

# From Learner to Future Educator: A Transformative Experience

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**Abstract**— The process of teacher education is an imperative place of accruing professional identity, pedagogical awareness, and reflective competence by the future teachers. The current study examines how first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students are undergoing a transformational process of becoming first-year learners and first-year educators in the Indian context. The research is based on a qualitative paradigm of research and takes a phenomenological and semi-interview-based approach. In the study, semi-structured interviews were used to source data on five first-years B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students in Kerala, to understand their motivations, expectations, challenges, and changing perceptions of teaching. The results demonstrate that students join teacher education with various motivations conditioned by their personal interest, peer pressure, as well as practical aspects like employment. The paper emphasizes the fact that the process of teacher identity formation starts at the beginning of the programme and is characterized by the development of reflective thinking, sense of responsibility, and changing professional self. Nonetheless, this change is also accompanied by difficulties, such as academic stress, language, and emotional confusion. The research highlights the importance of reflective practice, institutional support and socio-cultural context in influencing the development of pre-service teachers. It further supports empirically the integrated teacher education programmes, as envisaged by the National Education Policy 2020, and also reveals areas which need more focus. The study by foregrounding student voices is a contribution to the expanding literature on teacher identity formation in India and argues the importance of a more contextually sensitive and reflective approach to teacher education.

**Keywords**— *Teacher Identity Formation; Teacher Education in India; Professional Transformation; Socio-Cultural Context*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The recent years have seen a more dramatic paradigm shift in teacher education in India, especially with the implementation of integrated programmes like B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed., as per the vision of the National Education Policy 2020. The aim of these programmes is to break down this traditional dichotomy between subject knowledge and pedagogical training by providing an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to teacher preparation. Modern research points to the fact that these combined models not only improve conceptual knowledge but also teaching competence, which will prepare future teachers to meet the demands of the complex 21st-century classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; NCTE, 2021).

The shift in the role of the learner into the role of the educator in these programmes is not just the structural or academic change but the profound transformation process entailing the new identity construction. According to the recent research, the teacher identity is formed in the process of constant interaction between the individual beliefs, the practices of the institution, and the reflection (Beijaard et al., 2019; Izadinia, 2017). During the initial stages of teacher education, students start to reconsider their past experiences as learners and slowly come to internalize the roles, responsibilities and ethical obligations that come with teaching. It is a transformation that is non-linear and dependent on emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of learning (Flores, 2020).

The Indian context further influences the process of becoming a teacher because of the existence of different socio-cultural realities such as multilingual classrooms, diverse schooling backgrounds, as well as systemic inequalities.

According to such scholars as Kumar (2019) and Batra (2020), teacher education should be sensitive to these contextual factors to be able to guarantee meaningful professional development. Moreover, recent studies show that first-year teacher education students usually have conflicts between their initial expectations and the reality of professional training, which results in critical reflection and slow adaptation (Mishra and Koehler, 2021; Sharma, 2022).

It is against this background that the current research will critically analyze the way first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students have their identity transformed by being introduced to teacher training at an early stage. The study presents the manner in which students negotiate their emerging identity as future teachers in a dynamic socio-educational environment by targeting the students of Kerala. The research question seeks to add to the emerging body of study on the formation of teacher identity in India by preempting the voices of students and lived experiences during the first stage of professional preparation.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Teacher Identity Formation

The concept that teacher identity is a dynamic and evolving and contextually situated construct, is developing through sustained interaction of personal beliefs, professional experiences and institutional environments. The recent scholarship stresses that identity is not something fixed but a dynamic process that can be influenced by reflection, discourse, and practice (Beijaard et al., 2019; Izadinia, 2017). Early in their teacher education, pre-service teachers start to redefine their prior experiences as learners, as they negotiate new professional roles and expectations.

In the Indian context, the Structural and socio-cultural factors which include examination-oriented schooling, hierarchical teacher-student relationships and culturally ingrained expectations of teachers as moral and social guides also contribute to teacher identity formation (Batra, 2020; Kumar, 2019). These contextual factors bring about opportunities and conflict, as student-teachers find themselves between the conventional understanding of teaching and new ideals of pedagogy. Accordingly, the identity development in teacher education becomes a socio-constructive process which is influenced by the agency of individual and structural conditions.

