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Divergence Theory of Teacher Education: From Reality to Professionalization

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Abstract:

Teacher education plays a crucial role in shaping competent and professional educators. The study explores the persistent gap between foundational theoretical knowledge and actual classroom outcomes in teacher education. Despite ongoing reforms, teacher preparation programs often remain disconnected from the practical demands of real teaching environments, resulting in a mismatch between what teachers know and what they are able to implement effectively. This study aims to analyse the divergence between theoretical preparation and teaching outcomes, identify key areas where such divergence occurs, and its impact on teacher professionalization. Using a qualitative and analytical approach based on a review of literature, policy frameworks, and conceptual perspectives, the study identifies major areas of divergence, including the curriculum gap, policy implementation gap, skill application gap, and assessment gap. These gaps hinder the development of essential teaching competencies such as classroom management, critical thinking, adaptability, and reflective practice, thereby limiting teachers' effectiveness in diverse classroom contexts. The study reveals that such divergence weakens the process of teacher professionalization by restricting the integration of knowledge, skills, and professional identity. The study concludes by emphasizing the need to reorient teacher education toward a more integrated, practice-based, context-responsive, and competency-driven model that promotes experiential learning, stronger institutional collaboration, and continuous professional development, ultimately bridging the gap between theory and practice and enhancing the quality of teacher professionalism.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Divergence Theory, Professionalization, Educational Policy, Practice Gap, Teacher Training.

1. Introduction:

Teacher education is widely recognized as a cornerstone for enhancing the quality, equity, and effectiveness of educational systems worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). It is designed to equip prospective

teachers with essential pedagogical knowledge, professional competencies, and ethical dispositions required for effective classroom practice (OECD, 2019). However, a growing body of research highlights a persistent gap between the foundational knowledge imparted during teacher education and the actual outcomes observed in classroom contexts (World Bank, 2018). This divergence raises critical questions about the relevance, applicability, and effectiveness of existing teacher preparation programmes in addressing the complex and dynamic challenges of real-world teaching (NCTE, 2014). The concept of Divergence Theory of Teacher Education emerges from growing concerns about the disconnection between what is taught in teacher education institutions and what is required in actual classroom practice. This perspective aligns with existing scholarship that highlights the persistent theory–practice gap in teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2006). While teacher education curricula often emphasize educational theories, psychological principles, and standardized pedagogical approaches, classroom realities are shaped by diverse learner needs, socio-cultural contexts, institutional constraints, and evolving educational demands (Shulman, 1987). This mismatch not only affects teaching outcomes but also influences teachers’ preparedness and professional confidence (Hattie, 2009).

This mismatch between foundational knowledge and outcomes leads to a condition of divergence, wherein teachers often experience difficulty in translating theory into effective classroom practice (Korthagen, 2010). Such divergence is evident across multiple dimensions, including curriculum design, pedagogical practices, assessment strategies, and institutional expectations, reflecting a broader structural gap within teacher education systems (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Identifying these key areas of divergence is essential for understanding the limitations inherent in teacher preparation programmes and their implementation. A critical analysis of these dimensions provides insights into how and why the intended learning outcomes of teacher education frequently fail to translate into meaningful classroom success (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

This divergence has significant implications for teacher professionalization, as the development of a professional teacher identity is closely tied to the integration of knowledge, practice, and reflective engagement (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Professionalization in teaching depends on the acquisition of competencies, the cultivation of reflective practices, and the ability to adapt theoretical knowledge to complex classroom situations (Day, 1999). When a persistent gap exists between knowledge and outcomes, it can hinder the formation of a coherent professional identity and reduce teachers’ effectiveness in responding to dynamic educational environments (Avalos, 2011). In this context, the present study seeks to critically examine the divergence between foundational knowledge and classroom realities, with particular attention to identifying the key areas where this gap is most evident. Such an inquiry is grounded in existing research that emphasizes the need to align teacher education more closely with practice and contextual demands (Zeichner, 2010). Against this

backdrop, the study further aims to analyse the divergence between foundational knowledge and educational outcomes, identify the dimensions in which this gap is most pronounced, and explore its implications for the process of teacher professionalization (Darling-Hammond, 2006). By addressing these concerns, the study aspires to contribute to a more contextualized, reflective, and practice-oriented understanding of teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

2. Objectives of the Study:

- To study the divergence between foundational knowledge and outcome.
- To identify the key areas of Divergence.
- To explore Divergence's impact on Teacher Professionalization.

