

Teachers Education: Reformisms, Reforms and Transformation

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Abstract: *Quality has become key word in teacher education. Quality education is the solution to all the problems and teacher s are the main ingredients in quality enhancement programs. Teacher education programme require to the rapid change in world. The rapid changing classroom environments have promoted a need to train teachers who can communicate with and teach students for increasing diverse needs and background. The purpose of teacher education is to produce teachers who have professional competencies. The role of teachers is no longer confined to teaching room. One of the major inputs for enhancing the quality of teacher education would be the extent to which research and field experiments conducted at organization, institution and individual level and their outcomes are utilized for further improvement. The NCTE, SCERT/SIE and University Department of Education should take immediate action for improving the quality of the teacher education programmes.*

Key Words: *Teacher education, Quality enhancement, Research and field experiment.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The defence of the state in all countries is quite as much in the hands of our teachers as in those of the armed forces.

--- BERTRAND RUSSEL

Teacher Education in the 21st century must be oriented to the challenge of covering the entire population in providing literacy and knowledge for economic development and, progress of the society. The teacher is the fulcrum in this endeavor and, therefore, a thorough understanding of different aspects of teacher education is a must. Teacher education is, of course, at the base of all educational systems. The quality and nature of teacher training determines the nature and success of educational systems.

Teacher education is a sub-system of education. The equilibrium of this sub-system depends on the following three factors:

- Number of seats demanded for teacher education by admission seekers and supply of seats by teacher education institutions.
- Demand for and supply of teachers coming out of the institutions of teacher education in the job market for school teachers
- Number of teacher educators in the job market, seeking employment and job opportunities available in institutions of teacher education.

Maintaining equilibrium in these three areas is a complicated process. There was a period of shortage of teachers, followed by a season of excess supply of manpower in all fields, including teaching. Therefore, it is essential to work out a balanced growth of teacher education in future.

2. SOME ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

Many assert that the existing system of educator preparation is not equipping teachers with the skills needed to enable their students to be successful in the 21st century.

The essential features of teacher education in the 21st century are listed below:

- In many ways, teacher educators are working with one foot in the future and the other in the past. Their graduates will serve the most digitally savvy, socially networked generation in history.
- Today's youth have a clear vision of what the 21st century education should provide. They participate in online communities with a wealth of learning resources that extend far beyond the bounds of their schools and well beyond the limits of a single teacher's knowledge and skill.
- Teachers of the future will pursue careers in a globally integrated knowledge economy that rewards teamwork, continuous learning, and constant innovation.
- Higher benchmarks for traditional teaching have to be set to meet the needs of digital age learners.

- Schools of education must go beyond the present paradigm of teacher preparation. They must take on the exciting challenge of developing 21st century educators for 21st century schools. The time is right to reinvent teacher education.

The goal of the teacher education programme is to develop highly qualified teachers who as knowledgeable, effective leaders will be innovative, action-oriented role models in classrooms, schools, districts, and communities throughout the world. The teacher education programme should be at the forefront in preparing competent, self – confident leaders who are committed to educating children in rural and urban multicultural and international communities. Teacher trainees should be inspired to be motivated change agents, advocates for all children, creative, energetic and risk takers to touch the future through teaching.

3. REFORMS: TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT:

Once there is a genuine desire for improvements. There can be several directions of reforms in the existing teacher education system. Many of them cut across the stages of education, pre-primary to tertiary, while some of them have greater relevance for elementary education. In view of the national engagement with the task of elementary education we will concentrate on this stage, although the suggested measures may have relevance for other stages also.

3.1. Para Teachers

Universalisation of elementary education is leading to geometrical progression in teacher population at the elementary level. The costs involved are too heavy to be absorbed in the financial allocations available or likely to be available in the face of competing needs of other sectors. That is why most of the States are resorting to the widely accepted but questionable method of appointment and use of para-teachers. It may not also be feasible to fix qualifications for para-teachers, when the genesis of, and the entire rationale presented for, para-teachers is to remedy the maladies and change the rigidity and regimentation of existing qualifications and recruitment methods that lead to large scale teacher absenteeism, un-accountability of teachers and their non involvement with the community.

It should however, not to be forgotten that the para-teachers in due course will become teachers. This would, therefore, become a convenient and widely accepted alternative method of recruitment. This may add to the already existing backlog of un-trained teachers.

