



A Study on Blended Learning Internship as an Innovative Teaching Method

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21469570>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Received: 20-05-2026

Accepted: 30-06-2026

Published: 15-07-2026

Keywords:

Blended learning; internship; blended learning internship; teacher education; innovative teaching method; experiential learning; NEP 2020; reflective practice; professional development; digital divide

ABSTRACT

Blended learning internship integrates traditional field-based internships with online components such as e-modules, reflective journals, Learning Management System (LMS) platforms, and virtual mentoring. This study explores how blended learning internship functions as an innovative teaching method in Indian teacher education programmes. A mixed-method design was employed with 100 student interns and 15 teacher mentors from selected B.Ed. colleges in Rajasthan. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of reflection journals and e-portfolios were used as data collection tools. Findings indicate that blended learning internship significantly improves learning outcomes, student satisfaction, professional confidence, and reflective practice. However, the digital divide and increased mentoring workload remain major challenges. The paper concludes with evidence-based recommendations for integrating blended learning internship into Indian teacher education frameworks in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

1. Introduction

Contemporary Indian higher education is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the imperatives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines,

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both of which explicitly advocate for the adoption of blended and technology-integrated learning models across all disciplines, including teacher education. Globally, the concept of blended learning — defined as the purposeful integration of face-to-face instruction with online digital components — has evolved from an experimental strategy to what many scholars now describe as the "new normal" in higher education delivery (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004).

Within the specific context of teacher education, the traditional internship or teaching practice component has long functioned as a primarily placement-oriented experience, wherein student teachers are assigned to schools for a fixed period with minimal integration of theory, digital tools, or structured mentoring. This model, while offering practical exposure, fails to create the conditions for sustained reflection, self-regulated learning, and the development of technology-integrated pedagogical competence — all of which are central to the vision of the 21st-century teacher outlined in NEP 2020.

Blended learning internship (BLI) redefines this traditional model by embedding structured online components — including e-learning modules, LMS platforms, video-based feedback, peer interaction forums, and reflective e-journals — within the existing field-based internship framework. This dual-track approach creates what researchers term a "boundary learning experience," wherein student teachers simultaneously navigate the demands of the classroom and the affordances of digital learning environments (Li and Ishak, 2025).

This study presents an empirical investigation into how blended learning internship functions as an innovative teaching method within selected Indian teacher education institutions, with a particular focus on its effects on learning outcomes, professional confidence, and reflective practice, as well as the institutional and infrastructural challenges that impede its effective implementation.

2. Review of Literature

The literature on blended learning in higher education is extensive, spanning more than two decades of empirical research. Graham and Halverson (2023) provide a comprehensive synthesis of this body of work, identifying self-regulated learning, instructional design quality, and learner engagement as the primary determinants of blended learning effectiveness. Garrison and Kanuka (2004), in their foundational work, argued that blended learning holds "transformative potential" for higher education by enabling deeper intellectual inquiry through the combination of online flexibility and face-to-face interaction.



More recent research has specifically examined blended learning within the context of teacher preparation. Tong, Uyen, and Ngan (2023), in a systematic review of blended learning applications in mathematics teacher education from 2012 to 2022, identified improvements in pre-service teachers' academic achievement, pedagogical knowledge, and attitudes toward technology integration. Niemi, Kangas, and Kong as (2024) found that blended teacher training programmes in Finland were particularly effective in developing transversal competencies such as critical thinking and cross-disciplinary collaboration — competencies directly aligned with India's NEP 2020 objectives.

In the Indian context, Sharma and Gupta (2020) documented a generally positive attitude toward blended learning among students in higher education, provided that adequate guidelines, infrastructure, and technical support are made available. Kumar and Verma (2022) demonstrated through a case study of a B.Ed. college in North India that blended learning integration improved both theoretical understanding and classroom performance among student teachers. The national policy context is further reinforced by the work of Sharma, Vara Prasad, and Santa Rao (2024), who argued that the post-COVID era presents an unprecedented opportunity to institutionalise blended learning in Indian higher education in compliance with NEP 2020.