3. Methodology:

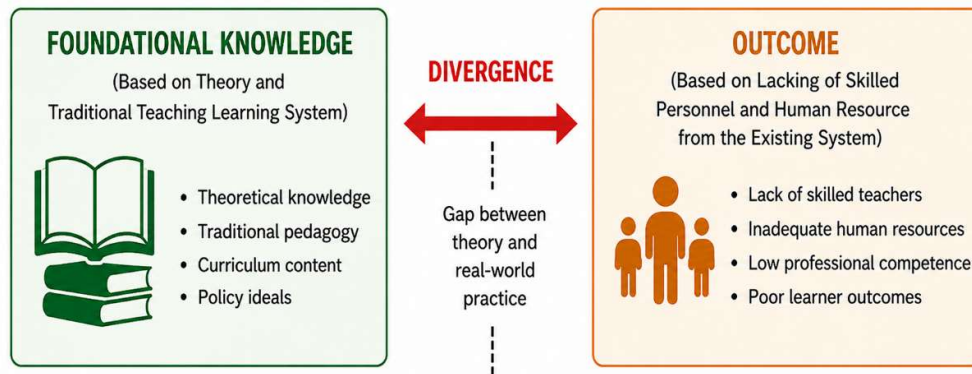
This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing document analysis to examine the divergence between foundational knowledge and educational outcomes in teacher education. The data gathered from various secondary sources, including policy documents such as the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), reports from national and international educational bodies, and relevant scholarly literature. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to gaps in teacher preparation, professional competencies, and institutional challenges. This approach facilitates a focused and in-depth understanding of the structural and functional factors contributing to divergence, as well as their implications for teacher professionalization.

4. Conceptual Framework: Divergence Theory of Teacher Education:

The Divergence Theory of Teacher Education provides a critical lens to understand the widening gap between the foundational knowledge of teacher preparation and educational outcomes. Teacher education programmes are traditionally designed to equip prospective teachers with knowledge of curriculum, pedagogical theories, and policy frameworks (Shulman, 1987). However, in practice, teachers often encounter complex classroom situations shaped by diverse learner needs, socio-cultural variations, institutional constraints, and limited resources. This mismatch between what is taught and what is experienced creates a divergence that directly affects the quality and effectiveness of teaching (Korthagen, 2010). The theory highlights the disconnection between foundational knowledge largely based on theory and traditional teaching learning systems and outcomes, which are often constrained by a lack of skilled personnel and human resources within existing systems (World Bank, 2018). While theoretical knowledge tends to be structured, standardized, and idealistic, practical reality is dynamic, unpredictable, and context-specific. The inability of teacher education programmes to adequately bridge this divide results in teachers being insufficiently prepared for real-world teaching demands (Zeichner, 2010).

The Divergence Theory of Teacher Education refers to the growing gap between:

- **Foundational Knowledge** (Based on Theory and Traditional teaching learning system)
- **Outcome** (Lacking of skilled personal and human resource from the existing system)



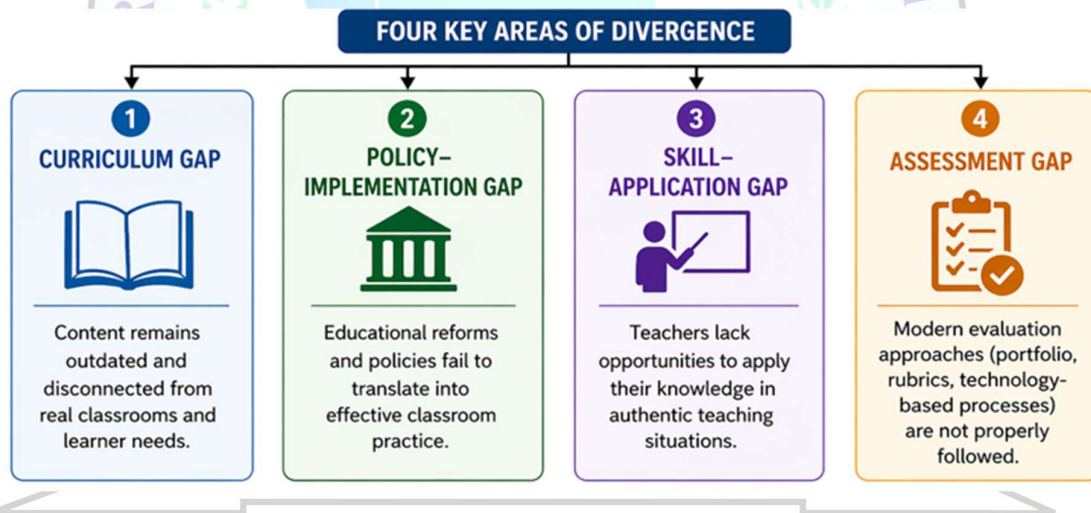
Key Dimensions of Divergence:

The concept of Key Areas of Divergence highlights the critical gaps within teacher education that hinder effective classroom outcomes. It reflects the disconnect between theoretical preparation and practical implementation in real educational settings. These divergences emerge across curriculum design, policy execution, skill application, and assessment practices. Each area represents a specific challenge that limits teachers' ability to respond to diverse learner needs. Understanding these gaps is essential for developing a more responsive, practice-oriented, and effective teacher education system. The key dimension of divergence is discussed below:

