

## Issues and challenges associated with various curricular aspects of Teacher Education

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**Abstract:** Teacher preparation over the past decade has increasingly become the focus of many universities due in part to numerous state reform initiatives and as the result of attention generated by several national reports and calls to action. Today teaching is a profession requiring specialization in terms of knowledge and skills. There exists a wide gap between theory and the knowledge and skills of teaching required in the actual classroom curriculum transaction. For this reason, a routine-bound teacher cannot act in accordance with the emerging needs unless he or she is trained and frequently oriented. One of the most important requirements to promote and strengthen education is the training of teachers who are the key resources in the reform, redirection and renewal of education. Internship practices play a great role in the teacher training programme. The Teacher Education Policy in India has evolved over time and is based on recommendations contained in various Reports of Committees/Commissions on education, the important ones being the Kothari Commission (1966), the Chattopadhyay Committee (1985), the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986/92), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990), Yashpal Committee (1993), and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, NCFTE 2010, has important implications for teacher education in the country. It was also felt that a system of rating by an independent autonomous body recognizing teacher education institutions will bring credibility in functioning of the institutions and the quality of the programme. The present paper highlights the recommendations of various committees and commissions to bring reforms in teacher education through internship practices.

**Key Words:** Teacher education, Quality, Issues and challenges, curricular

### Introduction:

Teachers are the operators of any educational system. It is said that teachers affect eternity; nobody can tell where their influence stops. Our new National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/1992 says that no nation can rise above the level of its teachers. Therefore, teacher education to produce teachers of high quality is of utmost importance. As the formal school system grew, teacher education institutions also grew in numbers. Then diversification of teacher education programmes took place across different levels such as pre-school, primary, secondary and higher secondary. While achievements

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in the field of education have taken place, there still remains a lot that needs to be done to improve the quality of education in general and teacher education in particular. This implies that continuous development of teacher education has to be undertaken. As such teacher education became a significant component of the educational system with a large network of various institutions offering teacher education programmes for professional development of teachers. An overview of the teacher education institutions, their growth and maintenance of their quality came under serious criticism. It became desirable to raise their standards through regular monitoring. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) was established to regulate and maintain norms and standards of teacher education institutions. Subsequently, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) were established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for motivating educational institutions to achieve higher performance standards. Accreditation of teacher education institutions would lead to a culture of self-appraisal and self evaluation and encourage them to pursue quality and excellence.

### **Status of Teacher Education**

The need for improved levels of educational participation for overall progress is well recognized. The key role of educational institutions in realizing it is reflected in a variety of initiatives taken 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 has necessitated 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 invariably 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. The POA, among others, has pointed out the following in respect of teacher education:

- a) Professional commitment and overall competencies of teachers leave much to be desired;
- b) The quality of pre-service education has not only not improved with recent developments in pedagogical science, but has actually shown signs of deterioration;
- c) Teacher education programmes consist mainly of pre-service teacher training, with practically no systematic programmes of in-service training, facilities for which are lacking.



- d) There has been an increase in sub-standard institutions of teacher education and there are numerous reports of gross malpractices; and
- e) The support system provided by the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and the University Departments of Education has been insufficient and there is no support system below the state level.

In pursuance of the NPE 1986 a major step was taken by the Central Government to enhance the professional capacity of a large number of teacher education institutions. Nearly 430 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) have already been established by 1997-98. The DIETs are charged with the responsibility of organising pre-service and in-service programmes in addition to being the nodal resource centres for elementary education at district level. Likewise, Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutions of Advanced Study in Education (IASEs) have been given the responsibility of introducing innovations in teacher education programmes at the secondary and higher secondary stages and in vocational education.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) as a non-statutory body (1973-1993) took several steps as regards quality improvement in teacher education. Its major contribution was to prepare Teacher Education Curriculum Framework in 1978. Consequently, teacher education curricula witnessed changes in teacher preparation programmes in various universities and boards in the country. A similar effort was made in 1988.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 made recommendations for school education about curriculum, schools, examinations and many more. It stated that teacher quality is a result of several factors, these include, teacher's status, remuneration, conditions of work, and teacher's academic and professional education.

