



**ACCREDITATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ADVANCEMENT:
STRATEGIES TO ELEVATE TEACHER TRAINING QUALITY IN SOUTH
ASIA**

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Abstract

*Teacher quality is the cornerstone of educational excellence. In South Asia, where disparities in educational achievement are pronounced and evolving demands necessitate pedagogical transformation, reforming teacher training has become a regional imperative. This article examines a tripartite framework—**accreditation, accountability, and advancement**—to systematically elevate the quality of teacher education. Drawing on policy reviews, field data, and regional comparisons from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, it evaluates institutional accreditation processes, performance-based licensing, continuous professional development (CPD), and accountability systems. The paper highlights the need for harmonized standards, data-driven regulation, and alignment with classroom realities. With targeted reforms, South Asia can move from fragmented, compliance-based models to systems that empower teachers, improve learning outcomes, and restore public trust in education systems.*

Keywords: teacher education, accreditation, professional development, accountability, South Asia

Introduction

The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Yet, across South Asia, teacher preparation and ongoing development remain inconsistent, fragmented, and, in many cases, outdated. Over-reliance on pre-service certification, outdated curricula, limited field exposure, and weak regulatory oversight have led to a wide variation in teacher competencies across urban-rural divides and public-private sectors. South Asia's growing school-age population and rising learning poverty (as highlighted by World Bank reports) place immense pressure on national systems to ensure that every child is taught by a competent, well-trained educator. Teacher training institutions (TTIs), however, have struggled with quality assurance, staff qualifications, and curriculum relevance. Even as governments attempt reforms, a systemic approach integrating accreditation, accountability, and advancement pathways is often missing. This paper addresses the challenge of elevating teacher training quality in South Asia by proposing a framework that includes robust accreditation processes, clear professional accountability, and progressive professional development. By drawing on comparative insights and regional initiatives, it identifies key gaps and proposes actionable strategies to strengthen the teaching profession and improve educational outcomes.

1. The State of Teacher Education in South Asia: Gaps and Challenges:

Teacher education across South Asian countries—namely **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**—faces widespread and persistent challenges that hinder the preparation of a competent and responsive teaching workforce. Despite national policy commitments and increasing investments in education, the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training remains uneven, particularly in public sector institutions. A key issue is the use of outdated curricula that fail to integrate modern pedagogical approaches, digital literacy, or inclusive education strategies. Teacher education syllabi in many institutions remain heavily theory-oriented



and disconnected from classroom realities, resulting in graduates who are ill-prepared for dynamic and diverse learning environments (UNESCO, 2020).

Weak institutional capacity further compounds the problem. Many training colleges, especially those located in rural and marginalized regions, operate with inadequate infrastructure, underqualified faculty, and poor access to digital tools. For example, in Pakistan, over 40% of teacher education institutions lack functioning libraries or ICT labs, significantly limiting the academic exposure of trainee teachers (USAID Pakistan, 2018). Similarly, a study by the National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka revealed that more than 30% of pre-service programs lack adequate practicum supervision, raising concerns about the preparedness of graduates for actual teaching roles (NIE Sri Lanka, 2019).

Another major gap lies in the inconsistency of accreditation standards and regulatory oversight. Although bodies like the **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)** in India and the **National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE)** in Bangladesh provide frameworks for quality assurance, enforcement mechanisms are often weak. A review by the World Bank highlighted that more than 25% of teacher education colleges in South Asia function with **minimal** compliance to national quality benchmarks, undermining the credibility of qualifications issued (World Bank, 2020).

Additionally, most countries offer limited practicum or field-based training, restricting student-teachers' opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. In Nepal and Bangladesh, many teacher trainees spend less than four weeks in actual classrooms during their training programs, leading to low classroom confidence and limited exposure to real teaching challenges (UNESCO, 2019). Compounding this issue is the low entry threshold for many teacher education programs, with few requiring standardized admission tests or aptitude assessments, allowing underprepared candidates to enter the teaching profession (GEM Report, 2020).