- I. **Curriculum Gap:** One of the most significant dimensions of divergence is the gap between prescribed curricula in teacher education programmes and actual classroom practices. Teacher education curricula often remain theoretical, rigid, and insufficiently responsive to contemporary classroom realities, with limited emphasis on experiential and practice-based learning. They frequently fail to adequately address critical issues such as inclusive education, classroom diversity, multilingual contexts, and behavioural challenges (UNESCO, 2020). As a result, teachers often struggle to adapt theoretical concepts to practical situations, leading to ineffective instructional strategies and reduced learner engagement (Zeichner, 2010).
- II. **Policy Implementation Gap:** Educational policies at national and institutional levels often emphasize innovation, quality improvement, and the strengthening of professional standards in teaching. However, the implementation of these policies is frequently constrained by systemic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, administrative inefficiencies, and limited professional support (World Bank, 2018). This gap between policy formulation and execution creates a situation in which policy goals remain largely aspirational rather than operational (Fullan, 2007). Consequently, teachers are often unable to effectively translate policy directives into classroom practice due to a lack of resources, training, and

institutional support (OECD, 2019).

- III. **Skill Application Gap:** Teacher education programmes often emphasize the acquisition of theoretical knowledge while giving comparatively less attention to the development of practical teaching skills. Opportunities for hands-on experiences, such as teaching internships, classroom simulations, and field-based learning, are frequently limited or inadequately structured, reducing their effectiveness in preparing teachers for real classroom situations (Zeichner, 2010). As a result, teachers may possess an understanding of pedagogical theories but struggle to apply them meaningfully in practice. This gap significantly affects their confidence, classroom management abilities, and overall teaching competence, ultimately influencing the quality of teaching and learning processes (Hattie, 2009).
- IV. **Assessment Gap:** Assessment systems in teacher education often prioritize academic achievement and theoretical understanding over the evaluation of practical teaching competencies. Evaluation methods largely rely on written examinations and rote memorization, with limited emphasis on performance-based assessments such as lesson delivery, classroom interaction, and reflective practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). This misalignment between assessment practices and professional requirements discourages the development of essential practical skills and fails to provide an accurate measure of a teacher’s readiness for classroom practice (Zeichner, 2010).



5. Divergence in Teacher Education: Reality vs. Expectations:

The divergence between the intended goals of teacher education and the realities experienced by teachers in classrooms is shaped by multiple structural and contextual factors. While teacher education programmes are designed to produce competent, reflective, and professionally equipped educators, the conditions under which these programmes operate often fail to meet these expectations (Avalos, 2011). Institutional limitations, socio-cultural diversity, and resource constraints significantly influence how teacher education is implemented and experienced in practice (Gupta, 2019). Consequently, a gap emerges between intended objectives and actual outcomes, reflecting broader

systemic challenges within education systems (Tikly, 2011). This section therefore focuses on identifying and elaborating the key areas where such divergence becomes most evident.

Institutional Constraints: Institutional limitations play a significant role in widening the gap between expected teacher competencies and actual training outcomes. Many teacher education institutions, particularly in developing contexts, face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching–learning resources, and a shortage of qualified and experienced faculty (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2018). In several cases, institutions lack access to updated curricula, research facilities, and modern pedagogical tools necessary for effective teacher preparation. Additionally, weak institutional governance, limited funding, and insufficient accountability mechanisms further constrain the quality of teacher education programmes (OECD, 2019). As a result, prospective teachers are often trained in environments that do not reflect the standards or conditions of contemporary classrooms, thereby limiting their preparedness for professional roles (Avalos, 2011).

Limited Practical Exposure: Practical experience is a crucial component of teacher education; however, in many programmes, it remains inadequate in both duration and depth. Teaching practice sessions are often short-term, insufficiently supervised, and treated as procedural requirements rather than meaningful professional learning experiences (Zeichner, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014). Student-teachers frequently lack opportunities to engage with diverse classroom situations, such as managing heterogeneous groups, addressing individual learning needs, and responding to behavioural challenges (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). Furthermore, the absence of structured mentoring and consistent feedback during internships reduces the effectiveness of these experiences. Without sustained and authentic engagement in real classroom settings, teachers struggle to translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills, resulting in limited confidence and competence in actual teaching situations (Korthagen, 2010).

Socio-Cultural Realities: Another critical dimension of divergence lies in the disconnect between teacher education programmes and the socio-cultural contexts in which teachers operate. Many programmes adopt a standardized and generalized approach to training, often overlooking the diversity of learners' backgrounds, including differences in language, culture, socio-economic status, and learning abilities (Gay, 2010). This limitation is particularly evident in rural and marginalized communities, where educational challenges are more complex and context-specific (Tikly, 2011). Teachers who are not adequately prepared to address such diversity may struggle to create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments (Banks, 2015). The absence of contextually relevant training therefore restricts teachers' ability to adapt their pedagogical approaches, ultimately affecting both teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2020).

