

TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education, the teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education, the teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

Meaning and Nature of Teacher Education

It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation. The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as – A programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face

the challenges therein. According to Goods Dictionary of Education Teacher education means, all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively.

In 1906-1956, the program of teacher preparation was called teacher training. It prepared teachers as mechanics or technicians. It had narrower goals with its focus being only on skill training. The perspective of teacher education was therefore very narrow and its scope was limited.

As W.H. Kilpatrick put it — Training is given to animals and circus performers, while education is to human beings. Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teacher Education = Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional skills.

Need of Teacher Education

The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observes, “The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher.” In his Call for Action for American Education in the 21st Century in 1996, Clinton indicated that : —Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom. We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training”.

The need for teacher education is felt due to the following reasons

It is common knowledge that the academic and professional standards of teachers constitute a critical component of the essential learning conditions for achieving the educational goals of a nation. The focus of teacher preparation had to shift from training to education if it had to make a positive influence on the quality of curriculum transaction in classrooms and thereby pupil learning and the larger social transformation. The aspects that need greater emphasis are :

- the length of academic preparation,
- the level and quality of subject matter knowledge,
- the repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers possess to meet the needs of diverse learning situations,
- the degree of commitment to the profession,
- sensitivity to contemporary issues and problems and the level of motivation.

This is not possible if teacher preparation focused only on training. Holistic teacher building is necessary and therefore teacher education needed more emphasis than mere training.

Educating all children well depends not only on ensuring that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their work, but also that they take responsibility for seeing that all children reach high levels of learning and that they act accordingly.

People come to teacher education with beliefs, values, commitments, personalities and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling which affect who they are as teachers and what they are able to learn in teacher education and in teaching. Helping teacher candidates examine critically their beliefs and values as they relate to teaching, learning and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education (Fieman-Nemser, 2001).

The National Academy of Education Committee's Report (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005) wrote that : On a daily basis, teachers confront complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgement and that can involve high stakes outcomes for students' future. To make good decisions, teachers must be aware of the many ways in which student learning can unfold in the context of development, learning differences, language and cultural influences, and individual temperaments, interests and approaches to learning. In addition to foundational knowledge about the areas of learning and performance listed in the above quotation, teachers need to know how to take the steps necessary to gather additional information that will allow them to make more grounded judgements about what is going on and what strategies may be helpful. More importantly, teachers need to keep what is best for the student at the centre of their decision making.

Teacher education like any other educational intervention, can only work on those professional commitments or dispositions that are susceptible to modification. While we can't remake someone's personality, we can reshape attitudes towards the other and develop a professional rather than a personal role orientation towards teaching as a practice.

The Ministry of Education document —Challenge of Education : A Policy Perspective (1985) has mentioned — Teacher performance is the most crucial input in the field of education.

Whatever policies may be laid down, in the ultimate analysis these have to be implemented by teachers as much through their personal example as through teaching learning processes. India has reached the threshold of the development of new technologies which are likely to revolutionise the classroom teaching. Unless capable and committed are teachers in service, the education system cannot become a suitable and potential instrument of national development. The teacher is required to acquire adequate knowledge, skills, interests and attitudes towards the teaching profession. The teacher's work has become more complicated and technical in view of the new theories of psychology, philosophy, sociology, modern media and materials. The teacher can be made proficient with well planned, imaginative pre-service and in-service training programmes.

Challenges in Teacher Education

Unprecedented expansion of teacher education institutions and programmes during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. With increasing school enrolments and the launch of pan-Indian primary education development programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education, there was a natural increase in the demand for teachers. Added to this, the backlog of untrained teachers in the system and the essential requirement of pre-service teacher certification for appointment as a teacher led to mounting pressure on existing institutional capacity. The demand far exceeding supply, market forces

have taken over unprecedented rise in the number of teacher education institutions in most parts of the country. From 3489 courses in 3199 institutions and an intake of 2,74,072 in 2004, the numbers in December, 2008 swelled to 14,523 courses in 12,200 institutions with an intake of 10,73,661 at different levels. This expansion has taken a heavy toll on quality parameters like infrastructure, faculty learning resources and student profile.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it may be said that, teacher education as a whole needs urgent and comprehensive reform. There is a need to bring greater convergence between professional preparation and continuing professional development of teachers at all stages of schooling in terms of level, duration and structure. Considering the complexity and significance of teaching as a professional practice, it is imperative that the entire enterprise of teacher education should be raised to a university level and that the duration and rigour of programmes should be appropriately enhanced.

Teachers in the contemporary society need to be through professionals fully equipped with both, high academic standards, Pedagogical and practical skills and ethical and moral values. However, it is unfortunate that teaching is still in a transitional stage and is experiencing serious occupational identify crisis. The debate on whether teaching can be called a profession dominates the educational scene even at the fag end of twentieth century. Teachers, often themselves are uncertain as to the nature of their occupation and to which category they belong non-professional, semi-professional or professional. There is a feeling among teaching community that they have been accorded a second class status while being given first class responsibilities. Teacher educators as a world wide group also seem to lack clarity on the professional identify of teaching and the preservice or inservice levels. Such confusions may be damaging for the teachers and their occupations. It may also create an obstacle in delineating the professionalism expected from them for the emerging society. Therefore, it is high time teaching is accorded the status which other professions like medicine, law etc. enjoy. Professionalism for a global society demands teachers to be innovative in their attitude, flexible in their approach and inquisitive and reflective in their mind always refreshing themselves with the day today increase of knowledge in their subject area professionalism, therefore, implies professional preparation of teachers and their professional development through the mechanism of continuous inservice training programmes. The National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) has rightly remarked that —teacher education is a continuous process and its preservice and inservice components are inseparable. NPE also suggested complete overhauling of the system of teacher education and establishment of DIET and SCERT to bring qualitative improvement in both preservice and inservice education of teachers. However, it is still a distance drawn because of inadequate trained personnel and lack of proper infrastructural facilities.

Teacher effectiveness depends on the Professional accountability of the teachers. An individual teacher's performance is monitored by a principal or educational authorities of varying levels of hierarchy. Teachers in the global world are considered as moral agents of change and not merely technicians imparting knowledge. The first accountability is the willingness to accept the responsibility, second, the access and right of community to know what is going on in school and third the teachers become the judge of students improvement in teaching. Teacher effectiveness can be enhanced and evaluated through performance

appraisal for teachers and teacher educators. Therefore, performance appraisal in the field of education is the need of the hour. In sum, the dream of a learning society can become reality only when the dream teachers are well equipped with moral, professional intellectual, practical and communication skills to convince the students through their efficient teaching. We can also conclude with the quote: —To be a good teacher, you have to have heart for the kids, integrity to push for excellence and a lot of creativity.

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