CHATTOPADHYAYA COMMITTEE REPORT (1983-85): RECOMMENDATIONS AND THEIR RELEVANCE IN TODAY’S SCENARIO OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Of all the professions in the world, teaching has remained the oldest and most essential one. It has remained the first area of specialization in any group and community. The issue of quality of education of teachers has thus become a priority educational phenomenon and so, it is not mere a platitude to state that good quality education needs good teachers. The analysis of current problems in teacher education in India raises question over the steps taken to improve its quality. It is witnessed that problems concerning teacher education in 1960s and 70s are still persistent. Thus, the present paper takes up on the Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) and whether the recommendations given in it are still relevant. Hopefully, this will lead us to acknowledge the major obstacles in achieving quality in teacher education. In conclusion, the paper highlights tremendous efforts and steps taken in the field of teacher education so that we can achieve what we dream of.

Keywords: Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85); Teacher Education; Vedic Period

INTRODUCTION

“No Nation rises above the level of its teachers.” (A Saying)
The entire journey of teacher education in India has witnessed a lot of movements and enormous change that has culminated in its present form. From the times of Vedic Gurus to a modern constructivist facilitator, teacher’s role has changed tremendously. Not only the way a teacher teaches but also how she has been taught to become a good teacher is a crucial aspect of history of teacher education. The teacher education system in India has been strengthened great deal in the past couple of decades. The greatest question that the Indian education faces is the quality of education that teachers receive. Therefore, the issue of teacher education since the inception of its institutionalization till today has always been a concern for all the committees and commissions. But before proceeding further, it is important to have a look at the major historical developments in teacher education in India, as an analysis of history is a must for the proper understanding of its present state as well as its future planning.

History of Teacher Education in India

If we look at the brief history of teacher education in India, the Vedic system of education was a well-established system of teaching and learning. The emphasis of ‘Gurukula’ system was on the overall reverence of the ‘Guru’. Since no formal teacher training course existed, ‘practice’ in teaching yielded much more meaning. Moreover, no formal recognition was given to the practitioners through awarding...
of certificates. It was necessary for a teacher to have passed through the recognized curriculum. Teachers came from the caste of Brahmins and gradually it became a hereditary profession. Teaching, in ancient and medieval India was not considered as a means of ‘employment’ or ‘service’ but was rather a specialized activity. The teachers in this period were accountable for raising the standards of the society through their sound educational system.

During the medieval period, teaching learning was not in its standardized form and was organized at the local level. The teacher was chosen amongst the local communities and therefore her learning as teacher happened in the very society. Krishna Kumar (2005; P. 74) in his book Political Agenda of Education asserts that “the common village teacher rarely had more than thirty children of varying ages, learning the basic skills from him”. The monitorial system of the time, in which senior boys acted as monitors of the juniors’ progress, was not as efficient and effective as it was supposed to be. Due to this, learning of teachers suffered a great deal and the hunt was on for better teaching methodologies. (Srivastava & Bose, 1973).

Before the Normal schools were started for training of teachers, the educational attainment of teachers was far from satisfactory. As per the surveys of R. Thompson and H. Steward Reid in 1840s and 1850s, an average teacher of the time could only teach an individual boy having no competency to teach the entire class. Therefore, the British in early 20th century felt the dire need to train teachers. Hence, one normal school was established in each school division in several provinces. Additionally, the Education Report of 1902 highlighted the fact that the average percentage of employed trained teachers during the time was 39 only. (Khandelwal, 2003)

**Teacher Education in British Raj**

The English government perceived teacher training as the main instrument capable of elevating school teaching to the level of a profession. Hence, the number of normal schools was raised up to 108 for the training of primary teachers, and for secondary teacher training, 2 colleges were opened, one in Madras and the other in Lahore. The Wood’s Despatch of 1854 recommended the English model to be adopted in India for the improvement in the professional abilities of school teachers. Although the Despatch emphasized the importance of training teachers, no satisfactory measures were taken even after 30 years.

