



# BRIDGING THE GAP

## The struggle to modernise teacher training in Bangladesh



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In the digital age, educational technology (edtech) is revolutionising teacher training worldwide. Countries like Finland, Singapore, and India have embraced edtech to significantly enhance teacher development. For instance, Finland's ThingLink platform creates immersive simulations that allow educators to practice classroom scenarios and refine their pedagogical skills. India's "SWAYAM" platform provides free online courses focused on pedagogy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, empowering teachers to improve their methods. Meanwhile, Singapore integrates AI-driven learning tools to deliver personalised feedback, enabling teachers to better meet students' needs. However, Bangladesh lags behind in adopting such

innovative approaches to teacher training. Bangladesh's teacher training system is evolving, but it remains rooted in traditional methods. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), the number of teacher training institutes has grown from 129 in 2000 to 209 in 2022, spread across the country's eight divisions. Despite this growth, the training curriculum itself has largely remained unchanged for decades.

Sayedha Rumina Masud, a teacher at Dinajpur Primary Model School explained, "Teacher training is done after getting the job and it takes one and a half years to complete. There is no pre-service pedagogical training. It follows the same traditional methods that it did 15 years ago."

"While the content is created online, most sessions rely on conventional lectures and books," she added.

Globally, tools like learning management systems, artificial intelligence and virtual reality are transforming teacher training. In Bangladesh, initiatives like Muktopaath and a2i's digital content repository provide some online resources. Muktopaath offers online courses for teachers on pedagogy and classroom management. Teachers also have access to interactive multimedia tools, video tutorials, and self-paced courses. However, when asked about the prospects of using digital tools, Sayeda Rumina shared, "Currently, no online tools are used for teacher training. While it might be possible in the future, I am sceptical given the current pace of progress. We do engage in curriculum development online, but that is all."

Despite the increase in training centres, many rural teachers face challenges. Indrojit Biswas, a former secondary school

teacher from Jessore noted, "Teacher training is provided properly, but it is not implemented at the school level. Teachers attend training for monetary benefits, not for genuine enhancement of skills."

He also pointed out, "Subjects like ICT are taught in a mixed method within teacher training institutes. However, the overall teacher training process still largely relies on traditional in person teaching methods."

Virtual simulations and augmented reality, used in countries like Finland, are yet to gain traction in Bangladesh. While platforms like Google Classroom and Zoom were utilised during the pandemic, rural areas at the grassroots levels continue to face challenges due to limited internet access and digital literacy.

Tumpa Rokho, a teacher at Rajshahi Mission Girls High School, emphasised these disparities saying, "Teacher training has yet to embrace digital methods. Occasionally, we use basic tools like Microsoft PowerPoint to create slides, but teaching is still predominantly done with books and whiteboards in schools." She acknowledged having internet access due to her location in the city but expressed concerns about rural schools. "Teachers in rural areas might not have the same access to the internet. If edtech is introduced for teacher training, there could be significant challenges in its implementation," she added. Currently, she does not use any other digital tools in her teaching practice.

Rumina further highlighted the decentralised structure of teacher training, "One noteworthy aspect is that teacher training is not centralised to Dhaka, as there are teacher training institutions available in different parts of the country.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

- » Bangladesh's teacher training remains rooted in outdated methods, with limited integration of educational technology compared to countries like Finland, Singapore, and India.
- » Challenges include inadequate digital infrastructure, lack of pre-service pedagogical training, and minimal access to online resources, especially in rural areas.
- » Systemic issues such as poor curriculum updates, limited professional development opportunities, and the outdated National Education Policy of 2010 hinder progress.
- » Teachers face barriers like insufficient ICT training, lack of digital literacy, and disparities between urban and rural education environments.
- » Prioritising teacher training reforms, integrating edtech, and updating education policies are crucial to improving the quality of education and meeting global standards.

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