Finally, urban-rural disparities in the availability and quality of teacher training are stark. While urban teacher education institutes often benefit from better facilities, faculty, and networks, rural colleges struggle with resource scarcity, limited professional development, and geographic isolation, leading to inequities in teacher readiness across regions (ASER Pakistan, 2021).

In conclusion, the teacher education landscape in South Asia is characterized by structural inefficiencies, regulatory fragmentation, and poor alignment with 21st-century teaching demands. Addressing these challenges through reforms in curriculum modernization, accreditation enforcement, practicum integration, and equity-based resource allocation is essential to achieving the **UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)** on quality education.

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2. Accreditation as a Foundation for Quality Assurance:

In South Asia, accreditation mechanisms play a pivotal role in ensuring that teacher education institutions (TEIs) meet minimum quality standards in curriculum design, faculty competence, infrastructure, and pedagogical practices. As the demand for qualified and skilled teachers grows across the region, robust accreditation systems are critical to safeguarding the integrity and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Accreditation serves not only as a regulatory tool but also as a framework for continuous quality improvement, enabling institutions to align with national education goals and international benchmarks (UNESCO, 2021).

In **India**, the **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)** is the central regulatory body responsible for approving and monitoring TEIs. Established under the NCTE Act of 1993, the council prescribes norms related to student intake, faculty qualifications, physical infrastructure, and practicum components. Over the years, the NCTE has developed detailed guidelines for both pre-service and in-service programs, and recently launched **online accreditation portals** to enhance transparency and standardize review processes (NCTE, 2020). Despite these advancements, challenges remain in ensuring compliance, especially among private institutions operating in rural and semi-urban areas, where monitoring capacity is limited.

In **Bangladesh**, the **National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE)** plays a similar role in regulating teacher training for primary schools. NAPE is responsible for setting competency standards, approving training curricula, and conducting professional development for teacher educators. It also supports the accreditation of institutions under the **Diploma in Primary Education (DPEd)** program, ensuring that training delivery aligns with classroom needs (NAPE, 2019). NAPE has also piloted the use of performance-based evaluations to renew institutional accreditation, a move that strengthens accountability and fosters innovation in training methods. Beyond individual national systems, there is growing recognition of the need for regional cooperation and benchmarking in teacher education accreditation. Cross-border mobility of teachers, especially in border areas and among migrant communities, demands a degree of mutual recognition of qualifications. However, South Asia currently lacks a coordinated accreditation framework that would allow for standard comparison across countries. Regional platforms such as **SAARC** have yet to establish education quality protocols that support cross-national teacher licensure or credit transfers (World Bank, 2020).

Moreover, successful accreditation processes must go beyond infrastructure audits and include student learning outcomes, classroom readiness assessments, and faculty development benchmarks. An effective model can be found in Sri Lanka's Quality Assurance Council (QAC), which evaluates teacher education institutions using a multidimensional rubric that covers governance, equity, curriculum, and graduate feedback (QAC Sri Lanka, 2018).

In conclusion, while accreditation systems in South Asia have made meaningful progress in setting baseline standards for teacher education, they require greater enforcement capacity, regional coherence, and outcome-based indicators to serve as true instruments of quality assurance. Strengthening these frameworks is vital to elevate the professionalism of teaching and fulfill the promise of **SDG 4.c**, which focuses on increasing the supply of qualified teachers.



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3. Strengthening Accountability through Monitoring and Evaluation:

Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for ensuring the effectiveness, transparency, and continuous improvement of teacher training programs across South Asia. Given the region's diverse and decentralized education systems, establishing reliable M&E mechanisms helps bridge the gap between policy intentions and implementation realities. Effective M&E frameworks assess the quality of both pre-service and in-service teacher education, using a combination of tools such as learning outcome assessments, classroom observation rubrics, teacher performance evaluations, and standardized licensing or certification exams (UNESCO, 2021).

