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IMPROVING QUALITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE NEED OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

This paper focusses on the need of improving quality in teacher education. The quality of education we provide to our students depends on the quality of teachers and the teacher education programme. Only competent, committed and resourceful teachers can give quality education. The purpose of teacher education is to produce teachers who have professional competencies. The role of teachers is no longer confined to teaching alone. They need to be thorough professionals, fully equipped with high academic standard, pedagogical and practical skills. There are many different challenges that have to be deal with in different countries, and the design of the teacher education has to respond to the specific needs of each system. The situations can be very different from country to country: some countries experience teacher surplus and others have to cope with teacher shortage. Indian Institutions of teacher education are far behind than developed countries. We need to make the system of teacher education more innovative and futuristic in order to respond to the changing demands of the society. There is a need also for a review and revamp of teacher education as a whole, encompassing the teacher training curriculum and selection of teacher educators in our teacher education institutes.

Introduction

The destiny of India lies in its classroom. This implies that teacher who is the organizer and controller of the classroom, is mostly responsible for the future of India. He is building future citizens of the

country. As the teacher moulds the children so the country will be moulded. From this point of view, a lot of responsibility lies with the teacher to discharge his duties effectively. So the teachers must be properly equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to deal with children. It is in this context that education of teachers becomes most important in any country.

The quality of education we provide to our students depends on the quality of teachers and the teacher education programme. Only competent, committed and resourceful teachers can give quality education. Quality is not the quantum of knowledge imparted to students but also the effectiveness with which they are able to apply that knowledge in meeting the challenges of tomorrow. Quality of teacher education programme also depends on the quality of teaching. For this, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the curriculum. There is a need for training teachers in community health, guidance and counselling, research strategies, competitions, personal development and support services.

Teacher Education

Teacher education is one of the important areas of concern as it influences the school education directly. Quality is the important concern of all – the NCTE, state governments, universities and other related sections of the society. The teacher education has gained special importance, as teacher quality is more and more being identified as decisive to student outcomes. It is now acknowledged that teachers are the school variable that influences the most student achievement.

The purpose of teacher education is to produce teachers who have professional competencies. The role of teachers is no longer confined to teaching alone. They need to be thorough professionals, fully equipped with high academic standard, pedagogical and practical skills. Recognizing the global perspectives in education, the **Jacques Delors Commission** in its report "Learning: The Treasure Within" (UNESCO, 1996) highlights the challenges that are to be responded to by teacher and teacher preparation system. The programmes of

teacher education for various stages need to be restructured and modernized in their input, process and output to make the system quality-oriented.

We need to make the system of teacher education more innovative and futuristic in order to respond to the changing demands of the society. Knowledge and information sharing serve as a major resource of creating values at the same time it is a matter of great concern that quality of education at all levels is declining. To maintain the standards and to update the quality of teacher education we require commitment, complete involvement of all the personnel, friendly management and training of people concerned. Teachers have to be motivated enough to plan for their own personal and professional development. They are expected to take responsibility and take charge for their own learning and development. As such self-discipline and self-regulation are the key factors responsible for success.

There are many different challenges that have to be dealt with in different countries, and the design of the teacher education has to respond to the specific needs of each system. The situations can be very different from country to country: some countries experience teacher surplus and others have to cope with teacher shortage. The shortage of teacher may be general, or focused on certain subjects, locations, or special kind of schools (special needs). Teacher attrition is also a problem. Finally, teachers face a third challenge: the necessity to improve teacher quality, in socio-economic context of broad expectations toward teachers (Sharma, 2010).

Current Status of Teacher Education Programmes

Indian Institutions of teacher education are far behind the developed countries. We need to make the system of teacher education more innovative and futuristic in order to respond to the changing demands of the society. Knowledge and information sharing serve as a major resource of creating values at the same time it is a matter of great concern that quality of education at all levels is declining. To maintain the standards and to update the quality of teacher education

commitment, complete involvement of all the personnel, friendly management and training of people concerned. Teachers have to be motivated enough to plan for their own personal and professional development. They are expected to take responsibility and take charge of their own learning and development. As such self-discipline and self-regulation are the key factors responsible for success.

The overall system of teacher training in our country has been round wanting for decades and many recommendations have been made by expert panels for improvement. A good critique of what ails the B.Ed. as well as diplomas in education is to be found in the National Curriculum framework for Teacher Education. A key point the framework makes is that state provisioning of elementary education is marked by an attitude of resignation towards the existing system of pre-service and in-service training, which leaves little inspiration for the practitioners to improve (The Hindu, January 17 2013).

Teaching practice is the core of education programme. But it is being neglected with more emphasis on the theory. Duration of teaching practice is too short to provide sufficient experience and opportunity to the pupil teachers to understand all the aspects of the school programmes.