Subsequently, the recommendations given by Indian Education Commission in 1882 regarding teacher education were too tame to be really progressive. It was mandatory for the teacher trainees to pass separately in theory and practical. The admonition from the Secretary of State led to a quickening of efforts in favour of the training of teachers and by 1882, each province established several training institutions for teachers. There were 346 normal schools in India in 1937 and the number of teacher trainees gradually increased to 19,742. Out of these 346 normal schools, 191 were exclusively for women in which more than 7000 women were being trained. The quantitative changes could thus be seen but the qualitative were still to come. Also, Government of India’s Resolution of Educational Policy of 1904 suggested that the teacher education program should be of one year for graduate trainees and of two years for undergraduates. (Khandelwal, 2003)

**Teacher Education in Post-Independent India**

The major breakthrough of post independent India was to do away with the colonial mindset and restructure the education system according to the Indian needs. (Sadgopal, 2003) This included modernization of teacher education curriculum and school curriculum. The University Education Commission (1948-49) and Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) stressed on the need for flexibility and local specificity in teacher education; attaining balance between the theory & practice, and; assessment of students’ performance.

Later, the Education Commission (1964-66) comprehensively dealt with all stages of education, from pre-primary to higher level, including the vocational and technical education. The commission stated, “The essence of programme of teacher education is quality and in its absence, teacher education
becomes, not only a financial waste but a source of overall deterioration in educational standards” (Para. 4.13; P.72). Some of the recommendations regarding teacher education given by the commission are:

- Accepting that the existing teacher education programmes are largely divorced from the realities of schools, it recommended reorientation of subject knowledge.
- Vitalization of professional studies and to root the entire curriculum in Indian conditions was also recommended.
- The development of special courses & programmes, and revision and improvement of curricula was emphasized.
- The commission stressed that the prospective teachers need courses which will help them to build up a proper perspective of life.
- It also emphasized the need for teacher education to be brought into the mainstream academic life (Para 4.04; p.68) of universities & relate the curriculum closely to the teacher’s responsibilities and to Indian conditions, problems and studies (Para. 4.31; P.75).

(Source: Education Commission (1964-66)

**Formation of National Curriculum Framework in Teacher Education**

However, teacher education institutions continued to exist as insular organizations and are still isolated from the mainstream academic life of universities. The dominance of isolated short term internship programs continues till today. As a major step taken for a quality check on teacher education institutions, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was established in 1972. It reviews the position of teacher education and takes cognizance of the weaknesses in the system. Moreover, the first comprehensive curriculum framework of teacher education, “Teacher Education Curriculum: A Framework” was prepared in 1978 by NCTE. This was in response to the ‘Curriculum Frameworks’ brought out by the NCERT for the ten-year school and higher secondary education in 1975 and 1976 respectively.

The need of the framework lied in the observation that nothing much had changed except for the nomenclature from ‘training’ to ‘education’. The objective of the framework was to remove the use of rigid techniques in teacher education, fact based subject matter, annual system of examination and the inability to cope with the dynamic socio-political changes. It also addressed to the suggestions put forth by the Education Commission (1964-66) and translated them into a workable scheme of courses.

**Persisting Issues**

One of the major debates persisting in teacher education even after India gained independence, is whether teachers are born and not made. Is teaching a professional skill that can be transmitted from one human being to another? Indeed, the latter argument is more promising for if teaching as a skill is hereditary then producing good teachers would become a matter of biologists rather than universities and colleges. Every human society has made some or the other provision to pass on its social heritage and train the young ones for future leadership by producing capable teachers. With the evolution of teaching, teacher education must also evolve. Serving both individuals as well as societal goals, education is surely an intentional enterprise. Teacher education is nothing more than an embodiment of one’s own beliefs, values and expressions having the power to influence the coming generations. It is important that teacher education practices are backed by rigorous scientific research worldwide which will lead to a tremendous change in the quality of teacher education.

But in the advent of globalization, clash of liberal humanist values with neo-liberal policies has given birth to a teacher who is more of a technician-deliverer of knowledge reflecting the dehumanized values of society. Also, this knowledge being disseminated is detached from the local context of the learners. Professionalization of teaching highlights the professional autonomy of a teacher who serves
more to a global economy than to the social values. This reflects the need of more meaningful pedagogical approaches to teacher educators who can imbibe these social values and impart them further to their pupils.