3.2. Institute Teachers Education.

Foreseeing this, it would be prudent to develop modular teacher education programmes in which there is a mix of distance education, summer schools, supervised practice teaching in the schools where un-trained teachers/para-teachers are already working. A blended package of this kind in which theoretical knowledge, competencies and professional skills are developed can additionally address adequately the problem of mismatch between the environment of the practicing schools attached to the teacher education institutions and that of the schools where teachers are required to work after their pre-service education. This has to be accompanied by an innovative system of evaluation clearly focusing on testing the competencies, professional skills and knowledge required of a good teacher. A written examination of 3 hours duration is inadequate for the purpose. It will have to be replaced or supplemented substantially (not nominally) by assignments given in the morning to be completed in the library by evening, Viva-voce, observation of a number of classes being taught in different schools by the trainee following different models of teaching in a number of subjects. The quality of teaching should be graded not only by the expert examiner, but also by the learners.

An achievements test of the learners immediately following the teaching should also be taken into account. The three modes may be give different weightages but final assessment will be a composite product of all the three. Similarly, the written examinations through assignments or question paper should also clearly separately grade the levels of achievement in identified competencies e.g. ability to analyse, synthesize, apply knowledge to different situations, solve problems, logical thinking, creative thinking etc. Tests, will have to be designed accordingly for which teacher educators, examiners and paper-setters have to be trained in the coming summer - vacation.

Examinations of this kind cannot be held in the present manner in a large number of examination centers. There should be a limited number of evaluation/ assessment centers where trainees (teachers-pupil) will come during the period fixed for the purpose, at least 4 times in the year. This will give flexibility to the teacher-pupil to present himself/herself for assessment whenever ready.

3.3. Flexibility in teacher-education qualification

The magnitude of the problem of un-trained teachers can be reduced to a much more reasonable level, if the State Governments could be persuaded to give preference to persons having any qualification in teacher education at the time of appointment as teachers/para-teachers. Even if they are trained for secondary classes, they can be required to

undergo a short bridge course comprising knowledge, competencies and skills specific to elementary education not acquired during earlier training and to help them to achieve maximum transfer of learning/training. This will enable them to deal with the elementary education classes with competence and confidence.

3.4. B.Ed. Elementary Education

Redesigning B.Ed courses to suit the requirement of elementary education can be another measure. This has already been tried by many institutions. In the absence of dependable data of manpower planning in the field of teacher education, I believe that the number of persons being churned out by the teacher education institutions for secondary classes is much larger than required, while the need of trained elementary education teachers is not being adequately met. A policy of permitting only B.Ed. (Elementary Education) and even encouraging the existing Institutions to switch over to the B.Ed elementary education course would be a step in the right direction. When such teachers have to move to secondary classes they can be required to undergo a bridge course to enable a smooth switch over with competence.

3.5. Certification by NCTE

It is suspected, not without reasons, that a large number of teacher-education institutions provide poor quality pre-service education. The most imperative reform, therefore, is evolving an innovative method of evaluation by the NCTE of those who are passing out from such teacher education institutions. This may raise eye-brows of the Universities on the ground of erosion of their autonomy. This problem can be tackled by the NCTE organising a certifying assessment procedure, analogous to NET of the UGC with the difference that it should go on through-out the year and should be a through assessment of theoretical knowledge as well as professional skills at limited number of identified centers by highly dependable experts of the NCTE. Professional skills should be tested by a method of prolonged internship in the schools where the students performance will be as much as the opinion of the observing expert. A compulsory duration of internship can also take care of the shortage of trained teachers in the elementary schools and may even reduce the requirement of the para-teachers.

3.6. Upper Primary Teachers

Another reform measures claiming urgent attention is to prepare teachers to take care of upper primary classes. A general purpose teacher of primary school is to be equipped to be a proficient teacher of some subjects in the upper primary classes where knowledge of a subject acquires grater significance. This again can be achieved by Distance Education mode in association with Open Universities and Distance Education wings of conventional Universities B.Ed (elementary education) will be also a useful step, since the graduates undergoing such a course are likely to have adequate knowledge of the content of the subjects to be taught at the upper primary level. This can even be made minimum qualification for appointment at upper primary stage.

3.7. Professional Preparation vs. Content enrichment

The quality of teacher education can improve substantially if it concentrates on developing professional competencies in a person who has already acquired good quality of general education in Higher Secondary Schools, general Colleges and Universities. At the risk of raising controversy, I would venture to suggest that teacher education sector should not take the responsibility of teaching school-subjects which should be left to the domain of the general education institutions. To ensure that persons of only adequate knowledge of content of a subject are admitted to the teacher education institution, the screening test for admission should assess the knowledge of the subjects which the candidate intends to take up for teaching in the upper primary or secondary schools.

