

A Reflective Study of Teacher Training Experiences and The Educational System of Sri Lanka

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 2

Month: February

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Claude, C. Jean. "A Reflective Study of Teacher Training Experiences and The Educational System of Sri Lanka." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 13, no. S2, 2026, pp. 156–62.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13iS2-Feb.10203>

C. Jean Claude

Assistant Professor of English

Pope John Paul II College of Education, Puducherry

Abstract

This paper presents a reflective and analytical account of the author's professional experience of conducting teacher training programmes in Sri Lanka. It examines the structure, philosophical foundations, and classroom practices of the Sri Lankan educational system, with particular emphasis on teacher preparation, curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and classroom culture. Drawing on firsthand observations, professional interactions with teachers, and training sessions conducted during the visit, the study offers a comparative perspective by highlighting key similarities and contrasts between educational practices in Sri Lanka and India.

The paper further analyses the implications of these international experiences for professional growth, intercultural understanding, and pedagogical innovation in teacher education. The study concludes by identifying selected practices from the Sri Lankan context that may inform, adapt, and enrich teacher education programmes and classroom instruction in India, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on international exposure and professional development in Teacher Education.

International exposure in teacher education is significant because it widens teachers' perspectives and prepares them to function effectively in a globalized and multicultural learning atmosphere. Through international acquaintance—such as exchange programs, global associations, online interactions, and comparative studies—teacher trainees gain awareness of varied educational systems, pedagogical practices, classroom management strategies, and assessment methods followed across countries. It helps develop intercultural competence, tolerance, and respect for diversity, which are essential for teaching learners from varied backgrounds. International exposure also enhances professional skills like communication, adaptability, critical thinking, and the use of innovative teaching technologies. Moreover, it encourages reflective practice by enabling teachers to compare global best practices with local contexts, thereby improving the overall quality of teacher education and preparing educators to meet global educational standards.

Objectives

1. To study the structure and functioning of the teacher training system in Sri Lanka.
2. To reflect on teacher training experiences within the Sri Lankan educational context.
3. To analyze the pedagogical practices and curriculum followed in teacher education programmes in Sri Lanka.
4. To identify the strengths and challenges of the Sri Lankan educational and teacher training system.

Overview of the Educational System of Sri Lanka**Structure of School Education**

The school education system in Sri Lanka is organized into clearly defined stages and is largely administered by the state to ensure universal access. Schooling begins with primary education, followed by junior and senior secondary levels, and culminates in collegiate education. National-level public examinations at key stages serve as gateways for academic progression and access to higher education. The structure reflects Sri Lanka's long-standing commitment to free education and social equity, while also revealing pressures related to competitiveness, examination orientation, and regional disparities in educational access and outcomes.

Curriculum Framework

Sri Lanka's curriculum framework is centrally developed and guided by national educational goals that emphasize holistic development. Designed by the National Institute of Education, the curriculum integrates academic knowledge with moral, civic, and life skills education. It encourages learner-centred pedagogy, competency-based learning, and continuous assessment practices. Recent curricular reforms reflect a growing emphasis on digital literacy, bilingual education, and skills aligned with global citizenship, highlighting the system's effort to balance local cultural values with international educational trends.

Teacher Qualification and Recruitment

Teacher education in Sri Lanka follows a structured pathway combining academic qualifications with professional training. Teachers are prepared through National Colleges of Education, teacher training colleges, and universities offering education degrees. Recruitment is largely managed by central and provincial authorities, ensuring standardized entry into the profession. Continuous professional development is increasingly recognized as essential, though challenges remain in ensuring consistent quality, equitable deployment of teachers, and alignment between teacher preparation and evolving classroom realities.

Role of Government and Private Institutions

The government plays a central role in shaping Sri Lanka's educational landscape by funding, regulating, and administering the majority of schools and teacher education programmes. Through policy formulation, curriculum development, and examination systems, the state ensures continuity and equity. Alongside this, private and international institutions have expanded, offering alternative curricula and pedagogical approaches. While these institutions contribute to diversity, innovation, and global exposure, they also raise important questions about equity, access, and the balance between public and private provision in education.

Teacher Training Practices Observed in Sri Lanka Pre-service and In-service Training Models

Teacher training in Sri Lanka is structured around both pre-service and in-service models, aiming to ensure professional preparedness and continuous growth of teachers. Pre-service training is primarily provided through National Colleges of Education, teacher training colleges, and university-based Bachelor of Education programmes. These programmes combine subject knowledge, pedagogical theory, and supervised teaching practice, allowing trainees to gain classroom exposure within real school settings. In-service training, on the other hand, focuses on enhancing the competencies of practicing teachers through refresher courses, short-term certificate programmes, and orientation sessions aligned with curriculum reforms. While pre-service training emphasizes foundational teaching skills, in-service models address emerging needs such as curriculum changes, ICT integration, and inclusive education, though their reach and effectiveness vary across regions.

Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development in Sri Lanka is recognized as an essential component of teacher quality and educational improvement. Opportunities are offered through government-led initiatives, provincial education departments, universities, and teacher training institutions. These include diploma and postgraduate programmes in education, subject-specific training, leadership development for school administrators, and capacity-building programmes for senior teachers. Increasing attention is given to reflective practice, learner-centred methodologies, and assessment reforms. However, access to professional development is often influenced by factors such as location, workload, and resource availability, highlighting the need for more sustained and equitable development frameworks.

Classroom Practices and Pedagogical Approaches Teaching Methods Commonly Used

Classroom practices in Sri Lanka reflect a blend of traditional and contemporary teaching methods. Teacher-centred approaches such as lecturing, explanation, and textbook-based instruction remain widely used, particularly in examination-oriented classes. At the same time, there is a gradual shift towards learner-centred strategies, including group work, discussions, activity-based learning, and experiential approaches, especially at the primary level. The choice of methods often depends on factors such as class size, subject requirements, curriculum demands, and teachers' professional training and experience.

Student Participation and Classroom Interaction

Student participation in Sri Lankan classrooms varies across educational levels and school contexts. While interaction is often structured and teacher-directed, opportunities for questioning, discussion, and peer interaction are increasingly encouraged. In many classrooms, students actively engage through oral responses, collaborative tasks, presentations, and co-curricular activities. However, examination pressure and time constraints sometimes limit deeper interaction and critical dialogue. Efforts to promote inclusive and participatory learning are evident, particularly through group activities and learner-centred pedagogical reforms.

Use of Technology and Teaching Aids

The use of technology and teaching aids in Sri Lankan classrooms has expanded in recent years, though implementation remains uneven. Traditional teaching aids such as charts, models, maps, and blackboards continue to play an important role. Digital tools, including multimedia

presentations, educational videos, smart classrooms, and online learning platforms, are increasingly integrated where infrastructure permits. Technology is used to enhance conceptual understanding, motivation, and accessibility, especially during blended and remote learning initiatives. Challenges related to resource availability, training, and connectivity continue to influence effective technology integration.

Assessment and Evaluation Methods

Assessment practices in Sri Lanka combine formative and summative approaches. Continuous assessment methods such as class tests, assignments, project work, and observations are used to monitor student progress, while national examinations serve as key summative evaluation tools. Teachers increasingly employ formative assessment strategies, including feedback, self-assessment, and peer assessment, to support learning improvement. Nevertheless, the strong emphasis on high-stakes examinations often shapes classroom teaching and learning, highlighting the need for more balanced and learner-oriented assessment practices.

Cultural and Professional Insights Teacher–Student Relationship

The teacher–student relationship in Sri Lankan classrooms is traditionally grounded in respect, trust, and moral responsibility. Teachers are viewed not only as instructors but also as mentors and role models who guide students' academic and personal development. This relationship is generally characterized by formality and authority, especially at the secondary level, while primary classrooms tend to reflect warmer and more nurturing interactions. Although the hierarchical nature of this relationship promotes discipline and respect, recent pedagogical reforms encourage more approachable and supportive teacher roles to foster open communication and learner confidence.

Classroom Discipline and Learning Culture

Classroom discipline in Sri Lanka is closely linked to cultural values such as obedience, collective responsibility, and respect for authority. Learning environments are typically orderly and structured, with clear expectations regarding student behaviour and participation. This disciplined atmosphere supports focused learning but may sometimes limit student autonomy and critical expression. Gradual shifts towards positive discipline, student engagement, and inclusive classroom management practices indicate an evolving learning culture that values both order and active participation.

Comparative Perspective: Sri Lanka and India Similarities in Educational Goals

Both Sri Lanka and India share common educational goals rooted in access, equity, and national development. Education in both countries emphasizes universal schooling, moral and value-based education, and the preparation of learners for higher education and employment. Teacher education systems in both contexts aim to develop professionally competent teachers who can support holistic learner development. Additionally, both countries view education as a key instrument for social mobility, national integration, and economic progress, reflecting similar post-colonial educational aspirations.

Differences in Pedagogy and Assessment

Despite shared goals, noticeable differences exist in pedagogical practices and assessment approaches. Sri Lanka's education system tends to be more centralized, with uniform curricula and national assessments guiding classroom practices. Pedagogy often remains structured and teacher-directed, particularly at secondary levels. In contrast, India's system is more diverse and

decentralized, with variations across states, boards, and institutions. Recent reforms in India, such as competency-based learning and flexible assessment frameworks, encourage experiential and interdisciplinary approaches. Assessment in both systems remains examination-oriented, though India has begun exploring alternative and formative assessment models more actively under recent policy initiatives.