The problems such as - uncontrolled mushrooming of teacher education institutes leading to substandard teacher education; disconnect between pre-service and in service components; isolation of teacher education from school realities; non recognition of teaching as a profession due to unavailability of any professional organization, and; lack of innovation still exist in Indian teacher education system. To understand why these problems still exist despite being addressed by almost all the educational commissions and committees, the present paper analyses the recommendations of the Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) and their relevance in today’s date as well.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To understand the objectives of Chattopadhyay Commission for teacher education.
2. To compare the recommendations of Chattopadhyay Commission with other important commissions and policies on teacher education.
3. To understand the importance of Chattopadhyay Commission in today’s scenario.
4. To apply the implications of Chattopadhyay Commission to solve the problems faced in today’s teacher education.

Chattopadhyay Committee Report and Its Relevance in Today’s World

The professional preparation of teachers has been recognised to be crucial for the qualitative improvement of education since the 1960s (Kothari Commission, 1964-66), but very few concrete steps have been taken in the last three decades to operationalise this. This may be one of the more important factors leading to the current poor state of education in the country. The Commission, in particular, notes the need for teacher education to be “…brought into the mainstream of the academic life of the Universities on the one hand and of school life and educational developments on the other.” It is indeed a matter of concern that teacher education institutes continue to exist as insular organisations even within the University system where they are located. Recognising ‘quality’ as the essence of a programme of teacher education, the Commission recommended the introduction of “integrated courses of general and professional education in Universities…with greater scope for self-study and discussion…and…a comprehensive programme of internship.”

In continuation to this, the Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) discussed numerous problems as well as steps to be taken to bring about satisfactory improvement in elementary and secondary teacher education. Some of the major recommendations given by the report can be penned down as following:

- The report observed that “what obtains in the majority of our Teaching Colleges and Training Institutes is woefully inadequate” and thus, “If teacher education is to be made relevant to the roles and responsibilities of the New Teacher, the minimum length of training for a secondary teacher should be five years following the completion of Class XII.”
- The report reiterating the need “to enable general and professional education to be pursued concurrently” meaning thereby that there is an urgent need to integrate general and professional education.
- The Commission recommends that “to begin with we may have an integrated four year programme for both the secondary and elementary pre-service teacher education, which should be developed carefully…it may also be possible for some of the existing colleges of Science and Arts to introduce an Education Department along with their other programmes allowing for a section of their students to opt for teacher education.”
It recommends that the B.Ed programme should be extended by two summer months having a total of 220 days in a session with longer working hours expressing the concern over poor quality of teacher education.

It states “if school teachers are to bring about a revolution in their approach to teaching that same revolution must precede and find a place in the colleges of education”.

They report envisioned the teacher of today as one who communicates to pupils “the importance of and the feeling for national integrity and unity; the need for a scientific attitude; a commitment to excellence in standards of work and action and a concern for society.”

The report addresses that the quality improvement in teacher education by being in par with developments in science and technology but keeping the cultural identity of the system in India to be intact.

Accepting that the existing teacher education programmes are largely divorced from the realities of schools, it recommended reorientation of subject knowledge.

To reiterate Kothari Commission, vitalization of professional studies and to root the entire curriculum in Indian conditions was also recommended.

The development of special courses & programmes, and revision and improvement of curricula was emphasized.

The report stressed that the prospective teachers need courses which will help them to build up a proper perspective of life.

Problems Encountered In Teacher Education
In the process of teaching, knowledge is constructed jointly by the students and teachers along with their interaction with textbooks, study materials and their experiences. There is a myriad of teaching strategies available to a teacher but the selection of the appropriate one depends upon the learners one has to deal with. But unfortunately, the teacher education is still suffering from various drawbacks that have been mentioned by the Chattopadhyay Committee Report and have led to the degradation of its quality. Some of the major problematic issues addressed by the report which are still encountered in teacher education can be summed up as:

- Teacher education programmes in India never addressed issues like hierarchies of caste and class, gender inequalities, cultural conflicts, unemployment, and regional disparities.
- Undoubtedly, teacher education system has remained rigid through the years with no scope for innovations.
- Pupil teachers are sent to schools in the very beginning of the B.Ed sessions without comprehensive theoretical understanding.
- A preplanned lesson has to be followed making use of teaching aids compulsory.
- The duration of the courses such as B.Ed and M.Ed is too short.
- There is no involvement of pupil teachers in the working of the school.
- There is lack of reflection on observation and experiences by the pupil teachers.