3.8. Training of Teacher Education

The teacher educators must be immediately trained to be proficient in learner-centered methods of education. Such training programmes should aim at enabling them to adopt these methods not only in the primary and middle schools but also for transaction of the teacher-education curriculum. I am reminded of the zero lectures B.Ed programme introduced by the Department of Education, Devi Ahilya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Indore under the leadership of Dr. B K Passi. This also will require a very massive training of the teacher educators which, however, can be achieved during the summer vacation if there is a determination to undertake reform measures instead of being only an adherent of reformism.

3.9. In-Service Education

Pre-service education has only long term impact on the quality of elementary education. That is why immediate measures will have to focus more on in-service education of the existing teachers and up-gradation of their capacities. Currently in-service education is sporadic, not logically inter-related without yielding additional tangible benefits to the teacher.

Like pre-service education there should be a well-conceived comprehensive curriculum of long duration (e.g. largely equivalent to B.Ed in duration required for adequate quality for coverage) broken into modules carrying varying credit weightages. Every pre-service programme should be accompanied by comprehensive evaluation - both of theoretical knowledge and of professional skills developed during the period. A scheme of giving certificates diplomas and degrees depending upon the number of modules completed and credits acquired will motivate the teachers for more pre-service education and will also make the whole exercise logically and coherently interwoven.

The curriculum for in-service education should be need-based and focus on clearly identified weaknesses in the field. The teachers should have the option a pre-testing to opt for only such modules of pre-service that help him/her remove the deficiencies and weaknesses identified in him/her.

3.10. From Regulatory Role to Quality Promotional Role

Attention of the NCRE is focused on regulation of teacher education. It is natural and necessary in the first phase of the existence of the Council, since the earlier phase of unregulated growth of teacher education in the country called for this intervention imperatively. It has now to shift major focus on improving the quality. Some measures that can be taken immediately are:

- **Grading of Institutions:** The appraisal report of teacher education institutions have to be redesigned to move in this direction. The appraisal reports should enable the Council and its Regional Councils to grade institutions from outstanding to poor.
- **Using Outstanding Institutions :** All outstanding institutions must be visited by dependable experts to verify the nature of excellence. Those really found outstanding should be projected as demonstration institutions. The best practices of these institutions should be carefully studied, compiled and circulated to other institutions for appropriate adoption. In this process, teacher-educators of these outstanding institutions should be used as resource persons. Visit to such institutions by the teacher-educators of other institutions may also be useful.
- **Poor Institutions: Fate to be decided:** Poor institutions should also be inspected by experts who should assess whether such institutions deserve to be eliminated or can be improved. In case they can be improved, a concrete plan of action should be prepared by the Management of the institution which should be implemented within a time frame with arrangement for close monitoring by the Council/Regional Council. These deserving closure should be ruthlessly closed in which the co-operation of the States will have to be a crucial element.
- **Shift :** Institutions graded as good or very good should also be asked to submit a plan for improving their grade - from good to very good and from very good to excellent within a fixed time frame, which should be approved by the Council/Regional Council and implemented with a provision for systematic monitoring.
- **Teacher Educator's Capacity Building – Knowledge:**
The quality of teacher education depends most heavily on the quality of teacher-educators. A systematic plan to assess and improve their competence should be prepared and implemented. Every month certain issues regarding teacher education should be communicated to teacher-educators through website/internet inviting papers from only the serving teacher-educators. The entries received should be appraised by a jury of high quality. Those teacher educators who have sent papers of acceptable standard should be required to come for seminars to be organized on such issues regularly at different places where experts of the NCTE should be able to discuss the papers and verify the authenticity of and credit for the authorship, by cross-examining and thoroughly grilling the author.

This will in the long run enable us to identify good teacher-educator as also provide material for an issue-based monthly journal which will be a meaningful platform for teacher-educators. Different educational institutions should be encouraged to host such seminars which will also give an opportunity to other teacher-educators and experts to have a first hand acquaintance with the concerned institution.

Awards, prizes and certificates for very high quality papers can also promote healthy competition.

- **Developing professional Skills:** Inadequacy of practical professional skills is too widely noted to need elaboration. Let us accept the adage, "It is never too late". A series of workshop innovatively designed can enable identification of teacher-educators strong in certain professional skills, which can be disseminated through a series of training workshops of other teacher-educators.

Capacity to frame competency testing questions is another rare skill. This approach can be adopted for development of other professional skills.

I am primarily pleading for creating an environment where quality, even if it exists somewhere, does not remain confined to some institutions and gets widely projected, disseminated and extensively used for

infecting or injecting others with this. It also motivates others and creates healthy competition for quality. Numerous academic activities, not of the traditional kind, but designed specifically for this purpose can be very useful instruments in this regard.