Demand for a greater number of teachers has led to massive quantitative expansion of the number of teacher training institutions and courses at various levels in recent years, but without the necessary emphasis on infrastructure, faculty qualification and learning resources. Mushrooming of teacher education institution with poor faculty and inadequate facilities leaves much to be desired. Teacher education is not effective in turning out competent teachers and therefore its content and delivery system need to be reviewed and reformed in the light of the technological and pedagogical advances that developed countries have witnessed.

There are several constraints in the effectiveness of the teacher education programme. Most of the teacher educators are not trained in the utilization of technologies in the classroom context. Most of the

teacher educators are not trained in the utilization of technologies in the classroom context. Secondly, many teacher educators have not even taught in the schools. So they develop a hypothetical conception regarding the actual functionality of the classroom and children's interaction with teachers. This does not provide them with actual experience of the classroom which ultimately diminishes the actuality of the teacher education programme (Ahmad, 2009: 12).

The most important area of concern is the lack of facilities seen in the teacher education institutions. In most of the B.Ed. colleges, there are fewer computers than are needed for the students. In some colleges, computer systems are seen to be outdated. Access to internet is denied to them which seriously handicaps them in the gathering of the latest information and inputs necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and its scientific application.

Problems of Teacher Education In India

Some of the problems concerning teacher education are discussed below:

(1) Problem of selection:

Defects of selection procedure lead to deterioration of the quality of teachers. Better selection method would not only improve the quality of training but also save the personal and social wastage.

(2) Deficiencies of small time period provided for Teacher's training:

In India, this period is of one year after the graduation - the effective session being of eight to nine months. The main purpose of teacher education programme is to develop healthy attitude, broad based interest and values. It is not possible during the short duration of nine months.

(3) Incompetence of student teachers:

The existing training programme does not provide adequate opportunities to the student teachers to develop competency because

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The organisers of teacher's training programme are not aware of the existing problems of schools.

5) Defects concerning papers:

A student teacher should know the meaning of education, its objectives, the socio-cultural and politico-economics background, the principles that guide construction of curriculum etc. But a proper preparation towards a good orientation is impossible in a short duration.

6) Problems of practice teaching:

The ratio of marks between theory and practice generally remains 1:5:2 although teaching practice plays a significant role in B.Ed. programme. In spite of all kinds of elaborate arrangements regarding practice in teaching, student teachers are non-serious to the task of teaching, deficient in sense of duty irresponsible, aimless, indifferent to children, lacking innovative measure in teaching which are great obstacles in the development of pedagogical skills.

6) Problem of supervision of teaching:

The supervisory organisation for practice teaching aims at bringing improvement in the instructional activity of the student teachers by using various techniques and practical skills in teaching and helps them to develop confidence in facing the classroom situations. At present the lesson plans are checked superficially and no discussion is made by the subject method specialist.

(7) Lack of subject knowledge:

The B.Ed. programme does not emphasize the knowledge of the basic subject. The whole teaching practice remains indifferent with regard to the subject knowledge of the student teacher.

(8) Faulty methods of teaching:

In India teacher educators are averse to innovation and experimentation in the use of methods of teaching. Their acquaintance with modern class-room communication devices is negligible.

(9) Isolation of teacher education department:

As has been observed by education commission, the teacher education has become isolated from schools and current development in school education. The schools consider the teacher education department as an alien institution and not a nursery for the professional development of school teacher. These departments only observe the formality of finishing the prescribed number of lessons not caring for the sounders of pedagogy involved in the procedure.

(10) Poor academic background of student-teachers:

Most of candidates do not have the requisite motivation and an academic background for a well deserved entry in the teaching profession.

(11) Lack of proper facilities:

In India, the teacher education programme is being given a step-motherly treatment. About 20 percent of the teacher education institutions are being run in rented buildings without any facility for an experimental school or laboratory, library and other equipments necessary for a good teacher education department.

(12) Lack of regulations in demand and supply:

The State Education Department have no data on the basis of which they may work out the desired intake for their institutions. There is a considerable lag between the demand and supply of teachers. This has created the problems of unemployment and underemployment.

(13) Inadequate Empirical Research:

In India, research in education has been considerably neglected. The research conducted is of inferior quality. The teacher education programmes are not properly studied before undertaking any research.

(14) Lack of facilities for professional development:

Most of the programmes are being conducted in a routine and unimaginative manner. Even the association of teacher educators has

not contributed anything towards development of a sound professionalization of teacher education in the country.

15) Insufficient financial grants:

In most of the states teacher education is still being run by the fee collected from student teachers, as the share of state grant is too small.

Some Suggestions To Remedy The Problems of Teacher Education

The following are some suggestions to remedy the problems of teacher education

(1) The courses of studies both in theory and practice should be reorganised. For this a pragmatic research should be conducted by some universities to see what is the course structure which will be helpful for realisation of the goals of teacher education. A comprehensive job analysis of teaching in our schools should necessarily be made the basis for recasting of courses in teacher education.