National Knowledge Commission (2007) suggested that there should be sufficient monitoring of the teacher education programmes by private institutes. The budgetary allocations should be increased, and the state level training system along with DIETs should be restored.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2010 highlighted that the education and training of a potential teacher will be operative enough to be delivered by experienced and professionally qualified teacher educators. To improve the quality of teacher education, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) took up several initiatives co-operatively with National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) to bring excellence. During the last decade, new thrusts have been posed due to rapid changes in the educational, political, social and economic contexts at the national and international levels. Curriculum reconstruction has also become imperative in the light of some perceptible gaps in teacher



education. Teacher education by and large, is conventional in its nature and purpose. The integration of theory and practice and consequent curricular response to the requirements of the school system still remains inadequate. Teachers are prepared in competencies and skills which do not necessarily equip them for becoming professionally effective. Their familiarity with latest educational developments remains insufficient. Organised and stipulatory learning experiences whenever available, rarely contribute to enhancing teachers' capacities for self-directed lifelong learning.

### **Issues and challenges in relation to curricular aspects in teacher education**

It is universally acknowledged that education is an effective means for social reconstruction and to a great extent it offers solutions to the problems a society is faced with. These problems may be economic, social, cultural, political, moral, ecological and educational. Since the teachers play a major role in education of children, their own education becomes a matter of vital concern. Teacher education must, therefore, create necessary awareness among teachers about their new roles and responsibilities.

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 specialization. It is acknowledged that formal professional training on continuous basis 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.

### **Issues in Teacher education**

**Economic Issues:** Poverty, unemployment, and low rate of growth and productivity are some of the major economic issues of the country which have led to the compulsions of the backward economy. These problems seek immediate solution and demand a realistic co-ordination between economic planning and manpower planning. Education can help find solutions if it is properly coordinated with manpower needs. Introduction of work education and vocationalization of education in secondary schools will have to be given a modern and meaningful direction. The attitude towards the work culture needs a transformation. The Indian society needs education with special emphasis on science and technology, vocational inputs and realistic work experiences. Teacher education curriculum, therefore, has to promote such attitudes as are necessary for the emergence of a new economic order.

**Social Issues:** Casteism, communalism and regionalism are some of the issues in the body politic of the society which misguide the youth. Increasing delinquency, violence, terrorism and fissiparous tendencies and use of inappropriate means to get one's ends served are threats to the



national integration and social cohesion. Democracy, violence and terrorism cannot coexist. Education has to develop a peace loving personality and the programme of teacher education has to contribute in this regard. Strengthening national and social cohesion in a diverse and plural society, accelerating the process of economic growth, improving the life of the downtrodden and the people living below the poverty line, removing the widely prevalent ignorance, superstition and prejudices from the masses, inculcating scientific temper and developing a critical awareness about the social realities of Indian life are some of the issues which call for immediate attention. Teachers and the teacher educators have a special role to play in such efforts.

***Issue of Cultural Reconstruction:*** Education is the process of transmission of dynamic and responsive components of cultural heritage and its continuous enrichment. There is a need to reinterpret the Indian culture in its distinct identity and composite strength. Its capacity to absorb the sublime from the other cultures needs to be highlighted. The teachers will have to play their role in cultural transmission and reconstruction.

***Issue of 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. Through committed teachers, the art of ensuring moral development in a secular, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society needs to be cultivated.

#### **Some other issues in relation to teacher education are as under**

a) New pedagogy of Colleges of Education b) Proliferation of Colleges of Education c) Curriculum d) Quality Concern e) Isolation of Colleges of Education e) Regional imbalances f) Examination system g) ICT skills

***Service condition of teacher educators:*** Important role of teacher in the education of children and turn places high expectations from the teacher education system. Teacher educators working in unaided schools often face several disadvantages as compared to aided schools. Incidents of exploitation by the managements in terms of no emoluments, low salary, no job security, long working hours are plenty. The government has made attempts to regulate the functioning of private institutions. Therefore, selection procedures, probation period, job security, promotion, emoluments and salaries, leaves and professional development of the teacher educators need to be taken care of.

#### **Problems within Education System**

The education system has to respond to several major issues and problems which have hindered the progress. Maintenance of educational standards against the pressure of increasing enrolment,



relevance and quality of school education, efficacy of school functioning under the decentralized role of political power through the enactment of Panchayati Raj Act are some of the pertinent issues. In addition, specific requirements and need of social and economical groups of the society and of the minority communities, vocationalization of education, scientific and technological literacy, alienation of youth, rush for urbanization, perceived urban orientation of educational system and its inflexibility to respond to rural, tribal and regional requirements are some of the dominant issues. These would determine the nature and shape of teacher education programmes and the efficacy and functioning of teachers in their new and emerging multifaceted roles.

***Isolation of Teacher Education:*** Teacher education institutions which were considered 'islands of isolation' have gradually developed 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.

