

Quality Issues in Teacher Education

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Teacher Education is an important area of concern in our educational system. Numerous Committees and Commissions were established to improve and change the status of Teacher Education. The constitutional goals, the Directive Principles of the State Policy, the socio-economic problems, the growth of knowledge, the emerging expectations and the changes operating in education, etc., call for an appropriate response from a futuristic education system and provide the perspective within which Teacher Education programmes need to be portrayed.

Traditionally, teachers have enjoyed a position of great respect in our country. The religious leaders and social reformers have been addressed as teachers of people. Many teachers are still held in high esteem by their students and community. However, on the whole the status of teachers has diminished during the last few decades. The reasons for this is due to deterioration in their service conditions, the isolation in which teachers work, phenomenal expansion of the educational system, lowering of standards of teacher training, a general impression that a very large number of teachers do not perform their duty properly and changes in the value system in society. The status of teachers has got a direct bearing on the quality of education, and many of the ills of the latter can be ascribed to the indifferent manner in which society has looked upon the teacher and the manner in which many teachers have performed their functions.

Need for Teacher Education

Development in a country depends greatly on the quality of its teachers. There are some major concerns which call for an immediate action. A comprehensive, dynamic and responsive system of teacher

education needs to be continually evolved keeping the overall scenario in view.

The need for improved levels of educational participation for overall progress should be recognized. Colleges of Teacher Education should take a variety of initiatives to transform the nature and function of Education—both formal as well as non-formal. Universal accessibility to quality education is considered essential for development. This can necessitate improvement in the system of Teacher Education so as to prepare quality teachers. Various Commissions and Committees appointed by the Central and the State Governments in recent decades have emphasized the need for quality teacher education suited to the needs of the educational system. The Secondary Education Commission (1953) observed that a major factor responsible for the educational reconstruction at the secondary stage is teachers' professional training. The Education Commission (1964-66) stressed that 'in a world based on science and technology it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people' and that 'a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. The Programme of Action (POA, 1992) has emphasized teacher education as a continuous process, its pre-service and in-service components being inseparable.

Attempts in the Improvement of Teacher Education

Various attempts have been made to improve the status of Teacher Education in India. The National Policy on Education (1986) has suggested establishing District Institutes of Education (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) for providing Teacher Education at various levels. DIETs cater to the pre-service and in-service education of Elementary School Teachers for each district level. Whereas the CTE and IASEs are responsible for Teacher Education at the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. Besides these, University Departments and National Level Organizations are also conducting In-service Education Programmes. However, there are no systematized and institutionalized in-service educational programmes that are operating on a continuous basis meant to serve all the teachers in the country. According to the NCTE (1998), in-service Education is not very encouraging. It is estimated that on an average 40% of the teachers are provided in-service Teacher Education once over a period of four

to five years. Therefore provision for in-service education on a continuing basis ensuring quality, adequacy and the required frequency is a challenge.

New thrust areas should be introduced in Teacher Education Programmes due to rapid changes in the educational, political, social and economic scenario at the national and international levels. Teacher Education is conventional in its nature and purpose. There is inadequacy in the integration between theory and practice. Teacher Education Programmes are to prepare teachers in competencies and skills which will equip them for becoming professionally effective. Their familiarity with latest educational developments remains insufficient. The system still prepares teachers who do not necessarily become professionally competent and committed at the completion of initial teacher preparation programmes. Several of the skills acquired and methodologies learnt are seldom practiced in actual school system. This highlights the need to bring realism and dynamism in the curriculum.

Enlightened, emancipated and empowered teachers should lead the societies in their march towards better and higher quality of life. They should reveal and elaborate the secrets of attaining higher values in life and nurture empathy for their fellow beings. Teachers are the torchbearers in creating social cohesion, national integration and a learning society. They not only disseminate knowledge but also create and generate new knowledge. They are responsible for acculturating role of education. No nation can even marginally slacken its efforts in giving necessary professional inputs to its teachers and along with that due status to their stature and profession.

Education of teachers needs to strengthen and stress upon the main attributes of a profession, such as the systematic theory, rigorous training over a specified duration, authority, community sanction, ethical code and culture, generating knowledge through research and specializations. Colleges of Teacher Education should provide formal professional training on a continuous basis because it is necessary for becoming a good teacher as it caters to the development of one's personality and sharpening of communication skills and commitment to a code of conduct.

Call for Change in Teacher Education

(a) *General Education*. Teachers should have a general education equal to that of the best educated members of their community.