Studies on the digital divide in Indian education, however, consistently flag the persistence of structural inequalities. Krishnan, Shah, and Kumar (2024) found that 65 percent of rural students in their sample cited poor internet connectivity and lack of devices as major barriers to digital learning participation — a concern that is echoed across multiple studies and has direct implications for the equitable implementation of blended learning internship models. Kumar and Ganesh (2022) further documented that while platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM offer scalable digital infrastructure, teacher digital literacy and mentoring capacity remain significant gaps.

Internationally, the theoretical grounding for blended learning internship draws heavily from Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which posits that effective learning occurs through a four-stage cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Mechouat (2024) confirmed the relevance of this framework specifically for pre-service teacher education, demonstrating that aligning teacher training programmes with Kolb's ELT significantly enhanced participants' professional confidence and attitudes toward teaching. Buhl-Wiggers, Kjaergaard, and Munk (2023) further emphasised the indispensable role of face-to-face interaction within blended models, finding that social learning, peer feedback, and mentoring outcomes were most strongly supported when in-person components were thoughtfully preserved.



Collectively, this body of literature establishes a strong evidential foundation for the blended learning internship model while simultaneously highlighting the conditions — infrastructure, faculty training, and intentional design — that must be in place for it to realise its potential, particularly in the diverse and resource-uneven landscape of Indian teacher education.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- 1.To examine the design and structure of blended learning internship programmes currently operating in selected Indian teacher education institutions.
- 2.To assess the effectiveness of blended learning internship in enhancing learning outcomes, learner satisfaction, and professional confidence among B.Ed. student interns.
- 3.To identify and analyse the key challenges encountered during the implementation of blended learning internship in the Indian teacher education context.
- 4.To propose evidence-based pedagogical and policy recommendations for the systematic integration of blended learning internship into teacher education frameworks under NEP 2020.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive-exploratory mixed-method research design. Quantitative data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire to assess patterns in satisfaction, professional confidence, and perceived usefulness. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and systematic document analysis of reflective journals and e-portfolios, enabling a richer, contextualised interpretation of participants' lived experiences with the blended learning internship model.

4.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprised B.Ed. student interns enrolled in teacher education colleges where blended learning internship had been formally implemented. A purposive sample of 100 student interns and 15 teacher mentors was drawn from urban and semi-urban B.Ed. colleges in Rajasthan selected on the basis of LMS adoption and documented blended internship practice.



4.3 Tools and Instruments

Three data collection instruments were employed:

1. A self-developed, validated Likert-scale questionnaire (five-point scale) measuring perceived satisfaction, professional confidence, and usefulness of the blended learning internship experience.
2. A semi-structured interview schedule for both student interns and teacher mentors, designed to elicit qualitative accounts of experience, challenge, and recommendation
3. An observation checklist for assessing participation and engagement in both field-based and online internship components.

4.4 Procedure

Institutional permissions were secured from all participating colleges prior to data collection. Student interns completed the questionnaire following the conclusion of the internship phase, ensuring responses reflected direct experience rather than anticipation. Selected participants — ten student interns and eight mentors — were subsequently invited for individual interviews. Reflection journals, e-portfolios, and mentor feedback records were collected and subjected to thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for rigorous qualitative coding.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. The study follows the ethical guidelines of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and institutional review norms. This research is original work and has not been submitted or published elsewhere.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Learning Outcomes and Learner Satisfaction

Quantitative analysis revealed that approximately 75 percent of student interns reported improved learning outcomes and higher levels of overall satisfaction with the blended learning internship format compared to the traditional internship they had previously experienced or observed. Interns consistently noted that online learning modules allowed them to revisit theoretical content at their own pace and on their own schedule,

which proved particularly valuable during the demanding fieldwork phase when immediate recollection of pedagogical theory was necessary.

Reflective journal analysis indicated that students developed a more deliberate awareness of the connections between theoretical knowledge and classroom practice — a finding consistent with the experiential learning cycle described by Kolb (1984) and the broader self-determination theoretical framework, which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core drivers of intrinsic motivation and deeper learning. The multi-channel feedback model — incorporating written comments, video responses, and discussion board interactions — was cited by numerous interns as a defining feature of the blended approach, providing richer and more timely guidance than was typically available in the traditional supervision model.

These findings align with the international evidence synthesised by Graham and Halverson (2023) and the Indian context documented by Kumar and Verma (2022), both of which identify structured feedback and instructional flexibility as the primary mechanisms through which blended learning enhances learning outcomes in professional preparation programmes.