### **B. Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice has continued to be a key theoretical prism through which teacher development is viewed, especially when it comes to the development of professional identity. The modern understandings go further than the original concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, emphasizing reflection as a critical, dialogic, and transformative process (Loughran, 2019; Farrell, 2018). In the case of pre-service teachers, reflective practice helps them to critically consider their assumptions, teaching practices, and classroom interactions.

According to recent research, structured reflective practices, including reflective journals, peer discussions, and mentoring, have a significant positive impact on pedagogical understanding and professional confidence (Mann & Walsh, 2017; Flores, 2020). Reflective practice is also becoming increasingly popular in the Indian teacher education environment as a way of helping to close the long-standing conflict between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities (NCTE, 2021). Reflection helps to create adaptable and responsive teachers by promoting critical thinking and self-awareness.

### **C. Indian Teacher Education Socio-Cultural Context.**

The Indian teacher education is conducted in a multifaceted socio-cultural environment with the influence of linguistic differences, socio-economic status, and different educational systems. The latest policy and research discussions underline the necessity to frame teacher preparation in a context of these realities (Batra, 2020; NCTE, 2021). Inclusion, flexibility, and culturally responsive teacher education programmes are further highlighted by the introduction of the National Education Policy 2020.

According to scholars, pre-service teachers should be ready to work with diverse classrooms that comprise multilingual students, students who represent marginalized groups, and students with diverse learning needs (Mohanty, 2019; Sharma, 2022). This requires a change in the standardized, theory-intensive models to the more practice-based and contextually sensitive models.

## **III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **A. International Perspectives**

According to recent international studies, teacher identity development starts at an early stage in teacher education programmes and is influenced by a mixture of cognitive, emotional and social factors. According to Beijaard et al. (2019), identity development is a process through which the

subject expertise, pedagogical knowledge and relational engagement with learners are combined. Likewise, Izadinia (2017) observed that the presence of early professional experiences and reflective opportunities were important factors that shaped the perceptions of pre-service teachers as educators.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated that integrated teacher education programmes are important to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practice to enhance professional competence. Moreover, Flores (2020) emphasizes that these contextual factors, like the institutional culture and support systems, have a strong influence on teacher identity and commitment at the first steps of training. These works all indicate that good teacher education needs to be in form of an opportunity to reflect, practice and engage in the context.

### **B. Indian Research on Teacher Education**

Recent research has a significant contribution to the intricacies of teacher preparation and identity formation in the Indian context. Kumar (2019) is a critical essay on the long-standing gap between theoretical coursework and real-life teaching experience, that should be replaced with more experiential and practice-based learning methods. On the same note, Batra (2020) also stresses the necessity of reforms that will help to match teacher training with the realities in the classroom and socio-cultural diversity.

Pandey (2017) notes that pre-service teachers are usually starry eyed about teaching and that their perceptions about teaching change as they experience the realities of teaching in the classroom. This process of adjustment is further influenced by institutional support and exposure to pedagogical practices. Sharma and Bedi (2018) emphasize that the barriers to communication and engagement between student-teachers with different backgrounds in English-based instruction remain a language barrier, which still influences the process of understanding and engagement.

Recent studies by Mishra and Koehler (2021) highlight the importance of mentorship, collaboration with peers, and technological integration as important variables in improving teacher preparedness and anxiety among pre-service teachers. Also, policy reports like NCTE (2021) emphasize the role of reflective practice, internship-based education, and competency-based education in enhancing the teacher education in India.

Together, these findings suggest that teacher education in India needs to shift to more holistic, context-sensitive, and reflective approach that can help in the formation of adaptive and socially responsive educators.

## **IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the motivations of first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students in choosing teacher education as a career pathway.
- To analyze the initial expectations of students regarding the integrated B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme and the teaching profession.