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 inter-related and inter-dependent. 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.

***Expanding Scope of Teacher Education:*** Education of teachers is not an end in itself. Any change in the nature, purpose, quality and character of the school demands a concomitant change in teacher education, especially in its curriculum. Certain new subjects have replaced the old ones whereas some others have changed their context, content, orientation, theme and philosophy. These changes at the school level, out of necessity, demand a new pedagogy and evaluation techniques. The teaching community has to face the challenges thrown by science and technology. There has been an explosion not only of scientific and technological knowledge but also in the means and techniques of acquiring knowledge. The scientific researches and developments related to theories of heredity, learning, mental health, neurology, attention, motivation etc. can no longer be treated alien to teacher education programmes.

***Develop a Culture-Specific Pedagogy:*** Every region and state has its typical cultural identity, and there is a need to utilize the same as a basis for developing meaningful, relevant pedagogies.



Since there is no one universal way in which the children learn, there is a strong need for looking into the cultural context in which a child is placed. A child in a tribal society may process information in an altogether different manner as compared to the one from the urban area and high socio-economic stratum. Pedagogy, therefore, should be culture-specific.

***Inadequate empirical research*** - Research in education has been noticeably neglected. The research conducted is of low quality. Before undertaking any research, the teacher programmes are not taken into consideration in an appropriate manner. It is vital to conduct adequate research regarding the implementation of teacher education programs. What are the flaws and inconsistencies that need to be identified, what remedies are to be put into practice to make improvements and the measures needed to make the investigation procedures effectual. Research enables to bring about innovative and modern strategies into the system of teacher education.

***For professional development lack of facilities*** - Most of the programmes are being conducted in a repetitive and unimaginative manner. Even towards development of a sound professionalization of teacher education within the country, the association of teacher educators has not rendered a significant contribution. In schools and educational institutions, there are lack of facilities that may lead to professional development of teachers. It is vital for the school leaders to serve as magnanimous leaders and make provision of ideas and suggestions to develop their professional skills and abilities.

***Poor academic performance background of student teachers*** – In most cases, candidates do not have the necessary motivation and an academic background for a well-deserved entry into the teaching profession. It is essential for the student teachers to possess adequate educational qualifications and experience, so that they are able to improve their job duties and accomplish the desired goals and objectives.

***Proper facilities not available*** –In India, the teacher education programs are not in a well-developed state. Besides the provision of curriculum and instructional methods, it is essential to develop infrastructure, technology, library facilities and other areas that may enhance their learning. The teacher education programmes are not given utmost consideration within the country. The teacher education institutions are being operated in rented buildings, about 20 percent without any facility for an experimental school or library or laboratory and other equipment that are necessary for an appropriate teacher education department. There are not any separate hostel facilities for student teachers.

***Demand and supply not sufficient*** - The State Education Department does not have the data on the basis of which they may work out the preferred opening for their institutions. There is a considerable lag between the demand and supply of teachers. This has created problems of unemployment. In educational institutions, there is a lack of qualified and experienced teachers. The lack of sufficient teachers is a major problem in the enhancement of learning among



students. There are number of factors that need to be taken into consideration when recruiting teachers, i.e. their educational qualifications, experience, nature, personal appearance and so forth. When there will be shortage of teachers, then it is obvious that it would affect the learning of the students in an unfavorable manner.

***Other Problems in Teacher Education*** –Other problems that are experienced in teacher education have been mainly related to the deprived standards with respect to resources for colleges of education. Unfavorable financial conditions of the colleges of education prove to be impediments within the course of providing infrastructure and other facilities. Negative attitude of managements towards development of both human as well as material resources, lack of occupational perceptions, scarcity of feedback mechanisms, objectives of teacher education are not adequately understood, secondary level teacher education is not the concern of higher education and lack of enthusiasm towards the profession are other limitations. Uniform education policy of the government treating reputed institutions alike, traditional curriculum and teaching methods within the teacher education programme and unsuitable organization of teacher education and unexpected and insufficient co-curricular activities are other problems that need to be taken into consideration.

### **Role of the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) in Teacher Education**

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) suggested some reformations regarding teacher education:

1. Undertaking surveys and studies relating to various aspect of teacher- education and publishing the results.
2. Developing guidelines for general teacher-education programme.
3. Developing norms for various courses or training in teacher-education, including minimum eligibility criterion for admission.
4. Preventing commercialization in teacher-education and maintaining quality and standard of teacher-education.
5. Establishing international relations in the area of teacher-education.
6. Preparing programmes for in-service teacher-education for orienting teachers for latest development.
7. Preventing B.Ed. correspondence courses which are lowering the standard and quality of teacher-education and commercializing the teacher-education.
8. Preparing code of professional ethics for teachers.
9. Developing curriculum of teacher-education.