5.2 Professional Confidence and Reflective Practice

Approximately 68 percent of student interns reported a measurable increase in professional confidence by the conclusion of the blended learning internship, specifically in the areas of classroom management, lesson planning, and technology-integrated pedagogy. This finding is particularly significant in the Indian context,

where concerns about the theory-practice gap in B.Ed. programmes have been extensively documented (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Mentor interviews revealed a striking pattern: interns who consistently engaged with the e-portfolio and reflective journal components demonstrated demonstrably stronger analytical and reflective skills when compared to peers whose engagement with these components was irregular or minimal. This finding substantiates Mechouat's (2024) argument that experiential, reflection-centred approaches to teacher education produce not merely competent practitioners but genuinely reflective ones — educators capable of examining and improving their own practice on an ongoing basis.

It should be noted, however, that a portion of student interns reported experiencing cognitive overload during phases when the demands of full-day school-based fieldwork were combined with the requirement to complete online assignments and upload digital artefacts in the evenings. This tension between breadth of experience and depth of engagement represents a central design challenge for any blended learning internship model and underscores the importance of workload calibration.

Fig. 3: Professional confidence areas (among the 68% reporting gain)

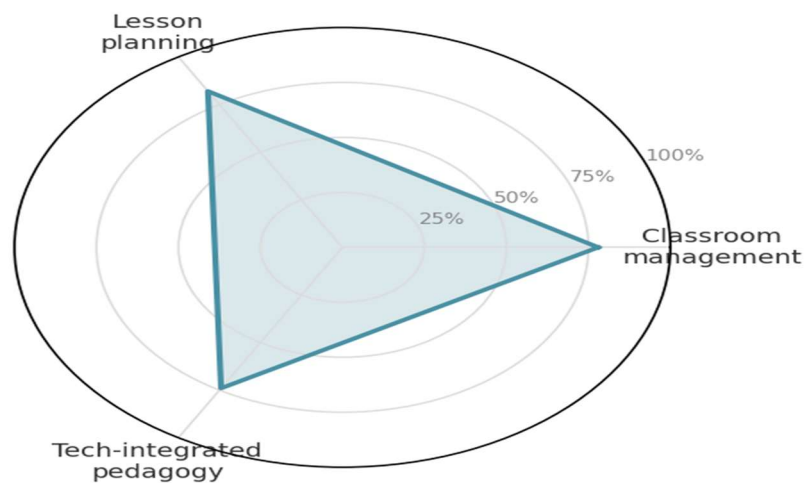
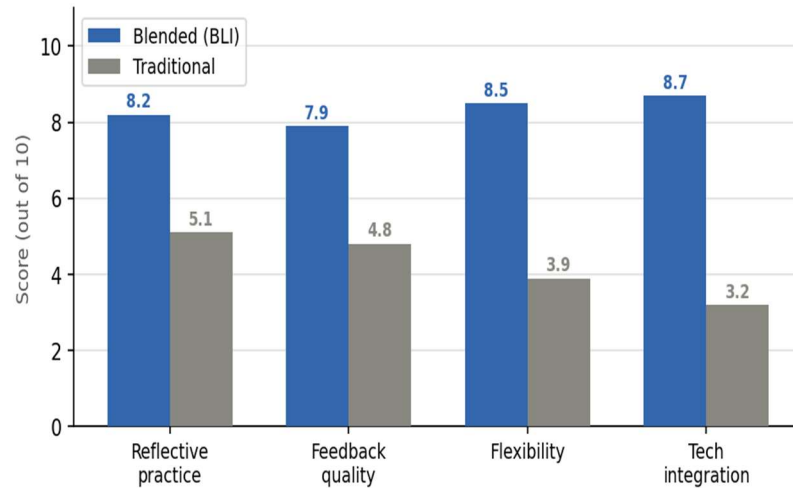


Fig. 4: BLI vs traditional internship (indicative, 1–10 scale)