Future teachers need a cohesive, general education, which includes the general education or academic foundation requirements established for all graduates, as well as courses in sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, language, literature and arts. A strong background in general education that prepares teachers to understand the context of their world empowers them to be comfortable with their own education and that of others. Education is the process of catching up with one's generation and if teachers fall behind in their knowledge of subject matter, they fall behind their generation—a strange, contradictory place for teachers to be. Coupled with these requirements is the need for a regard for learning and growth. All teachers must profoundly value learning ideas and artistic expression.

(b) *Subject Specialization.* Teachers should have a subject specialization in the field they plan to teach as well as two related areas. Teacher Education Programmes should stress on how important it is for teachers to have a deep, comprehensive knowledge of subject matter. Teachers need to become knowledgeable in areas outside of their specializations and to become well educated themselves so that they get respect from all professional men and women they meet.

(c) *Teachers as Agents of Change.* Teacher Education must prepare future teachers to discuss difficult topics. Teachers also need to be “transformative intellectuals” who teach their students to be critical thinkers and active, informed citizens. Teaching should be an undertaking oriented to empowering person to become different, to pursue meanings to make increasing sense of their actually lived worlds. Teacher Education Programmes, rather than simply showing the Teacher Trainees the way, must guide them from a position where they cannot be easily swayed by others to one in which they are agents in their own behalf.

(d) *Teachers as Models of Inspiration.* The recent focus on the knowledge of the mechanics of effective teaching overlooks the complex and significant human dimension that exists when students and teachers come together. Although scholars may prescribe behaviours, it is the unique personalities of teachers and their students and how they regard each other that will make the difference in the long run. When selecting a course, experienced college students know that gaining information about the professor teaching the course is

much more useful than reading the course description. Furthermore, sections of the same course vary widely because of the personalities, teaching styles, and academic interests of the individual professors teaching them. Unquestionably, teachers have unique opportunities to be inspiring models for their students.

Therefore, Teacher Education should provide opportunities for teachers to be inspiring models for their students. It should create enthusiasm for learning, high regard for the subjects they teach, personal integrity and character, and styles of encountering life and overcoming obstacles. Teacher Education programmes should make the teachers scholars, agents of change and models of inspiration.

(e) *Application of Pedagogy*. Teacher Education must prepare teachers to selecting appropriate material for students' leading discussions and seminars and learn to observe and diagnose students' academic needs and how to individualize instructions accordingly.

Characteristics of Teachers

(a) *Professional Behaviour*. Teacher trainees who will truly be professionals are to be committed to professional behaviour, and must be guided by a specific set of values. He or she should make a lasting commitment to professional practice, adopt a high standard of professional ethics and models behaviour that are in accord with that code of ethics. The teacher trainee should also engage in serious, reflective thought about how to teach more effectively. Moreover, he or she should do this while practicing how to teach, and continually examining experiences to improve practice.

(b) *Lifelong Learning*. The professional is dedicated to continuous learning, both about the teaching-learning process and about the subject taught. Teacher trainees should see themselves as both teachers and learners. There should be continuing education for teachers. The content of the curriculum as well as the methods and materials for teaching that content are changing rapidly. So teachers must be involved in continuous learning to maintain their professional effectiveness. In addition, teachers must practice what they preach. A teacher who is not continuously learning raises serious questions for students: if it's not important for our teachers to learn, why should we? The attitude towards learning that teachers model for students may be as important as the content they teach.

(c) *Teacher Empowerment.* The professional teacher welcomes opportunities to share in decision-making power concerning education. For making decisions about the curriculum to implementing new programmes designed to meet student's needs, professional teachers want to become empowered. Like other professionals, they welcome the opportunity to make decisions that directly affect their work. Those who are participating in the trend towards teacher empowerment must often report a renewed zest for teaching.

(d) *Professional Involvement and Activism.* Though the terms activism and militancy are not associated with being a professional, they capture well the kind of professional involvement that teaching presently needs if it is ever to become a full profession. The professional teacher is willing to get involved with colleagues and to press not only for increased financial rewards but for better working conditions and a greater role in professional governance. Teachers are to be given the power they need to improve the profession. This power, as a result, will have to be attained in two ways. First, teachers must demonstrate by their behaviour and accomplishments that they are professionals. This will make teaching occupy its rightful status. Secondly, teachers must more frequently demand and in some cases even take the most important role in the educational enterprise. They must therefore take a broader view of the decisions that as professionals, they have the right to make. In some instances, power to make these decisions may have to be wrestled away from those who because of tradition, not competence, have held it.

A teacher trainee should strive to acquire each of these characteristics to the best of his/her abilities. He/she will have to accept and meet the professional challenges of teaching.

