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Narayana Murthy proposes training 500,000 teachers annually to strengthen Indiaâ??s research ecosystem

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Infosys founder calls for a shift from adopting technologies to indigenous invention, emphasising education, research and innovation as foundations of national prosperity



Infosys founder Narayana Murthy has proposed establishing 2,500 “Train the Teacher” colleges across India's states and Union Territories, with a target of training 500,000 primary and secondary schoolteachers annually, as part of a broader call to strengthen the country's education and research ecosystem.

Addressing the Infosys Prize 2026 announcement virtually in Bengaluru, Murthy said India must move beyond adopting and improving technologies developed elsewhere to building its capacity for original invention. He emphasised that higher education, research and innovation are essential to raising per-capita income and improving citizens' quality of life.

The proposed initiative would bring together 10,000 accomplished retired science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teachers from India and developed countries to train educators through a network of 2,500 colleges. Each team of four teachers would train 100 primary and 100 secondary schoolteachers annually, amounting to 500,000 teachers every year.

Murthy estimated the programme would cost around $1 billion annually, or $20 billion over 20 years, arguing that the investment would be affordable for a country aspiring to become a $5 trillion economy. He also suggested that teachers trained through the programme could become trainers themselves within five years, creating a multiplier effect across the education system.

From technology adoption to indigenous invention

Murthy outlined four stages in a nation's technological development: not inventing or innovating; adopting inventions developed elsewhere; improving existing technologies through research and higher education; and finally, creating original inventions.

He cited South Korea's advances in storage devices and televisions, and India's development of software services through the Global Delivery Model, Aadhaar and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), as examples of countries progressing through technology adoption and innovation.

India's achievements in atomic energy, space, vaccines, the Green Revolution and generic medicines place it at the second stage in most areas and the third in some, he said. However, challenges involving urban infrastructure, pollution, traffic and access to clean and safe water indicate that the country has yet to make similar progress across several critical sectors.

“India must aspire to reach stage four in every area that touches the lives of our poorest citizens in our remotest villages,” Murthy said.

Achieving this would require better research and education, high aspirations, curious minds, global standards of productivity, discipline and hard work. He also emphasised the importance of learning from countries and cultures that perform better.

Research and education as drivers of innovation

Murthy stressed that the transformation must begin in classrooms, where students should be encouraged to develop independent, critical and analytical thinking, engage in Socratic questioning and connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications.

He welcomed the National Education Policy as a step towards this approach, while underlining the need for greater investment in teacher training and improved working conditions for educators and researchers.

“Training alone is not enough. We must respect our teachers and researchers, pay them better, equip them well, and honour them,” he said.

Murthy described teachers and researchers as role models for young people and said recognising their contributions was central to building a stronger research culture.

Explaining the rationale behind the Infosys Prize, Murthy said the award was instituted in 2009 as a contribution to research in India.