Technological Gap: In the era of digital transformation, educational policies increasingly emphasize the integration of technology in teaching and learning processes. However, a significant gap persists

between these expectations and the actual technological competencies of teachers (UNESCO, 2018). Many teacher education programmes lack adequate infrastructure such as computer laboratories, reliable internet access, and digital learning resources necessary for meaningful, hands-on training (World Bank, 2018). Additionally, limited exposure to educational technologies, including learning management systems, digital content creation tools, and online assessment platforms, restricts the development of teachers' digital literacy. This gap became particularly evident during the shift to online learning, when many teachers were unprepared to effectively use technology for instructional purposes (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Consequently, the technological gap further exacerbates the divergence between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

6. Divergence Between Foundational Knowledge and educational outcomes:

The divergence between foundational knowledge acquired during teacher education and actual educational outcomes in classrooms creates a persistent theory–practice gap. Teachers often find it difficult to translate abstract pedagogical concepts into effective classroom strategies, which can reduce their confidence and professional competence. As noted by Donald Schön (1983), effective teaching requires reflective application of knowledge in real situations, a skill that is often underdeveloped in teacher preparation programs. This gap also affects student learning, as ineffective application of teaching methods may lead to lower engagement and uneven learning outcomes. Lee Shulman (1987) highlights that the integration of subject knowledge with pedagogy is essential for meaningful learning, which is often lacking when theory and practice remain disconnected.

Reduced Teaching Effectiveness: The gap between theoretical preparation and classroom realities reduces teaching effectiveness by limiting teachers' ability to adapt their strategies to diverse and unpredictable classroom situations (Zeichner, 2010). Teachers often struggle with classroom management, learner diversity, and student engagement due to insufficient practical training (OECD, 2019). Effective teaching requires integrating content knowledge with appropriate pedagogy and reflective practice, which is often lacking, leading to diminished instructional quality (Shulman, 1987).

Lack of Contextual Adaptation: The lack of contextual adaptation is a significant consequence of the gap between foundational knowledge and classroom realities (Dewey, 1938). Foundational knowledge in teacher education is often presented in generalized and idealized forms, with limited attention to the diversity of real classroom contexts (Fullan, 2007). However, effective teaching requires sensitivity to learners' socio-cultural backgrounds and the ability to adapt instruction accordingly. Teachers frequently struggle to modify curriculum content, pedagogy, and assessment methods to suit local needs and diverse learners. This mismatch between standardized instructional approaches and students lived experiences reduces the relevance and effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Gay, 2010).

Teacher Frustration and Professional Stress: Teacher frustration and professional stress are

significant outcomes of the gap between theoretical preparation and classroom realities (Ingersoll, 2001). When teachers are unable to effectively implement the knowledge and skills acquired during training, they often experience frustration, stress, and a sense of professional inadequacy (Day, 2004). This disconnect can diminish teachers' confidence and overall job satisfaction, particularly among novice teachers who are still developing their professional identity (Hargreaves, 2000). Prolonged exposure to such challenges increases the risk of burnout and contributes to higher rates of teacher attrition in the early years of the profession (Ingersoll, 2001).

Weak Classroom Management Skills: Weak classroom management skills are a common consequence of the gap between theoretical preparation and classroom realities. Teacher education programs often emphasize theoretical models of classroom management, which may not fully prepare teachers for the complex and unpredictable behavioural challenges encountered in real classrooms (Emmer Carolyn M. & Sabornie, 2015). As a result, teachers may struggle to translate theoretical strategies into practical and effective interventions for managing student behaviour (Doyle, 1986). This inability can lead to poor discipline, loss of instructional time, and reduced classroom control, ultimately affecting the overall learning environment and student achievement (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015).

Limited Development of Practical Skills: Limited development of practical skills is a significant outcome of the gap between theoretical preparation and classroom realities. This divergence often leads to inadequate cultivation of essential teaching competencies such as improvisation, decision-making, communication, and problem-solving, which are vital for effective classroom practice (Shulman, 1987). Teachers may possess strong theoretical understanding but still struggle with how to apply this knowledge in dynamic and real-life teaching situations. This disconnects between “knowing what” and “knowing how” limits teachers' ability to respond effectively to classroom challenges and reduces overall teaching competence (Dewey, 1938).

Ineffective Implementation of Educational Policies: Ineffective implementation of educational policies is a significant consequence of the gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom realities (Fullan, 2007). Educational policies and reforms such as learner-centred approaches, inclusive education, and competency-based learning are often grounded in ideal theoretical assumptions. However, contextual constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, and rigid institutional structures hinder their practical implementation in schools (Hargreaves, 2000). As a result, teachers may struggle to translate policy directives into effective classroom practices, leading to partial or ineffective implementation (Fullan, 2007).