The Challenge of the Profession

To meet the challenges of the profession of teaching, however, will not be easy. At best, the task is very difficult; at worst, it may be close to impossible. Teachers are expected to reach unattainable goals with inadequate tools. The miracle is that at times they accomplish this impossible task. Though outcomes of teaching may be unsatisfying and if students do not learn all that a teacher would like them to learn, the experience of teaching others is very satisfying. Compared to all other professions, the work of the teacher matters the most. After all, the drive to become educated, to inquire into the

nature of the world, is what distinguishes human beings from other life forms on this planet. And the teacher, more than any other professional, is centrally concerned with facilitating this highest human need.

The Importance of Vision and Commitment

Anyone who aspires to become an effective teacher should have a personal vision—a sense of what he or she values and is committed to. This can help one respond to the complex realities of life. The life of teachers and students are characterized by brevity, fragmentation and variety. During an average day, for instance, a teacher engages in many interactions. A personal vision provides framework with which to respond and to make use of the many prescriptions and conceptions of others. Without a vision, our behaviour becomes reflexive, inconsistent and shortsighted as we seek the action that will most quickly put out the fire so we can get on with putting out the next one. Actually, without a clear sense of purpose teachers often get lost, and our activities in the classroom become but empty vessels of our discontent.

The commitment is also a vital component of professional effectiveness. However, it is not so easy to make a commitment to excellence. Excellence is achieved by teachers who muster up the nerve and passion to step out in spite of doubt, or fear. They may step out for love, because of a burning desire to be the best, to make a difference.

Continuing Professional Development

To promote professionalizing of teaching, there should be longer and more rigorous teacher preparation programmes, and share decision-making management programmes. Today teachers have unprecedented opportunities to enhance their professional status. Every teacher must take the opportunity to continue his/her professional development throughout his/her career. Learning and growth must not end upon completion of a course of study. Teachers should be alert to new ideas, to refine decision-making skills and to become more effective in integrating theory and practice.

Source of Motivation

Once a teacher is qualified to teach, the effort to continue learning often stops, a phenomenon that seems to be more due to the prevailing image of teaching as an easy occupation than to any

personal lack of initiative. A key source of motivation for professional development is the anticipation of being intellectually challenged in order to enter and then to function effectively in fields such as medicine, engineering, etc. Because teaching has yet to gain a similar reputation as an intellectually rigorous field, those who enter it must take the initiative to continue to grow professionally. One avenue for professional development is to become a member of professional organizations and to subscribe to one or more professional journals. Continued learning can also be promoted by teachers selecting to use their free periods to observe reputedly talented teachers when they teach. Teachers can also ask trusted colleagues to observe and critique their teaching or tap their students' perceptions through evaluative, anonymous questionnaire. Experimenting with several teaching strategies and comparing the results, reading books in the field by experts and the growing up of teacher-authors, and attending conferences and workshops to strengthen specific skills are still other ways that those so motivated can learn more about teaching.

Opportunities for Development

Colleges of Teacher Education should provide opportunities for professional development through the following factors.

- (a) *Teacher Workshops.* Teacher workshops which can benefit teachers at all levels and the most effective in-service programmes tend to be the ones that teachers request.
- (b) *Teacher Centers.* Colleges of Teacher Education can arrange centers where teachers can come together with other teachers and perhaps with other useful persons to do things that will help them teach better. Centers should cooperate with a local or neighboring College of Education and include faculty members on planning committees. Their goals range from providing a setting for teachers to exchange ideas, to offering information on education products and procedures, to arranging instruction in new areas of responsibility, such as supervision of student teachers and teaching students with special needs. Teacher centers should be stimulating because they can offer opportunities for collegial interaction in a quiet, professionally oriented setting.
- (c) *Supervision of Student Teachers.* After several years in the classroom, teachers may be ready to stretch themselves further

by supervising student teachers. Some of the less obvious values of doing so are that teachers must rethink what they are doing so that they can explain and sometimes justify their behaviour to someone else, learning themselves in the process. Furthermore, because they become a model for their student teachers, they continually strive to offer the best example.

Issues relating to Teacher Education

The following are some of the issues which needs to be considered in Teacher Education:

- (a) *Problem of Selection.* Defective selection procedure may lead to deterioration of the quality of teachers. Therefore, proper selection of teachers should be made on the bases of aptitude test and personal interviews. Proper admission procedures are not observed in most of the institutions. Most of those applying for admission to Teacher Education colleges do not have the requisite motivation and the academic background for a well-deserved entry in the teaching profession.
- (b) *Duration.* The period of training of teachers has all along been one year after graduation. The main purpose of teacher education programme is to develop healthy attitude, broad base interest and values consistent with the dignity of training profession and thereafter, develop a personality too, and this is not possible within a short duration of nine months to be precise. As seen, the training of teachers is less lengthy than that required for other professionals. The professional component of Teacher Education programs is the shortest of all professions.
- (c) *Incompetency of Student Teachers.* The existing training programmes does not provide adequate opportunities to the student teachers to develop competency to face the varied type of situations in their real teaching life because the organizers of teacher's training programme are not aware of the existing problems of schools. They are usually not in direct contact with schools. Due to this gap between training institutions and schools, the growth of content stagnates, methodology gets stale and contact with academic discipline becomes weak.

