work in their day-to-day life”.

Thus, both India and Finland face certain forms of challenges concerning the development of teacher education in both countries.

### Conclusion

One of the most remarkable features of the Finnish Education system is that it meets the contemporary needs of the education world. The research-based approach, the focus on Teacher's skill development both during pre-service and in-service training, makes teacher education a highly proficient plan. It plays an eminent role in determining the quality of education imparted to school students.

On the contrary, India's education system is primarily based on rote learning. The complexity of both teaching as a practice and the training of teachers must be addressed for teacher education to advance in India. To do this, as stated (Chowdhury, 2021) <sup>[7]</sup> in his work, teacher education research must converge with the mainstream research on teaching and research on higher and professional education. According to him, the research on teacher education being merged with mainstream research is required in order to highlight the institutional framework of higher education and assist in refuting ideological claims that university-based reactions are entirely rooted in individual hesitation or resistance. It is necessary to create a shared language that can act as a potent tool for bringing together the community of researchers and practitioners working to improve teaching and teacher education.

The Indian Teacher Education programme at present has not given the autonomy to the teachers to customize the program as per the needs of the students whereas it is the most highlighted feature of the Finnish Teacher Education programme. This autonomy allows teachers to make the curriculum rigorous, and amendable. It has also provided

significant attention to a student's individual needs, which is lacking in Indian rote-based learning.

The recent National Education Policy, of 2020 has emphasized improving the quality and the standards of the teacher education system by recognizing that teachers need training in high-quality content and pedagogy which is also one of the key features of the Teacher Education curriculum. Finnish Teacher Education also gives the opportunity to teachers to self-learn in the process by reflecting and teaching the other teachers. The same has been recommended by NEP that teachers should be given opportunities for self-improvement to learn the latest innovations in their profession. More pedagogical freedom will be granted to teachers so that they can instruct their students in the way they believe to be most effective. It is high time that Indian policy practitioners must learn from the teacher education policies of other countries, Finland in this case. The potential reforms in Indian policies have existed in Finland for a long and the effective results of these policies throughout these years make it a suitable model to be adopted by other developing countries like India.

After 75 years of Independence, India is on its way to liberalizing and modernizing the education system as per the contemporary times. The future of the country lies in the potential of young minds and hence, teacher education plays a significant role in shaping the country's coming years.

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