For instance, in **India**, the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** emphasizes the importance of regular evaluations of teacher education institutions using **teacher preparedness indicators** and classroom effectiveness metrics. The **Performance Grading Index (PGI)** developed by the Ministry of Education provides state-wise evaluation on aspects including teacher training participation and student outcomes, promoting inter-state accountability (Ministry of Education, India, 2020). Similarly, **Pakistan's National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE)** uses institutional self-assessments combined with **peer review evaluations** to gauge compliance with national standards for program quality and delivery (NACTE Pakistan, 2019).

One of the key trends in strengthening accountability is the growing use of **digital tracking and e-monitoring platforms**. These tools allow real-time oversight of teacher training attendance, training module completion, and post-training performance. For example, **Bangladesh's a2i (Access to Information) program**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, has introduced a **Teacher Portal** that enables online professional development courses and tracks teacher engagement and certification digitally (a2i Bangladesh, 2020). This model not only enhances accessibility but also facilitates continuous tracking of teaching quality at the individual level.

Moreover, several countries are integrating third-party audits and external evaluations into their M&E frameworks. Independent institutions and donor agencies often assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of training programs, especially in externally funded teacher development initiatives. For example, in Nepal, an independent evaluation of the Teacher Professional Development program found that only 60% of trained teachers applied modern pedagogical techniques in the classroom—highlighting the need for better follow-up and supervision (World Bank, 2019).

Additionally, linking M&E results to **performance-based funding** can drive improvements in institutional accountability. In Sri Lanka, teacher education institutions that meet specific quality indicators—such as trainee completion rates, graduate teaching performance, and student learning



gains—are eligible for **additional public funding and capacity-building support** (MOE Sri Lanka, 2020). This approach aligns financial incentives with quality outcomes, creating a results-driven culture within training institutions.

In conclusion, strengthening M&E in teacher education requires the adoption of **standardized tools, transparent reporting systems, independent oversight, and incentive structures**. These systems must not only track inputs and outputs but also evaluate **actual teacher competencies and classroom impact**, ensuring that investments in training translate into improved teaching practices and learning outcomes across South Asia.

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4. Advancing Teacher Competencies through Practice-Based Models:

In the evolving landscape of education, transitioning from theory-heavy teacher education programs to practice-oriented models has become a critical imperative in South Asia. Traditional training approaches across countries like **Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh** often focus heavily on theoretical coursework, with limited opportunities for trainees to apply knowledge in actual classroom settings. This imbalance results in teachers who may be well-versed in content but lack practical pedagogical competence, especially in diverse and resource-constrained classrooms (UNESCO, 2019). To address this, there is a growing consensus on integrating school-based practicums, mentorship programs, microteaching labs, and reflective teaching strategies into teacher preparation frameworks.

One of the most effective reforms has been the structured practicum model, which immerses teacher trainees in real classroom environments under the supervision of experienced mentors. In Nepal, the Ministry of Education's Teacher Education Project (TEP) introduced a year-long practicum embedded within the **Diploma in Education (D.Ed.)** program. This practicum requires trainees to gradually take on instructional responsibilities, engage in lesson planning, and participate in student assessments, fostering **adaptive teaching and classroom management skills** (MOE Nepal, 2018). Evaluations of this approach have shown significant improvements in trainee confidence and student learning engagement (World Bank, 2020).

Mentorship and peer coaching are also proving effective in enhancing pedagogical competencies. In **Sri Lanka**, the **National Institute of Education (NIE)** has institutionalized a model in which every trainee is assigned a practicing teacher mentor during their practicum. These mentors provide real-time feedback, model instructional techniques, and guide reflective discussions, leading to **greater professional maturity** among novice teachers (NIE Sri Lanka, 2019). Furthermore, **microteaching labs**—where trainees practice teaching small segments of a lesson to peers followed by feedback—are being scaled across teacher education colleges in India



and Bangladesh as low-cost, high-impact strategies to build instructional fluency (NCTE India, 2020).