- (d) *Problems of Practice Teaching.* In most of the training institutions more emphasis is laid on the theory in respect to marks and time. For training colleges who do not have practicing schools, they do not have ample time to practice their skills of teaching which results in poor performance as a teacher. Teaching practice plays an important role in B.Ed. programmes, and its main purpose is to help the trainees to acquire the powers of observations, attention, imagination and a sense of time. Therefore, training institutions should take measures to fill in this gap.
- (e) *Problems of Supervision.* At present the students are asked to prepare the lesson plans without being able to use them properly due to time factor. The lesson plans are checked superficially. The supervision team of two or more teachers supervises the teaching of student within a short period of time and the supervisors fail to supervise all the lessons taught by the trainees. To guide and appraise the student teacher the supervisor should have enough time to observe the student teachers teaching so that a thorough understanding can be attained to provide proper feedback to the student teacher.
- (f) *Lack of Subject Knowledge.* The B.Ed. programme does not totally emphasize the knowledge of the basic subject. There is no provision to increase and strengthen the knowledge of particular subjects of the student teacher. The whole teaching practice remains indifferent with regard to the subject knowledge of the student teacher.
- (g) *Methods of Teaching.* Many teachers are averse to innovations and experimentations on the use of new methods of teaching. They often like to use traditional methods of instruction, lecturing and dictating notes. Their acquaintance with modern classroom communication devices is negligible. Their lectures then become monotonous, boring and uninteresting. Student teachers may talk about new methods of teaching but may not be able to use them effectively with ease.
- (h) *Absence of Professional Attitude.* The entire Teacher Education Programme in our country lack in professional attitude which is necessary for a sound programme of Teacher Education.

- (i) *Isolation of Teacher Education Departments.* Teacher Education Institutions are considered 'islands of isolation.' They hardly develop linkages with schools, peer institutions, universities and other institutions of higher learning as also the community. However, much remains to be done in this direction. The curriculum of the school, its actual transactional modalities, examination system, management processes and its ethos need to be the main thrust areas of Teacher Education Programmes. To achieve these ends, teacher educators need to be made conversant with various aspects of school experiences. It is observed in day-to-day functioning that teacher educators often tend to lose contact with content areas relevant to their own disciplines resulting into gaps in communication and latest information. It is, therefore, a felt need in the present-day context that Teacher Education Institutions keep in continuous touch with institutions of higher learning and peer institutions for effective transmission of knowledge and its upgradation. The breaking of isolation from the community is essential for enabling teachers and teacher educators to reconstruct pedagogical and educational principles and practices in the light of experiences gained from mutually beneficial community interactions. Teacher as a professional and intellectual cannot remain indifferent to the events that are taking place in society. The academic and social issues are interrelated and interdependent. In contemporary context, the role of the teacher is no longer confined to teaching alone. The teachers are expected to play an active role in the developmental activities responding to progress of the community.
- (j) *Crises of Values and Morality.* There has been a persistent erosion of values in the society. In the present-day context certain values need to be redefined and reinstalled. There are situations when the values imparted and inculcated in schools are not generally practiced in society. Value education demands a planned and purposive approach. It is through education and as of necessity through teacher education programmes that the task of inculcating values can be substantially accomplished. Whereas values are emotive, the other related significant dimension is that of moral education

which is essentially conative in character. Through committed teachers, the art of ensuring moral development in a secular, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society needs to be cultivated.

- (k) *Teachers Demand and Supply*. There is a mismatch between the demand and supply of trained teachers—area wise, subject wise and perspective wise. This is primarily because of an inadequate database of requirements for teachers. Teacher Education Institutions should be able to ascertain the specific needs of society. So it becomes the responsibility of the State to create a database and liaison with the Teacher Education Colleges.

Conclusion

Thus, Teacher Education is undergoing rapid changes in keeping pace with the demands of learning and expectations of learners, community and society as a whole. Various efforts have been made to improve teacher education. But gaps can still be seen. Teacher Education must aim to build a national system of Teacher Education based on India's cultural ethos, its unity and diversity synchronizing with change and continuity. It should facilitate the realization of the constitutional goals and emergence of the new social order. It should prepare professionally competent teachers to perform their roles effectively as per needs of the society. It should also aim to upgrade the standard of teacher education, enhance the professional and social status of teachers and develop amongst them a sense of commitment.

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