Negative Impact on Student Learning Outcomes:

The divergence between foundational knowledge and classroom realities has a negative impact on student learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009). When teaching methods are not effectively aligned with

the needs and contexts of real classrooms, students may fail to fully benefit from instruction (William, 2011). This misalignment can result in poor academic performance and reduced student engagement in the learning process (Hattie, 2009). Furthermore, it may contribute to widening learning gaps, particularly among disadvantaged learners who require more context-sensitive and inclusive teaching approaches (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Gap Between Expectations and Practice: The gap between expectations and practice is a significant outcome of the divergence between teacher education and classroom realities (Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher education programs often promote idealized models of teaching that shape expectations about effective classroom practices. However, when these expectations do not align with actual school conditions such as resource limitations, institutional constraints, and diverse learner needs it creates a disconnect between theory and practice (OECD, 2019). This mismatch can lead to disillusionment, reduced motivation, and decreased professional commitment among teachers, particularly in the early stages of their careers (Ingersoll, 2001).

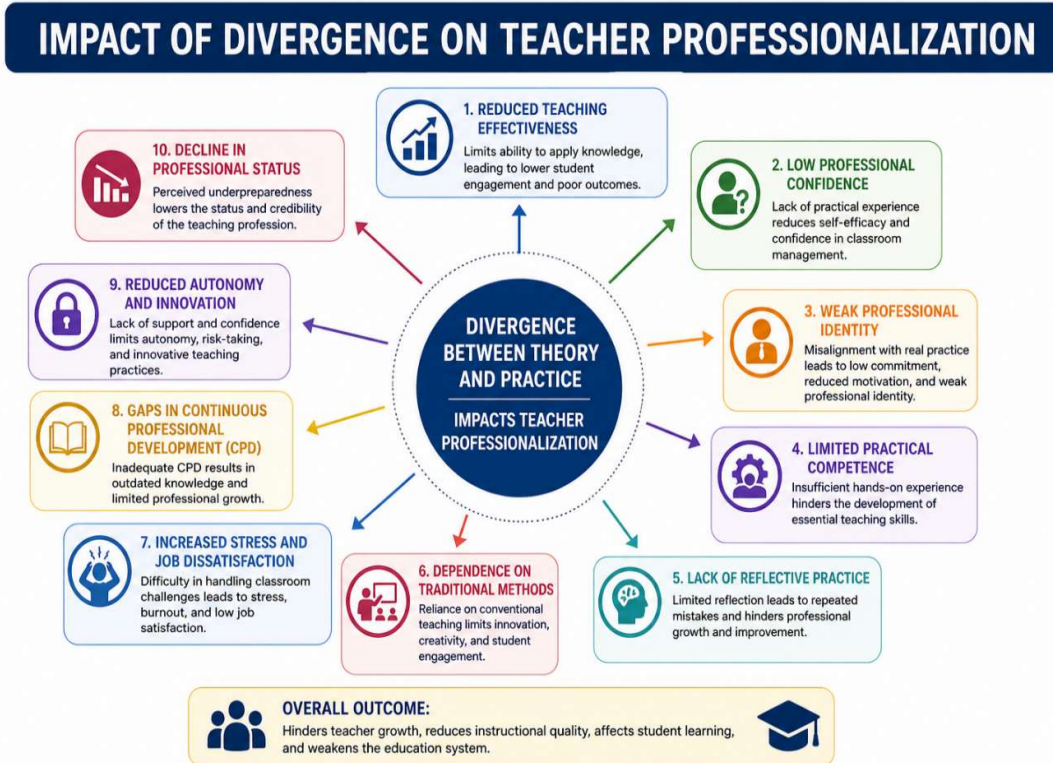
Need for Continuous Professional Development (CPD): The divergence between foundational knowledge and classroom realities underscores the need for continuous professional development (CPD) among teachers (Day, 2004). Ongoing training is essential to help teachers update their skills and adapt to evolving classroom demands and educational contexts (Fullan, 2007). Reflective practice plays a crucial role in enabling teachers to critically examine their experiences and improve their teaching strategies. Additionally, mentoring and sustained exposure to real classroom situations support teachers in bridging the gap between theory and practice, thereby enhancing their professional competence and effectiveness (Day, 2004).

Reconsideration of Teacher Education Programs: The divergence between foundational knowledge and classroom realities has led to a critical reconsideration of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). It is increasingly recognized that traditional, theory-heavy models of teacher preparation are insufficient for addressing the complexities of real classroom environments (OECD, 2019). Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on restructuring programs to include more practice-oriented components such as internships, school-based training, and experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). Such approaches enable prospective teachers to connect theoretical knowledge with practical application, thereby improving their readiness for real-world teaching challenges (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

7. Impact of Divergence on Teacher Professionalization:

The divergence between theoretical preparation and classroom realities significantly affects teacher professionalization. It limits teachers' ability to integrate knowledge with practice, weakening their professional competence. This gap also hinders the development of a strong professional identity and reflective practice. As a result, teachers may struggle to adapt effectively to dynamic and complex

educational environments. The impact of divergence on teacher professionalization is discussed below:



Reduced Teaching Effectiveness: The gap between theoretical preparation and classroom realities reduces teaching effectiveness by limiting teachers' ability to apply pedagogical knowledge in practice (Korthagen, 2010). As a result, teaching often becomes rigid rather than adaptive and student-centred, making it difficult to address diverse learner needs. This disconnect weakens instructional quality, lowers student engagement, and leads to poorer learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009).