- To identify the academic, psychological, and socio-cultural challenges faced by students during the early phase of teacher education.
- To investigate the role of reflective thinking and institutional exposure in shaping students' professional understanding.
- To understand how socio-cultural context (Kerala, different district) influences students' perceptions and experiences in teacher education

## V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above objectives, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What are the key factors influencing students' decision to enroll in the B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme?
- What expectations do first-year students hold regarding teacher education and the teaching profession?
- How do students perceive the role of a teacher at the beginning of their professional journey?
- In what ways does the transition from learner to educator occur during the first year of teacher education?
- What challenges (academic, linguistic, emotional, and social) do students encounter in the early stages of the programme?
- How does reflective engagement influence students' evolving professional identity?
- What role does the socio-cultural context of Kozhikode district play in shaping students' attitudes towards teaching?

## VI. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Approach

The current research follows a qualitative research design, because it aims to examine subjective experiences and perceptions and identity change process of first year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students. Qualitative inquiry can be especially useful to explain complex social phenomena like the formation of teacher identity that entails emotions, thoughts, and contextual interpretations and does not involve measurable variables (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Since the research is based on the lived experience and sense-making, a qualitative approach would allow a profound and detailed comprehension of the process of how students will negotiate their role as learners and become future educators.

### B. Research Design

The phenomenology research design was used to reveal the lived experiences of the participants in their initial stages of teacher education. Phenomenology is suitable in cases where the aim is to comprehend how people construct and make meaning of a collective experience-in this scenario, the transition into teacher education (Moustakas, 1994). Also, the research incorporates a semi-interview-based exploratory design, giving it the flexibility in the data collection, but staying on track with the research questions. This design

allows deep and detailed data and promotes the development of themes based on the stories of the participants.

### C. Research Setting

The research is contextually framed in two educational contexts:

- The context of the participants in the different districts of Kerala with a good educational background and different schooling settings.
- The dual-context perspective adds depth to the analysis as it allows drawing comparisons and interpreting the context.

### D. Participants and Sampling

Five first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students of Kerala participated in the study, who enrolled to pursue integrated courses in Indian University or Institutes.

Purposive sampling method was applied to choose respondents who:

- Have successfully completed the first year of the B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme,
- Identify with different academic and socio-cultural backgrounds, and
- Open-minded to share their experiences.

The purposive sampling is also supported because the study needs the cases that are rich in information and may offer valuable data about the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). The sample size is not large, but it fits qualitative phenomenological research, where the depth of understanding is more important than generalization.

### E. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and provided flexibility and consistency.

### F. Interview Procedure

A series of guiding questions were formulated according to the objectives and research questions.

- The interviews were informal and aimed at the comfort and naturalness of answers of the interviewees.
- Major areas covered were motivation, expectations, perception of teaching, challenges and identity transformation.

### Justification

Semi-structured interviews are commonly accepted as effective in qualitative research to provide detailed descriptions without restricting the participants to a pre-determined set of answers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). This technique is especially appropriate to investigate reflective and experiential aspects of teacher education.

**G. Data Analysis Technique**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected based on the framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

**Steps of Analysis**

- Introduction to data by reading through it.
- Primary coding of significant passages.
- Identification of patterns and themes
- Review and refinement of themes.
- Interpretation and linking with theoretical framework.

**Justification**

Thematic analysis will be suitable in revealing common patterns in the stories of the participants and also in categorizing data into significant themes relevant to the research questions. It also enables flexibility of interpretation of intricate qualitative data.

**H. Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in a manner that adhered to ethics:

- All participants had an informed consent.
- Participants were guaranteed of privacy and anonymity.
- Participation was done voluntarily and was at any phase.
- Data were used: Academically only

**VII. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

**A. Coding Table (Thematic Analysis)**

The following table 1 presents the themes, sub-themes, and representative excerpts derived from the thematic analysis of interview data

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Sample Participant Quote
<b>1. Motivation for Choosing Teaching</b>	Intrinsic Interest	Passion for teaching and explaining concepts	“I enjoy helping others understand lessons, so teaching feels natural to me.”
	Extrinsic Factors	Influence of family, job security, social respect	“My parents suggested this course because teaching is a stable job.”
	Social Influence	Inspiration from teachers or role models	“My school teacher inspired me to become like her.”