What Needs To Be Done?
As a result of globalization, privatization, communication technology, Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education (1998) reflected on the new requirements that were to be brought about in teacher education. Its concern for teacher education is evident by the statement, “Since the teacher plays a major role in the education of the children, their own education becomes a matter of vital
concern.” The framework further acknowledged the need to provide autonomy to organizations responsible for curriculum development. With an overview of all the previous frameworks and recommendations, it accepted commitment, competence and performance as the guiding principles for the development of teacher education curricula and programmes. (Rajput & Walia, 2001)

Like any other field of education, teacher education too has undergone gradual changes in the past years. Reforms such as the inclusion of the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) in qualifications have been widely appreciated. It is necessary for an aspiring teacher to pass this test with 60% marks after obtaining the required degree. The latest teacher education curriculum has been designed in 2010 keeping in mind the reforms in school education. Finally the decision to increase the duration of the B.Ed and M.Ed courses is in progress to provide ample time to the student teachers to learn theory and practice blending the two meaningfully. To make teacher education more meaningful, following suggestions can be implemented:

- The need to learn, unlearn and relearn certain values for teacher educators to develop their personality and requisite competencies and attitudes.
- The need for long and rigorous internship in teacher training programmes which should be followed by frequent in service programmes.
- The duration of teacher training programmes should be substantially increased.
- Use of ICT should be promoted in teacher preparation programmes.
- There should be a provision of mutual feedback among pupil teachers for the enhancement of pedagogic capacity and sensitivity.
- The curriculum of teacher training programmes should be designed in such a manner that they inculcate philosophical, sociological, psychological as well as political orientations among teacher trainees.
- The teacher trainees should get the understanding and experience of real life complexities in their training programme.
- The programmes should prepare teacher trainees to act as a creative, sensitive, reflective and critically aware of her socio economic and political reality.

The ‘National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education: Towards Preparing Professional and Humane Teacher-2009’ is the latest step taken by NCTE. The very title of the framework justifies, “though verily a profession, the teacher’s personality, in being humane to the learners, is the core foundational issue on which the framework is based; in order that it has a bearing on transforming the very dynamics of teacher education per se.” The guiding forces for this curriculum framework were NCF-2005 and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education-2009. The framework envisions teacher education as “a holistic enterprise involving multiple fronts which aim at the development of the total teacher- knowledge and understanding, repertoire of skills, positive attitudes, habits, values and the capacity to reflect”. The layout for curriculum can be conceived as comprising three broad curricular areas:

- Foundations of Education which includes courses under three broad rubrics, namely, Learner Studies, Contemporary Studies and Educational studies.
- Curriculum and Pedagogy which includes courses under two broad rubrics, namely, Curriculum Studies and Pedagogic Studies.
- School Internship enabling the development of a broad repertoire of professional capacities, perspectives, teacher sensibilities and skills.
Apart from this, few teacher education programmes have stood out due to their innovations and quality. They are:

- Four year integrated programme of Secondary Teacher Education, Regional Colleges of Education, NCERT
- One year programme of Secondary Teacher Education, Vedchhi, Gujarat
- Hoshangabad Science Teaching Project, Eklavya, Madhya Pradesh
- Mirambika Elementary Teacher Education Programme, Sri Aurobindo Educational Society, New Delhi
- Four year integrated programme of Elementary Teacher Education (B.El.Ed), Faculty of Education, University of Delhi
- The ‘Anveshna Experience’- a participating teacher education programme, Department of Education, Banasthali Vidyapeeth, Rajasthan.

CONCLUSION

Nonetheless, teacher education has been struggling to strengthen its identity. It is true that after persistent struggle there is an evident improvement, but there is no end to perfection. The problems concerning teacher education which were encountered in 1960s and 70s are still persistent and cause hurdles in achieving quality. In the current view of education knowledge is not coming from external sources but constructed by the joint effort of the teacher and the learner both acting as beneficiaries. This view points to the need to take a fresh look at teacher preparation. In this scenario the statement by Alvin Toffler suits the situation rightly, “It is no longer sufficient for Johnny to understand the past. It is not even enough for him to understand present for ‘here-and-now’ environment will soon vanish. Johnny must learn to anticipate the directions and range of change- And so must Johnny’s teachers” (Alvin Toffler, 1970, p.364). This speaks for the future vision of teacher education.

REFERENCES