Low Professional Confidence: Low professional confidence among teachers is often a direct consequence of inadequate practical preparedness during teacher education programs (Bandura, 1997). When teachers lack sufficient hands-on experience, their sense of self-efficacy diminishes, leading to hesitation and uncertainty in managing real classroom challenges such as student behaviour, diverse learning needs, and instructional planning. This reduced confidence discourages teachers from experimenting with innovative teaching strategies and limits their willingness to take initiative in instructional decision-making. As a result, teaching practices may become overly cautious and less effective, ultimately impacting student learning and classroom engagement (Vygotsky, 1978).

Weak Professional Identity: Weak professional identity among teachers often emerges from the misalignment between teacher education and actual classroom practice, leading educators to perceive their role as routine rather than as a specialized profession (Day, 2002). When training fails to adequately connect theory with practice, teachers may struggle to internalize professional values, resulting in reduced commitment to ethical standards, continuous professional development, and reflective practice (Hargreaves, 2000). This weakened sense of professional identity also diminishes

teachers' feeling of belonging to a skilled professional community, ultimately affecting their motivation, collaboration, and long-term engagement in the profession (Day, 2002).

Limited Practical Competence: A lack of authentic teaching experiences during teacher preparation often results in limited practical competence, hindering the acquisition of crucial skills such as lesson implementation, classroom control, and learner engagement (Grossman et al., 2009). Without adequate opportunities for practice and reflection, teachers may find it difficult to translate theoretical knowledge into effective classroom actions. Consequently, they may struggle to maintain discipline, adapt instruction to varied learning contexts, and address diverse student needs effectively. This gap between knowledge and application ultimately weakens instructional competence and reduces the overall effectiveness of teaching learning processes (Shulman, 1987).

Lack of Reflective Practice: A lack of reflective practice among teachers significantly limits opportunities for continuous professional growth and improvement (Donald Schön, 1983). When teachers do not engage in critical reflection on their instructional methods and classroom experiences, they are less able to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make informed adjustments. This absence of reflective habits often leads to the repetition of ineffective practices and prevents the identification of areas needing improvement (Stephen D. Brookfield, 1995). Consequently, the development of professional competence is hindered, and teachers may struggle to evolve in response to changing educational demands and diverse learner needs (Brookfield, 1995).

Dependence on Traditional Methods: Dependence on traditional teaching methods often arises when teachers face practical constraints that prevent the effective application of innovative pedagogies acquired during training (Freire, 1970). In such situations, teachers tend to revert to conventional, teacher-centred approaches, commonly characterized by rote learning and passive knowledge transmission. This reliance limits opportunities for creativity, critical thinking, and active student participation in the learning process. Consequently, the overall quality of teaching and learning is affected, as students are less engaged and less able to develop higher-order cognitive skills necessary for meaningful learning (Dewey, 1938).

Increased Stress and Job Dissatisfaction: The inability to cope with the complex and dynamic demands of real classroom environments often results in heightened levels of stress and diminished job satisfaction (Kyriacou, 2001). When there is a mismatch between pre-service training and actual teaching conditions, educators may experience feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and emotional exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Over time, such prolonged stress can contribute to burnout, characterized by reduced personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and chronic fatigue (Maslach et al., 2001). This not only lowers teachers' motivation and commitment but also adversely affects their instructional effectiveness and student outcomes. Furthermore, persistent dissatisfaction may lead some teachers to consider leaving the profession altogether, thereby contributing to higher

attrition rates and instability within the education system (Ingersoll, 2001).

Gaps in Continuous Professional Development (CPD): Gaps in continuous professional development (CPD) often emerge when initial inadequacies in teacher training create persistent and evolving learning needs that are not adequately addressed by in-service programs (Desimone, 2009). As a result, professional development initiatives may lack coherence, relevance, or sustained support, leading to fragmented skill acquisition rather than comprehensive professional growth (Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). This discontinuity prevents teachers from effectively updating their pedagogical knowledge and adapting to changing educational practices, including the integration of new technologies and learner-centred approaches (Avalos, 2011). Consequently, insufficient and poorly structured CPD can hinder teachers' ability to remain responsive to contemporary classroom demands and limit overall educational quality (Desimone, 2009).

Reduced Autonomy and Innovation: Teachers may experience reduced autonomy and innovation when they feel inadequately prepared or lack sufficient institutional support, leading to diminished confidence in experimenting with new teaching strategies (Ingersoll, 2007). This lack of empowerment often discourages risk-taking and creative pedagogical practices, reinforcing reliance on routine or traditional methods (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Consequently, teachers' ability to adapt to diverse and evolving classroom demands is constrained, limiting responsiveness to students' needs and contextual challenges (Avalos, 2011). Furthermore, restricted professional autonomy can hinder teachers' active contribution to school improvement and educational innovation, ultimately affecting the overall quality of teaching and learning processes (Ingersoll, 2007).