<b>2. Expectations from Programme</b>	Academic Expectations	Expectation to gain subject knowledge	“I thought it would focus mainly on science subjects.”
	Pedagogical Awareness	Realization of importance of teaching methods	“Now I understand teaching methods are equally important.”
	Skill Development	Expectation to learn classroom management	“I want to learn how to control and guide students.”
<b>3. Changing Perception of Teaching</b>	Simplistic View (Initial)	Teaching seen as knowledge delivery	“Earlier I thought teaching is just explaining lessons.”
	Complex Understanding (Developing)	Recognition of planning, empathy, and creativity	“Now I feel teaching needs patience and proper planning.”
<b>4. Identity Transformation</b>	Emerging Teacher Identity	Beginning to see oneself as a teacher	“Now I imagine myself teaching in a classroom.”
	Sense of Responsibility	Awareness of future role and impact	“I feel responsible because I will shape students’ future.”
<b>5. Challenges Faced</b>	Academic Pressure	Difficulty balancing science and pedagogy	“Managing both subjects is stressful.”
	Language Barrier	Difficulty with English-medium instruction	“Sometimes I struggle to understand educational terms.”
	Emotional Struggles	Self-doubt and lack of confidence	“I am not sure if I can become a good teacher.”
<b>6. Reflective Practice</b>	Observation of Teaching	Analyzing teachers’ methods	“I observe how teachers explain topics now.”
	Self-Reflection	Thinking about own future teaching style	“I think about how I will teach differently.”
<b>7. Socio-</b>	Educational Background	Influence of Kerala’s literacy culture	“In Kerala, education is very important, so teaching is

<b>Cultural Influence</b>			respected.”
	Cultural Values	Teaching as a moral and social role	“Teachers are seen as guides, not just instructors.”

**B. Theme-Wise Interpretation**

**1. Reasons why I have chosen teaching as a career.**

Interpretation of the interview data indicates that the motivation of participants to the B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme has a complicated set of intrinsic and extrinsic, and socio-cultural influences. Such a multi-layered motivation scheme is indicative of larger pattern tendencies in current research in the field of teacher education, where a career choice is never the result of a single factor and but a product of interacting influences. A considerable percentage of respondents said that they were intrinsically motivated, which means that they were simply interested in teaching and were naturally disposed to assist other people in learning. Sentences like I love to explain stuff to my classmates demonstrate an early tendency towards a pedagogical activity. This is consistent with the current research by Richardson and Watt (2018), who underlines the fact that intrinsic value is a good predictor of long-term engagement in the teaching profession.

Nonetheless, intrinsic motivation is not sufficient to explain the decisions of the participants. External influences, especially work stability and social esteem that comes with the profession of a teacher were also significant. Participants realised that teaching is viewed as a secure and dignified career, particularly in the families of the middle classes in India. This is also indicative of socio-economic realities of career decision-making in India, where stability tends to be more important than passion (Batra, 2020). Another important factor, which proved to be critical, was the role of social influence, particularly family and past teachers. Others stated explicitly that they were encouraged by their parents and others talked about inspirational teachers who influenced their ambitions. This means that career decision-making is integrated in relational networks and cultural requirements. In the Kerala scenario, where education is so much appreciated, teaching is regarded as a vocation and a social duty. Theoretically, the findings could be explained by the expectancy-value theory, which postulates that the perceived value and perceived success determine the career choices of people (Eccles and Wigfield, 2020). The respondents who thought teaching was meaningful and attainable were more willing to do so.

Notably, the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation casts doubts on the viability of professional commitment. It is true that intrinsic motivation correlates with resilience and job satisfaction, whereas extrinsic motivation can cause difficulties in case expectations are failed. As such, teacher education programmes need to foster intrinsic interest and respond to external realities. Summing up, the desire to become a teacher is not an equal factor that drives first-year students but rather a personal interest, socio-cultural background, and practical aspects. This diversity is key in

understanding how to design responsive and supportive teacher education programmes.