10. Developing methodology of teaching and techniques of evaluation procedures, continuing and non-formal education.
11. Improving role of the teacher in social and vocational areas.

Keeping with the view of all these above noted things, **the NCF 2005** took the following steps regarding teachers' education:

1. Meaningful academic planning has to be done in a participatory manner by headmasters and teachers.
2. Monitoring quality must be seen as a process of sustaining interaction with individual schools in terms of teaching-learning processes.
3. Teacher education programmes need to be reformulated and strengthened so that the teacher can be an encouraging, supportive and human facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners (student) to discover their talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens.
4. Reformulated teacher education programmes that place thrust on the active involvement of learners in the process of knowledge construction, multidisciplinary nature of knowledge of teacher education, integration theory and practice dimensions, and engagement with issues and concerns of contemporary Indian society from a critical perspective.
5. Centrality of language proficiency in teacher education and an integrated model of teacher education for strengthening professionalization of teachers assume significance.
6. In-service education needs to become a catalyst for change in school practices.

By assessing the NCF 2005, the NCF 2009 and NCFTE 2010 suggested the following reformations and suggestions:

### **Suggestions for Improving the Condition of Teacher Education**

There are some suggestions here for improving the condition of teacher education:

- Teacher education, like higher education and technical education must be the responsibility of the central government.
- Uniformity among teacher education institutions must be ensured and maintained in terms of curriculum, duration and timings of the programme.
- Curriculum development on a continuing basis to keep pace with current trends.
- Government should look after the financial requirements of the institutions.



- Teacher educators must be well qualified and experienced with language proficiency.
- Teacher educators to be trained in the use of ICTs.
- Institutes of low standards should be reformed or closed.
- Conditions for affiliation should be made strict.
- Regular and rigorous inspection by NCTE should be done on a regular basis.
- Selection procedure must be improved and interviews, group discussions along with common entrance test and marks should be introduced.
- More emphasis should be given on practice teaching till mastery is reached with appropriate feedback.
- Internship should be at the proper time and student teachers must be exposed to the full functioning of the school.
- Evaluation in teacher education should be objective, reliable and valid.
- Several types of co-curricular activities should be included in the curriculum.
- Professional development of teacher educators as ongoing ritual.
- Refresher course should be organized frequently for teacher educators.
- The curriculum of pre-service and in-service teacher education has to be redesigned to maintain continuity between the two.
- One of the major inputs towards enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools as well as the teacher education institutions would be the extent to which research outputs and the outcomes of innovations are utilized by the system.

**Some other suggestions in relation to appointment of teachers are as under:**

1. The appointment shall be made on the basis of recommendations of the selection committee constituted as per the policy of the UGC or Affiliating University.
2. Appointment of supporting shall be made as per the norms of the UGC or University concerned.
3. All type of appointments is to be made on full-time and regular basis.
4. The academic and other staff of the institution shall be paid such salary in such scale of pay as may be the UGC or University concerned from time to time through account payee cheque.
5. The management of the institution shall discharge the statutory duties for its employee relating to pension, gratuity, and provident fund.
6. The reservation for SC/ST/OBC/ Differently-abled and other categories shall be as per the rules of the Central Government as well as State Government
7. The age of superannuation of the staff shall be determined by the policy of the concerned Government.



## Conclusion

Teacher education has to be conceived as an integral part of educational and social system and must primarily respond to the requirements of the school system. It can no longer remain conventional and static but should transform itself to a progressive dynamic and responsive system. National values and goals need to be meaningfully reflected and their inculcation attempted with care and caution. The theoretical and practical components need to be balanced appropriately. The theory and practice of education has to be enriched with the latest research findings not only in the field of education but also in the allied disciplines and areas. While it is essential to develop identified competencies to prepare effective teachers it is equally necessary to develop commitment and build capacity to perform as integral part of teacher preparation. The teachers have to keep abreast of the latest developments not only in their field of specialisation but also in areas of educational developments and social and cultural issues through continuous in-service orientation. Last but not the least, professionalism needs to be instilled in each and every phase of teacher preparation starting from conceptualization to evaluation and appraisal to prepare professionals and improve the quality of education.

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