Strengths and Challenges in Both Systems

Sri Lanka's key strengths lie in its strong public education system, high literacy rates, and well-organized teacher training institutions. However, challenges include examination pressure, limited flexibility, and resource constraints in certain regions. India's strengths include diversity, innovation, and large-scale educational initiatives supported by policy reforms and technology integration. At the same time, India faces challenges related to regional disparities, quality assurance, and consistent teacher preparation across states. A comparative perspective highlights that while Sri Lanka benefits from uniformity and stability, India offers scope for innovation and adaptability—suggesting valuable opportunities for mutual learning and cross-national collaboration in teacher education.

Implications for Teacher Education in India Practices That Can Be Adapted

Insights from the Sri Lankan education system suggest several practices that can be meaningfully adapted within teacher education in India. The structured and well-coordinated nature of pre-service teacher training, along with strong school-based teaching practice, highlights the value of systematic mentoring and guided classroom exposure. India can benefit from strengthening uniform professional standards in teacher preparation while retaining contextual flexibility. Emphasis on moral education, teacher accountability, and continuous assessment practices observed in Sri Lanka can also inform improvements in Indian teacher education institutions.

Lessons for Teacher Training Programmes

A key lesson for teacher training programmes in India is the importance of aligning teacher preparation with classroom realities and national educational goals. Sri Lanka's centralized curriculum design and focused teacher deployment underline the need for coherence between training, curriculum, and assessment. Indian teacher education programmes can place greater emphasis on reflective practice, classroom observation, and sustained in-service support. Additionally, integrating values, discipline, and inclusive pedagogical approaches into teacher training can enhance both professional competence and ethical responsibility among future teachers.

Scope for International Collaboration

The comparative study highlights significant scope for international collaboration between India and Sri Lanka in the field of teacher education. Collaborative initiatives such as faculty exchange programmes, joint research projects, shared professional development workshops, and virtual learning communities can promote cross-cultural understanding and the exchange of best practices. Such collaborations can support innovation, capacity building, and the development of globally competent teachers, while also strengthening regional educational partnerships in South Asia.

Personal and Professional Reflections Impact of the Experience on the Author

The exposure to the Sri Lankan educational and teacher training context had a meaningful impact on the author's professional outlook. Observing structured teacher preparation models,

disciplined classroom environments, and strong teacher–student relationships provided valuable insights into the role of cultural context in shaping educational practices.

The experience encouraged deeper reflection on existing assumptions about pedagogy, assessment, and teacher preparation, fostering a more comparative and global perspective on teacher education.

Growth as a Teacher Educator

The experience contributed significantly to the author’s growth as a teacher educator by strengthening reflective practice and professional adaptability. Engagement with diverse training models and classroom practices enhanced the ability to critically analyse teaching–learning processes and to appreciate multiple approaches to effective instruction. This exposure reinforced the importance of mentoring, continuous professional development, and learner-centred pedagogy, motivating the author to integrate innovative and culturally responsive strategies into teacher education programmes in the home context.

Challenges Faced and Insights Gained

The author encountered challenges related to contextual differences, including variations in curriculum structure, classroom expectations, language use, and institutional norms. Adapting to these differences required openness, flexibility, and reflective engagement. These challenges ultimately led to valuable insights regarding the need for contextual sensitivity in educational reform and teacher training. The experience highlighted that effective teacher education must balance global best practices with local realities, reinforcing the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and continuous learning in the professional journey of a teacher educator.

Conclusion

The study highlights key insights into the structure of the Sri Lankan educational system, teacher training practices, classroom pedagogy, and the cultural dimensions influencing teaching and learning. The findings reveal a well-organized teacher education framework supported by strong government involvement, disciplined learning environments, and a growing emphasis on professional development. Comparative analysis with the Indian context underscores both shared educational goals and contextual differences in pedagogy, assessment, and teacher preparation, offering valuable perspectives for strengthening teacher education practices.

The educational significance of international training lies in its ability to broaden professional understanding, encourage reflective practice, and promote the exchange of best practices across borders. Exposure to international teacher training contexts enables educators to critically examine their own systems, adapt effective strategies, and develop culturally responsive and globally informed teaching approaches. Such experiences contribute to the professional growth of teacher educators and enhance the overall quality of teacher preparation programmes.

Future research may focus on longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of international exposure on teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Further comparative research across diverse educational systems can deepen understanding of culturally grounded pedagogical practices. Additionally, studies exploring technology-enabled international collaborations and institutional partnerships can provide insights into sustainable models of global engagement in teacher education.

Works Cited

1. Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka. (2019). National policy framework on education.
2. Government of Sri Lanka.
3. National Institute of Education. (2016). Curriculum framework for general education in Sri Lanka. NIE.
4. NCERT. (2021). Teacher education in India: Issues and challenges. National Council of Educational Research and Training.
5. Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 291–309.
6. Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press. UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?* UNESCO Publishing.
7. UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO.
8. Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10–20.
9. Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (2005). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.