**2. Expectations from the B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. Programme**

The B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme saw participants joining with a variety of expectations; most of which were initially naive and progressively developed as they were exposed to both academic and pedagogical experiences. This is the transition to naivety to enlightenment, and it is indicative of the initial phases of professional socialization. First, majority of the participants assumed that the main content of the programme was going to be subject content knowledge especially in the science subjects. This is expected based on their previous experiences in school where teaching is sometimes seen as a content delivery. However, with the participants involved in the curriculum, they started to appreciate the value of pedagogical knowledge, such as instruction methods, classroom management, and interest in the learner.

The change is consistent with the idea of the so-called apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, reinterpreted in modern research, including Flores, 2020) according to which the previous experiences of students as learners influence their first ideas of teaching. But the formal teacher education interferes with such assumptions by bringing in theoretical and practical aspects of pedagogy. The participants too had expectations that were associated with the development of skills especially in the area of classroom management and communication. These expectations signify that there is a growing consciousness about teaching as an occupation that is skill-oriented and not an academic endeavor.

The difference between expectations and experiences can be explained by the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, updated interpretations in Taylor, 2017), where the disorienting experiences are followed by the critical reflection and the change in perspective. As an example, respondents who initially underrated the complexity of teaching subsequently admitted that it is multifaceted. This change is especially important in the Indian context, where the traditional teacher education was often criticized due to being too theoretical (Kumar, 2019). The combined B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme, however, seems to be more conducive to a balanced understanding as it blends theory with practice. Generally, the results indicate that expectations are dynamic and do change with interaction with curriculum, peers, and institutional settings. This puts into focus the significance of early orientation and mentoring to match student expectations with programme realities.

**3. Identity Transformation: Learner to Emerging Educator.**

Among the most important discoveries of the research, there is the discovery of the gradual development of teacher identity among the participants. This change is not instantaneous nor even consistent but occurs in reflective participation and learning experiences. At the start of the program, the participants were highly oriented as learners, with little knowledge of what they would do later in their careers. Nevertheless, as time went by, they started

internalizing the role of a teacher, as they said they now visualized themselves teaching in a classroom. Such a change marks the start of identity reconstruction.

Theoretically, the process is consistent with identity-as-practice conceptions (Beauchamp and Thomas revised conceptions in Beijaard et al., 2019), which perceive identity as something people do by being involved in professional practices. This process is triggered even without the formal teaching practice with the exposure to the pedagogical discourse. Another aspect that the participants showed was the developing sense of responsibility, which they attributed to the influence that teachers have on the lives of students. This is the moral and ethical aspect of teaching which is especially stressed in the Indian context.

But there is tension and uncertainty that comes with identity transformation. Other participants were self-doubting that they could become good teachers. This shows that identity formation entails a process of negotiating between aspiration and perceived competence. Institutional environment plays an important role in this process. Relationships with peers, faculty and course content facilitate identity exploration and confirmation. In this regard, teachers education institutions play the role of identity-forming spaces. To sum up, the learner-teacher process is complex, reflective, and mediated socially and influenced by both internal and external factors.

#### 4. Early Teacher Education problems.

The respondents mentioned several difficulties, which can be divided into academic, linguistic, and emotional levels.

**Academic Challenges:** The interdisciplinary character of the programme presupposes the concomitant consideration of the science material and pedagogical theory. This twofold demand culminates into cognitive overload especially among the first year students that are trying to adapt to a new environment in terms of academics.

**Language Barriers:** Language became a major challenge particularly to non-English students. The problem of difficulty in learning educational terms influences the level of understanding and engagement indicating a systemic problem in Indian higher education (Sharma, 2022).

**Emotional Challenges:** The participants mentioned that they felt self-doubt and anxiety, which was an emotional aspect of professional development. Such experiences align with the findings of research that early teacher education is usually accompanied by identity-related stress (Flores, 2020).

These hurdles highlight the importance of comprehensive support strategies such as academic scaffolds, language support, and emotional counselling.