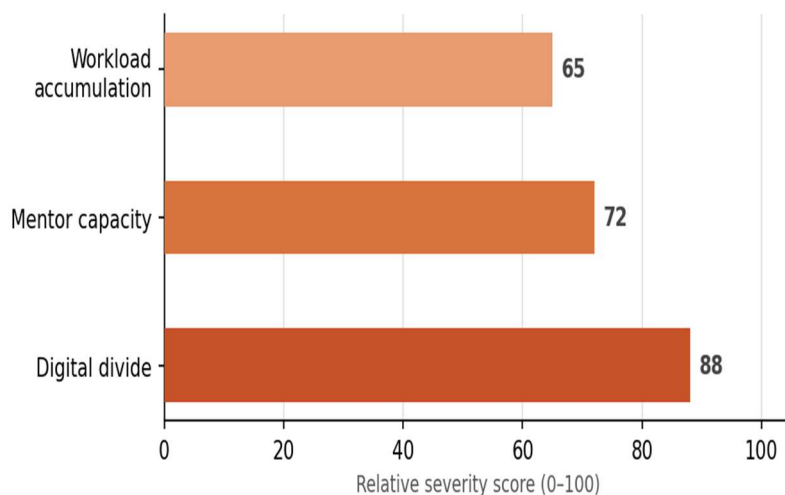


5.3 Challenges and Constraints

Despite the predominantly positive outcomes documented above, this study also surfaced a set of persistent and substantive challenges that must be addressed before blended learning internship can be scaled effectively across Indian teacher education:

1. **Digital divide:** Irregular internet connectivity, absence of personal devices, and limited access to institutional computing facilities constituted the most frequently cited barrier, particularly among interns from semi-urban backgrounds. This finding directly corroborates the empirical evidence of Krishnan, Shah, and Kumar (2024) and the structural analysis of Kumar and Ganesh (2022).
2. **Mentor capacity:** A significant proportion of teacher mentors reported limited familiarity with LMS platforms, uncertainty about how to design effective online reflection tasks, and discomfort with giving structured digital feedback. This represents a critical gap that no amount of platform investment alone can bridge.
3. **Workload accumulation:** In several institutions, online assignments were added on top of existing internship duties without any corresponding reduction in other requirements. When blended learning is treated as an additive layer rather than an integrated redesign of the internship, the result is invariably increased burden rather than enhanced experience.

Fig. 2: Key implementation challenges



These challenges are not unique to India. They appear consistently in the international blended learning literature, including Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020) and Lapitan et al. (2021), who emphasise that institutional readiness, faculty development, and thoughtful curriculum redesign are prerequisites — not optional accompaniments — for successful blended learning implementation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study affirms that blended learning internship represents a meaningful and evidence-supported innovation in Indian teacher education. It offers a viable pathway to bridging the theory-practice divide that has long undermined the effectiveness of B.Ed. programmes, while simultaneously preparing student teachers for the technology-integrated professional environments they will inhabit. Its alignment with the vision of NEP 2020 — which calls for experiential, flexible, and digitally enabled learning across all stages of education — makes it a particularly timely and contextually appropriate model for institutional reform.

6.1 Pedagogical Recommendations

1. Blended learning internship should be formally constituted as a credit-bearing, well-structured course within the B.Ed. curriculum, complete with clearly defined assessment rubrics, an explicit calendar that balances fieldwork and online tasks, and transparent learning outcomes for both domains.
2. Mentor development must precede programme launch. Targeted workshops should equip mentors with practical proficiency in LMS use, the design of high-quality reflection prompts, the provision of constructive online feedback, and the management of digital portfolios.



3. Workload must be actively managed through programme redesign, not merely monitored. When online components are added, corresponding adjustments to other internship demands are essential to prevent cognitive overload and sustain meaningful engagement.

6.2 Policy and Institutional Recommendations

1. Institutions seeking NAAC accreditation or aligning their programmes with NEP 2020 should treat digital infrastructure — stable Wi-Fi, functional LMS platforms, and provision for students without personal devices — as a baseline requirement rather than an aspirational goal.
2. The UGC and State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) should develop standardised guidelines for blended learning internship design and assessment, providing a common framework that can be contextualised by individual institutions.
3. UGC CARE-listed teacher education journals and research forums should actively commission empirical studies on blended learning internship from diverse Indian states, institutional types, and socio-economic contexts, in order to build a robust, nationally relevant evidence base for policy.

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