Decline in Professional Status: The perception of teachers as underprepared professionals can significantly undermine the status and credibility of the teaching profession in society (Hargreaves, 2000). When teachers are viewed as lacking the necessary skills and competencies, it diminishes public trust and confidence in their ability to deliver quality education (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This negative perception can also affect how teaching is valued compared to other professions, limiting its recognition as a highly skilled and intellectually demanding career. Consequently, a decline in professional status may discourage talented individuals from entering or remaining in the profession, further impacting the overall quality and prestige of teaching (Hargreaves, 2000).

8. From Divergence to Professionalization:

To address the persistent gap identified by the Divergence Theory of Teacher Education, it is essential to move toward the professionalization of teacher education (Freidson, 2001). Professionalization involves aligning theoretical knowledge with practical competence, ensuring that teachers are equipped not only with conceptual understanding but also with the skills, dispositions, and adaptability required in real classroom settings (Sockett, 2008). This shift highlights the importance of integrating theory with practice through competency-based preparation and reflective engagement

(Kennedy, 2016). Furthermore, it calls for systemic reforms that reinforce professional standards, promote accountability, and sustain continuous professional learning to enhance both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (Guerriero, 2017).

Integration of Theory and Practice:

Integrating theory with practice is fundamental in teacher education, as it enables prospective teachers to effectively translate pedagogical knowledge into real classroom situations (Korthagen, 2010). Practical experiences such as internships and teaching practice enable reflective learning and skill development (Grossman et al., 2009). This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, improving teaching effectiveness. Mentoring and feedback further support professional growth and adaptability (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Competency-Based Education: Competency-based education marks a shift in teacher professionalization by focusing on the development of practical teaching skills rather than only theoretical knowledge (Mulder, 2014). The emphasis is placed on building critical teaching competencies such as classroom management, communication, assessment practices, and the use of educational technology to ensure readiness for practical teaching environments (UNESCO, 2018). This approach ensures that teacher trainees achieve mastery in essential skills through clearly defined competencies (Gervais, 2016). Additionally, it promotes authentic, performance-based assessments like portfolios and classroom observations to evaluate practical teaching effectiveness (Gulikers et al., 2004).

Contextual and Flexible Curriculum: A relevant teacher education programme must be responsive to the diverse and dynamic realities of classrooms. A flexible and context-sensitive curriculum that incorporates local needs, socio-cultural contexts, inclusive practices, and emerging educational trends is essential for preparing teachers to work effectively in varied teaching environments (UNESCO, 2020). Such adaptability aligns with contemporary perspectives on teacher education that emphasize the importance of contextual relevance and responsiveness to diversity (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). By integrating these elements, teacher education programmes can remain dynamic and better aligned with evolving educational demands, thereby enhancing teachers' preparedness and professional competence (OECD, 2019).

Strengthening Institutional Collaboration: Collaboration between teacher education institutions and schools is vital for aligning theoretical preparation with classroom realities (Goodlad, 1994). Such partnerships provide practical learning opportunities through mentorship and school-based experiences, enhancing teachers' professional competence (Zeichner, 2010). They also help institutions keep curricula relevant and context-specific, ultimately improving teacher quality and professionalization (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Continuous Professional Development: Continuous professional development (CPD) is a vital

component of teacher education, as it extends learning beyond pre-service preparation and supports ongoing professional growth throughout a teacher's career (Day, 1999). CPD enables teachers to update their knowledge, refine pedagogical skills, and remain responsive to evolving educational demands and innovations (Avalos, 2011). Engagement in activities such as workshops, seminars, online courses, and reflective practices fosters continuous learning and adaptability, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Desimone, 2009).

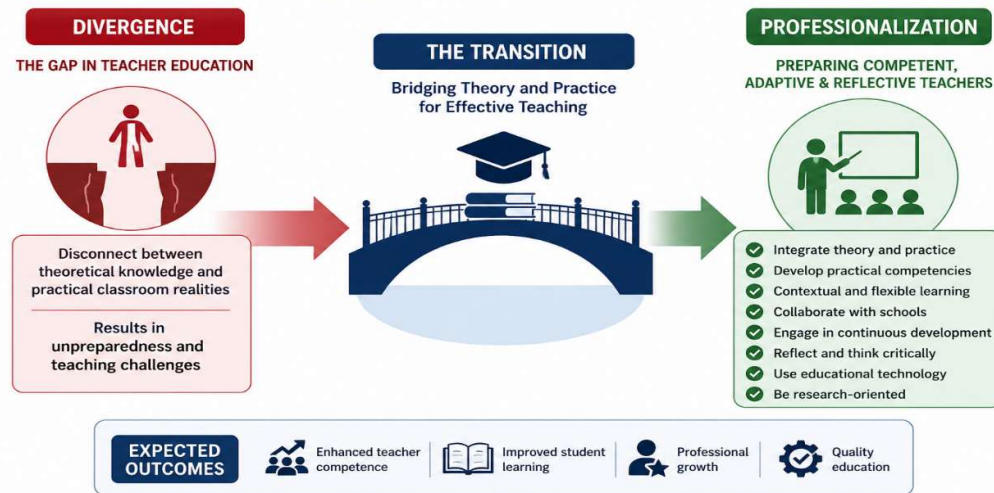
Reflective Practice and Critical Thinking: Reflective practice and critical thinking are central to teacher professionalization, as effective teachers continuously evaluate and refine their instructional approaches (Schön, 1983). Encouraging practices such as self-assessment, peer observation, and action research enables teachers to critically analyse their teaching, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and respond more effectively to classroom challenges (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). This reflective orientation fosters deeper critical thinking and supports informed, context-sensitive decision-making in complex educational situations (Brookfield, 1995).