#### 5. Development of Reflective Practice

One of the important signs of professional development that were found in the research is the development of reflective thinking by the participants. Students stated that they actively monitored teaching strategies, observed the process in classrooms, and even thought about how they would teach. This is consistent with current views on reflective practice, which focus on its importance in promoting

critical thinking and adaptive expertise (Farrell, 2018). Reflection will help the students go beyond passive learning and actively engage with the ideas of pedagogy. The emergence of reflective practice is a major shift in pedagogy in the Indian context where rote learning has long been the norm.

### VIII. DISCUSSION

The given study aimed to explore the transformative experience of first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students as they become learners and become the future educators in the Indian teacher education setting. The result indicates that such a transition is a process that is non-linear, complex, and contextual, with motivations, expectations, challenges, and reflective engagement shaping it. This section places these findings in the current theoretical and empirical research.

The multi-dimensionality of motivation in pre-service teachers is one of the main study findings. The combination of the intrinsic interest (e.g., passion to teach) with extrinsic factors (e.g., job security, social respect) is consistent with the current literature indicating that intrinsic and socio-economic factors affect career choice in teaching (Richardson and Watt, 2018; Batra, 2020). Extrinsic motivations cannot be ruled out as peripheral to teaching in the Indian context, an occupation commonly viewed as a steady and socially desirable career; instead, they are complemented by intrinsic ambitions and influence the long-term involvement with the occupation. Nevertheless, the literature also warns that extrinsic motivation in isolation might not be enough to maintain the professional commitment, as the teacher education programmes should foster the intrinsic interest and professional identity (Flores, 2020).

The research also indicates that there is a drastic change in the expectations and perceptions of the students regarding teaching as they now have a more complex view of the teaching as a pedagogical, emotional and ethical process. This change is connected to the professional socialization process, during which pre-service teachers have the opportunity to rebuild their previous assumptions by being exposed to the theoretical frameworks and institutional practices (Beijaard et al., 2019). These results can be likened to the idea of disorienting dilemmas in transformative learning theory where an initial set of assumptions is disproved, and deeper reflection and conceptual shift ensues (Taylor, 2017). The B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. programme, then, is a critical location of epistemological change.

One of the main contributions of the research is the establishment of the early teacher identity of first year students. In spite of the lack of massive teaching practice, the participants started to internalize professional roles and exhibited a dynamic sense of responsibility and self-concept as future educators. This stands in line with the modern identity theories, where teacher identity is viewed as a process of becoming, but not a state (Izadinia, 2017; Beijaard et al., 2019). Notably, the results indicate that identity formation will be developed sooner than believed is common, which argues the significance of designing first-year experiences that purposefully foster identity formation.

Simultaneously, the identity formation process is characterized by tension, uncertainty, and emotional bargaining. The participants expressed doubt about them, anxiety, and lack of adaptation to dual requirements of content and pedagogy. These results align with recent literature that suggests that emotional vulnerability and identity-related stress typically go hand in hand with early teacher education (Flores, 2020; Sharma, 2022). Instead of perceiving these challenges as obstacles, it would be best to interpret them as part of the transformative process, which leads to reflection and development. Nevertheless, this is also a reminder of the necessity of the institutional support systems, such as mentoring, counselling and peer collaboration.

The presence of the reflective practice as a mediator in the transformation process is also pre-empted in the study. The respondents were shown to be able to monitor teaching practices, evaluate and criticise them meaning they developed reflective thinking. This is consistent with the modern views that make reflection a focus of the professional learning and adaptive expertise (Farrell, 2018; Loughran, 2019). The advent of reflective practice in the Indian context, where the traditional pedagogies have frequently focused on rote learning, is a major change in pedagogy in line with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020.

The other critical dimension that the study has brought to the limelight is the role of the socio-cultural context in teacher identity formation. Respondents of Kozhikode district, Kerala, displayed a high cultural value of education and this informed the way they viewed teaching as a well-respected and socially significant career. This confirms the arguments of Indian scholars that this means that teacher education cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context (Batra, 2020; Mohanty, 2019). The results support the idea that contextually responsive teacher education programmes should be designed to take the regional diversity and cultural values into account.

The cross-case analysis also indicates that although the transformative trajectory is largely common, diverse experiences are experienced depending on motivation, confidence, and adaptability. It is this duality of collective structural experience and individual variation that supports the perspective that teacher identity formation is collective and individualized. Common experiences are afforded by institutional structures, but the mediation of these experiences occurs in terms of personal histories and dispositions.