(2) The method of teaching in the teacher education departments should be such that it inspires a sense of appreciation among other departments of the universities and colleges: A teacher education department should therefore, conduct special innovative programmes in the following directions: Seminar, combining of seminar and discussions with lectures, team teaching panel discussion and projects sponsored by the faculty members for improvement of learning in various spheres.

(3) For development of professional attitude it will be advisable to recognise the college of education as unit in themselves. Such an institution should be equipped with facilities for organising various types of activities such as daily assembly programmes, community living, social work, library organisation and other curricular activities, which promote democratic spirit of mutual appreciation and fellow feeling.

(4) The admission procedures of B.Ed. should be completely

- systematised and steps should be taken to make it full proof against tempering and meddling as far as possible.
- (5) There should be a planning unit in each State Education Department. The function of this unit should be to regulate the demand and supply of teachers at various levels of schools. This unit can also be given the responsibility of projecting future requirements of teachers in various categories.
 - (6) It will be in the fitness of things if at the time of setting up a teacher education department, a demonstration school is made an integral part of it and a definite norm should be followed for certain facilities such as laboratories, libraries and other important audio-visual equipment.
 - (7) The practising schools have to be taken into confidence. For this the members of the staff of teachers colleges should be closely associated with the schools. The course of studies and the practical work and practice teaching can be easily moderated in such a way that they will have useful implications for improving school practices.
 - (8) Teacher education programme should be organised on the basis of evidence obtainable from researching innovative practices of teaching such as microteaching, simulation and interaction analysis procedures.
 - (9) The teacher education department should be made a nucleus for research on teaching curriculum and evaluation in the regular university departments. It can also be entrusted the responsibility of sponsoring programmes for extension such as bringing the community into close contact with the university academicians. There should be a free exchange of scholars from one department to the other. This will improve the quality of teacher education programmes immensely.
 - (10) For professional growth of teacher educators there should be seminars, summer institutes and research symposia at more frequent intervals.

- (11) There is a paucity of round textbooks and reading material, including reference books in Hindi and regional languages in the field of teacher education.
- (12) The State Government should make adequate provision of funds for teacher education departments. Special assistance should be given for running an experimental school and holding of practice teaching sessions in various schools.
- (13) Correspondence courses in teacher education should be provided, with a strict and high screen for admissions and a rigorous manner of assessment.
- (14) Libraries need to be enriched with complete and comprehensive reference section equipped with all available journals for use by all the researchers.
- (15) Since the teacher is the pivot of the entire educational system and is the main catalytic agent for introducing desirable changes in the teaching learning process, all attempts need be made for motivating teachers to become innovative and creative. It goes without saying that a self motivated and really industrious teacher can utilise his own resources to keep himself abreast of new knowledge and skills.

Improving Quality in Teacher Education

Quality of teacher education is a product of the knowledge, skills and competencies working in perfect harmony to produce good students. The teacher education institutions should be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial in their approach to skill development among students. Teacher education institutions have to shoulder the responsibility of inculcating the desirable value system as well as task taking behaviour among the student teachers (Sharma, 2010).

Teacher educators have the sole responsibility of preparing the future teachers for the globalised community of learners. A well developed programme of professional development is therefore required to enable the teacher educators to develop these skills (Miyan, 2004).

- Also, every teacher educator should be trained and competent
- in the use of ICT - Internet, media, appropriate institutional technologies.
 - in selecting, organizing and using learning resources.
 - in the use of communication skills.
 - to understand expectations of the community.
 - to undertake action research for qualitative improvement of classroom.

According to NCTE (1998), teacher educators' changing responsibilities include:

- i) Demonstrating and encouraging the use of technology across curriculum to the pre-service and in-service teachers
- ii) Keep abreast, plan and implement e-learning in the professional development in their respective institutions
- iii) Interact through e-mail with trainees, participating schools and parents, become active and competent online users and hence direct trainees and teachers to the digital resources (Kappen, 2010: 306).

Teacher educators need to be not only competent in their province of specialization, but also committed in their profession. Commitment here signifies their willingness to give all their available time and energy in the training of prospective teachers to do their work in a spirit of selfless service. They need to be creative in their methods of teaching and the use of technology. Creativity here implies carrying out their activities in new and different ways which in turn are bound to make their students innovative in their thinking and work culture.

Conclusion

No doubt education plays a significant role in nation's development but the quality of education is greatly determined by the quality of teachers, and therefore great efforts were made and still are being made to improve the quality of teacher education. As regards the present teacher education programme is said to be mechanical,

stereotyped, traditional, dull, old fashioned and passive. There is a need also for a review and revamp of teacher education as a whole, encompassing the teacher training curriculum and selection of teacher educators in our teacher education institutes.

The role of the teacher is often formal and ongoing, carried out by the way of occupation or profession at a school or other place of formal education. The quality and efficiency of education depends to a great extent on the quality of teachers who truly add value to the students. It is therefore concluded that teacher education must enable teachers to develop and sustain the confidence and skills to be creative, critical and reflective practitioners.

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