Integration of Educational Technology: In the modern educational landscape, digital competence has become an essential component of effective teaching. Teacher education programmes must therefore integrate the use of educational technology, including digital tools, online learning platforms, and multimedia resources, to prepare teachers for contemporary classrooms (UNESCO, 2018). The inclusion of technology-enhanced learning supports the development of innovative pedagogical practices and enables teachers to create engaging, interactive, and flexible learning environments (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Moreover, such integration equips teachers to respond effectively to the rapid technological transformations shaping education systems worldwide (Redecker, 2017).

Research Orientation in Teacher Education: Professionalization in teaching requires educators to function not only as practitioners but also as reflective researchers. Incorporating research-based learning, action research, and inquiry-oriented approaches enables teachers to critically examine their own practices and generate context-specific knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Such engagement with research fosters reflective practice and continuous professional development, strengthening the connection between theory, research, and classroom practice (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

DIVERGENCE TO PROFESSIONALIZATION

Bridging the Gap in Teacher Education



The movement from divergence to professionalization requires a holistic transformation of teacher education systems. Such transformation involves integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application, emphasizing competency-based development, ensuring contextual relevance, and promoting continuous professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; OECD, 2019). A comprehensive approach to teacher education enables the preparation of skilled, reflective, and adaptable professionals capable of responding to complex classroom realities. These reforms are essential for bridging the gap between foundational knowledge and educational outcomes, thereby enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of education systems (UNESCO, 2020).

11. Discussion:

The present study, reveal a persistent and multidimensional divergence between foundational knowledge in teacher education and the actual outcomes observed in educational practice. This gap underscores a critical limitation within existing teacher preparation frameworks, where theoretical constructs often fail to translate effectively into classroom realities. While foundational knowledge provides essential conceptual understanding, its limited contextualization restricts teachers' ability to respond to dynamic and diverse learning environments. As a result, the intended outcomes of teacher education programmes are not fully realized in practice.

One of the key areas of divergence identified in this study is curriculum design. Teacher education curricula tend to emphasize abstract theories and standardized content, often neglecting the practical complexities of real classrooms. This creates a disconnect between what teachers learn during their training and the skills required for effective teaching. Similarly, pedagogical practices taught in training institutions frequently lack adaptability, making it difficult for teachers to address varied student needs, classroom diversity, and socio-cultural influences.

Assessment practices also contribute to this divergence. The focus on theoretical examinations and limited practical evaluation fails to capture the competencies required for effective teaching. Consequently, teachers may demonstrate strong academic knowledge but struggle with classroom management, instructional strategies, and learner engagement. Institutional factors, such as rigid structures, limited exposure to real teaching environments, and inadequate mentoring, further intensify this gap.

The impact of this divergence on teacher professionalization is significant. Professionalization requires the integration of knowledge, skills, and reflective practices; however, the gap between theory and outcomes hinders this integration. Teachers may experience a lack of confidence and preparedness, which can affect their professional identity and effectiveness. Moreover, the inability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts limits their capacity for innovation and continuous professional growth.

These findings suggest the need for a more practice-oriented and context-sensitive approach to teacher education. Bridging the gap between foundational knowledge and outcomes requires curriculum reform, enhanced field-based experiences, reflective teaching practices, and continuous professional support. By aligning theoretical learning with practical application, teacher education can better contribute to the development of competent, adaptable, and professional educators. Addressing the divergence between knowledge and outcomes is essential for strengthening teacher professionalization. A balanced integration of theory and practice will not only improve teaching effectiveness but also enhance the overall quality of education.

12. Conclusion:

The study concludes that a significant divergence exists between foundational knowledge in teacher education and the outcomes observed in classroom practice, highlighting a critical gap in the effectiveness of current teacher preparation programmes. Key areas such as curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and assessment practices contribute to this disconnect, limiting the practical applicability of theoretical learning. This divergence adversely affects teacher professionalization by hindering the development of essential competencies, reflective abilities, and a strong professional identity. Therefore, there is a pressing need to adopt a more practice-oriented and context-sensitive approach in teacher education that integrates theory with real classroom experiences. Bridging this gap is essential for preparing competent, adaptable, and professional educators, ultimately contributing to the improvement of educational quality.

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