Reflective learning is another cornerstone of practice-based training. Trainees are encouraged to maintain teaching journals, participate in post-lesson reflections, and conduct classroom-based action research. These reflective practices help future teachers critically analyze their own teaching behaviors and adapt methodologies based on student needs. According to a study by **UNESCO Bangkok (2021)**, reflective journaling increased teacher trainees' awareness of learner diversity and improved their ability to differentiate instruction effectively.

Despite the effectiveness of these models, widespread adoption remains limited due to logistical challenges, limited school-college partnerships, and lack of trained mentor teachers. There is a pressing need to **formalize and standardize practicum structures** across all teacher education institutions in the region, with clear guidelines on duration, supervision, and evaluation metrics.

In conclusion, embedding **practice-based components into teacher education** is essential for preparing competent, reflective, and adaptive educators. By combining real classroom exposure with structured mentorship and reflective analysis, South Asian countries can significantly improve **teaching quality and student learning outcomes**, advancing toward the goals of **SDG 4.c**.

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5. Regional Collaboration and Policy Harmonization in South Asia:

Enhancing the quality and consistency of teacher education in South Asia requires not only national reforms but also regional collaboration and policy harmonization. Given the shared socio-cultural contexts, pedagogical challenges, and demographic pressures among countries like **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka**, there is considerable potential for mutual learning, resource sharing, and standard alignment. Currently, teacher education across the region suffers from fragmented policies, isolated development efforts, and the absence of common professional benchmarks, which limits innovation, quality assurance, and teacher mobility (UNESCO, 2021).

One avenue for collaboration is the development of shared regional teacher standards. Establishing a unified competency framework—covering subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, digital literacy, and inclusive education—can help align pre-service training and certification processes across borders. Such a framework would also support the mutual recognition of teaching credentials, enabling the mobility of qualified teachers between countries to address shortages in underserved regions (World Bank, 2020). For example, a **South Asian Teacher Competency Framework**, if developed and endorsed regionally, could facilitate standard setting while allowing flexibility for contextual adaptation.



SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) provides an existing institutional platform that could play a pivotal role in promoting **regional education forums, joint research initiatives, and cross-national training programs**. While SAARC's **Educational Forum** has initiated dialogue on inclusive and quality education, its efforts remain sporadic and under-resourced. Reviving and institutionalizing regular ministerial-level exchanges focused on teacher education—similar to the ASEAN Teacher Education Network—could foster sustained cooperation and policy alignment (SAARC Secretariat, 2019).

The expansion of **Open Educational Resources (OERs)** presents another significant opportunity. Countries in the region can collaboratively develop and share **digitized teacher training modules, multilingual instructional materials, and classroom resources** through platforms like the **National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) India**, and Bangladesh's **MuktoPaath**. By pooling resources, nations can reduce duplication of effort, lower training costs, and broaden access to high-quality professional development content (COL, 2020).