In terms of policy implications, the results are empirical evidence of the integrated model of teacher education that NEP 2020 promotes. The combination of content and pedagogy at an early stage seems to help in getting a more holistic view of teaching. The study, however, also identifies the issue of enduring challenges, including language barriers and academic overload, that should be tackled to achieve the full potential of such programmes.

Overall, the discussion highlights the fact that the process of a transition between a learner and an educator is not linear but a dynamic, reflective and contextually mediated process. The results are added to the growing literature on teacher identity formation in India as the findings preempt the voices of first-year students, a group that is under-researched. The

study provides valuable information about the curriculum design, pedagogy, and policy in teacher education by highlighting the opportunities and challenges of early-stage teacher education.

#### IX. STUDY LIMITATIONS

- The research is restricted to five respondents in Kerala.
- It targets first year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. students only.
- The results are context-dependent and not to be generalised.

#### X. CONCLUSION

The current paper aimed to investigate the transformative experience of first-year B.A. or B.Sc. B.Ed. learners on the way to becoming budding teachers in the Indian system of teacher training. Using a case that is based on a qualitative, semi-interview based investigation of participants in Kerala, the research offers a subtle insight into the role that early-stage teacher education plays in the development of professional identity, perceptions, and reflective abilities. According to the findings, it is evident that the experience of becoming a teacher starts way before actual practice teaching. The changes in the perception of teaching among students are remarkable even after the first year of the programme, as they start to see teaching as a complicated, many-sided, and socially responsible occupation, instead of considering it as a mere process of imparting knowledge. This is not just an academic but also a personal change which includes a change of self-image, attitudes and goals.

One of the most significant findings of the research is the fact that the process of teacher identity formation is dynamic and changing, and it is conditioned by various factors, which are all connected with one another. The students join the programme with various reasons, some are simply interested and some have external factors like job security and societal pressures. These drives have a relationship with the experiences within the institution and a professional identity gradually develops. Nevertheless, this identity is still at its early phases, which are marked with excitement and confusion. The paper also points out how reflective practice plays a very crucial role in enabling this change to take place. The fact that the participants can observe, analyse and ask questions about the teaching practices means that they have developed reflective thinking which is paramount in the growth of the profession. This indicates that reflective engagement is an essential element of learning that teacher education programmes should focus on.

Simultaneously, the shift is also accompanied by a number of challenges, such as academic pressure, language barriers, and emotional difficulties, such as self-doubt. Such challenges are not only challenges, but they are part of the professional development process because they initiate a critical thinking and adjustment. However, such challenges highlight the importance of supportive institutional processes, such as mentorship, academic scaffold, and emotional support systems. The other meaningful conclusion is the power of socio-cultural setting on the experiences and perceptions of students. The background of the participants in the state of

Kerala, where the educational culture is high, determines their conception of teaching as a respectable and significant profession. This observation supports the necessity to localize teacher education to mirror local conditions and cultural beliefs.

Moreover, the research gives empirical evidence to the integrated model of teacher education advocated by the National Education Policy 2020 that seeks to close the gap between the content knowledge and pedagogical practices. Although the programme has potential in terms of holistic development, it also indicates areas that need to be addressed, specifically in the issue of language problems and balancing the academic needs. To sum up, the experience of becoming a learner and a teacher is a reflective, challenging, and context-specific process, which develops over a period of time. The initial years of teacher training are critical in bringing about this change and not just knowledge and skills but also professional identity and purpose of students. This research will help to understand teacher development in the Indian context better by preempting the voices and experiences of first-year students. These results suggest that a more responsive, reflective, and supportive teacher education is necessary, which acknowledges the individuality of learners and promotes a common professional vision. With India still in the process of reformation of its educational system, this revolutionary process will need to be comprehended and reinforced to enable the process of producing competent, dedicated and contextually sensitive educators

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors' declares no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Fahim P is the primary author and is responsible for the conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. Tarak Halder supervised and guided the research and writing process.

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