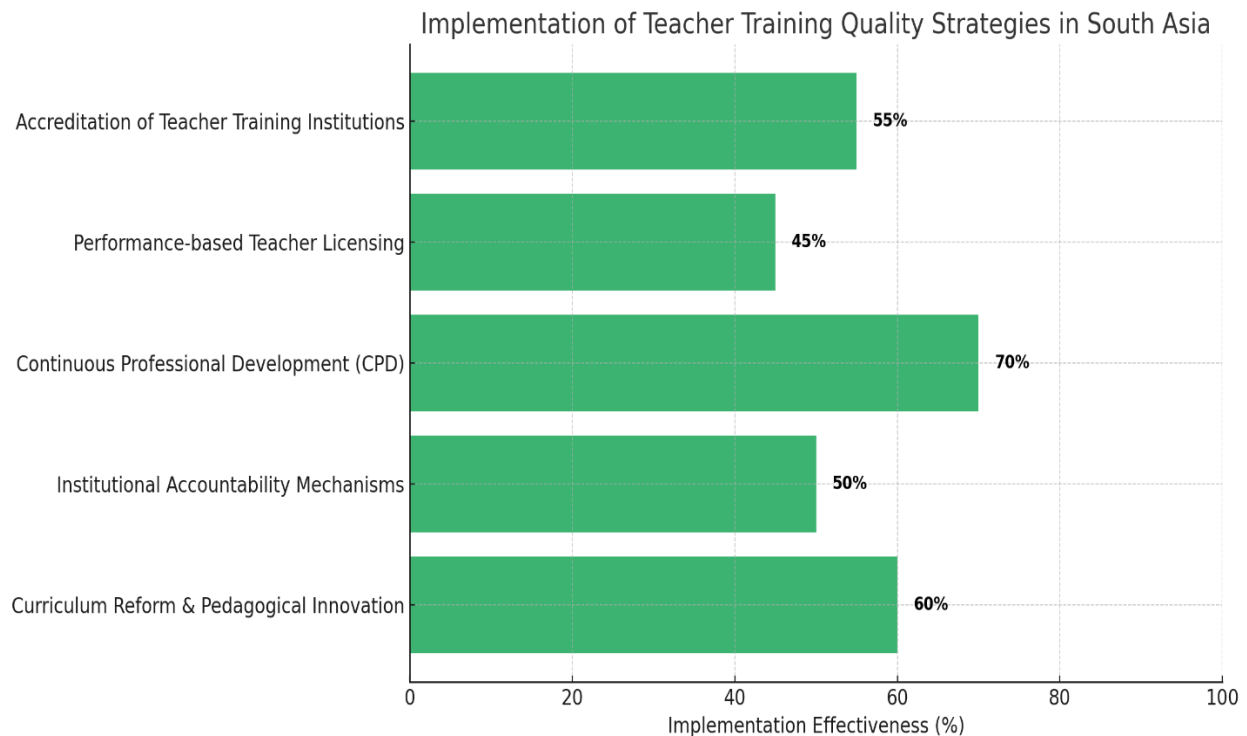
Furthermore, the establishment of **mutual accreditation protocols** can enhance institutional credibility and foster trust across borders. A **South Asian Quality Assurance Framework** for teacher education institutions could be developed, aligned with global standards such as those proposed by UNESCO's **International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030**, but adapted for regional relevance (UNESCO, 2020). This would enable cross-country peer reviews, benchmarking, and shared accountability mechanisms.

Despite these opportunities, several challenges remain, including **political tensions, funding constraints, and regulatory mismatches**. Therefore, regional collaboration efforts must be designed to be apolitical, decentralized, and implemented through bilateral or multilateral cooperation projects involving universities, ministries, and international organizations.

In conclusion, strengthening regional collaboration in teacher education can accelerate innovation, improve quality, and promote equity across South Asia. Through harmonized policies, shared platforms, and coordinated action, the region can collectively move closer to fulfilling the vision of SDG 4, particularly target 4.c, which aims to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers through international cooperation.

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Summary

Teacher training in South Asia is at a crossroads. While some countries have developed ambitious reform agendas, the region as a whole remains constrained by legacy systems, weak regulation, and fragmented policies. This article proposes a comprehensive framework centered on accreditation, accountability, and advancement, offering a pathway to sustainable, high-quality teacher education. Through stronger institutional accreditation, robust licensing mechanisms, embedded CPD, transparent accountability systems, and structured professional growth pathways, South Asia can transform the teacher training landscape. This requires political will, cross-sector collaboration, and consistent funding. If implemented effectively, these reforms can strengthen not only teacher preparation but also elevate the status and impact of the teaching profession—bringing South Asian education systems closer to the promise of quality education for all.

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