- **Transformation: Towards Alternatives :**

I consider the existing teacher education system as un-scientific, illogical, based on out-dated theories and principles of education, psychology, sociology and other social sciences. It does not meet the requirement of the nation today.

It is based on a large number of faulty assumptions and therefore, there is no scope for reform. The only solution is dismantling the present system and putting in place a radically different one.

Let us briefly look at the faulty assumption I am referring to. I will only list them without giving evidence and logical arguments to substantiate them. I would suggest that they should be taken as hypotheses which may be rejected by marshalling evidence and arguments against them. The following, in my view, are the assumptions on which the edifice to teacher education stands:

- The society considers persons with teacher education qualifications as better teachers than those without such qualifications.
- The duration of teacher education programme has a scientific basis and is adequate to develop a good teacher.
- Teacher educators who have never taught in a particular stage of education are competent enough to train good teachers for that level.

Every stage of education requires a different teacher education course because :

- Every stage has requirements which are preponderantly specific than requirements that are general and useful and applicable to all stages.
- The transfer of training of learning for a teacher trained for one stage of education to another stage is minimal.
- A general course for all stages with provision for specialization/bridge course for each stage cannot meet our requirement.
- Collaboration between institutions of general education and teacher education cannot take care of teacher preparation.
- Teacher Education curricula include the latest developments in cognate disciplines like Psychology, Sociology, Communication Science, Management, Public Administration etc.
- During the pre-service education, teachers are trained thoroughly in teaching learning strategies based on latest research and studies
- The teaching ability of teacher people can be assessed by observing his teaching of 45 minutes.
- Internship is not essential or is not feasible.
- Teacher Education courses can largely be covered by Teacher Centered method and learner centered methods need not be used.

We shall now proceed to consider some alternative approaches. They have not been comprehensively worked out. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Components of different approaches can be combined: yet I present them as separate, independent and comprehensive models because each has a distinct approach.

A. Induction and On-The-Job-Training

A short term (only one to two years) teacher education programme is ritualistic and does not inspire credibility and confidence in the society. It is better therefore, to recruit high achievers of general education, provide them induction training and enable them to acquire excellence in teaching gradually through experience during which they are given continual guidance.

B. Professional Competencies

Pre-service teacher education programme only focusing on professional competencies and skills required by a teacher be developed and put in place for which collaboration with institutions of general education be so organized as to provide complementary role to each.

C. Licensing/Certifying Examination

Preparing teachers should be left free without prescribing any course but there should be a certifying or licensing procedure by the NCTE in which identified, competencies, knowledge etc. necessary for by a teacher is assessed in a more dependable manner at limited number of centers through out the year. There should be provision for credit

accumulation, appearance in the tests a number of times to acquire necessary credits. Competencies, qualities, characteristics required of teacher should be prioritized and given different credits. A variation of this approach can be that theoretical knowledge is tested earlier as a pre-requisite and only those achieving acceptable standard are permitted to appear in the final test where practical professional skills are appraised.

D. Comprehensive Teacher Education Faculty

A teacher education programme be developed that starts from class 11 and goes up to Post Graduation with similar stages and duration at par with general education and only those in the stream be considered qualified to work as teachers. In this model the starting point could be after 12th Standard that from the graduate level.

E. Integration with general education

The theoretical part of the discipline of education could be offered as an optional subject in general education in all faculties. The course should be adequate to give the necessary theoretical back ground. Professional skills be provided by teacher education institutions or with attachment to a senior qualified teacher licensed to act as teacher educator.

F. Communication Course

A course in communication abilities combined with excellence in general education should be considered adequate qualification for the job. Courses in communication abilities may be so designed as to develop capabilities of communication in diverse situations so that those who join the course have several professional options including teaching.

G. Personality Development Psychologist

Education is seen not as a process of merely imparting knowledge but is perceived as a process to develop all the aspects of personality. This requires a specialist as thoroughly trained as a medical Doctor. Professional course of this kind be developed based on the recent advances in behavioral sciences. As a post script to the brief presentation of these approaches, it should be emphasized that in each of the approaches, the curriculum, the transactional methods and evaluation patterns should target on the clearly stated objectives and the certificates should indicate the credit achieved in each of them.

4. CONCLUSION:

Many entirely new paradigms that take care of these faulty assumptions can be developed once the basic approaches suggested above are scrutinized and selection of one or more of them is made for comprehensive development and presentation. Scientific rigour will demand experimental implementation of some of the selected models and finalization only after scientific comparison. In fact some of the components of the models are already floating around in our environment, although they have not been systematically identified for comparative study and for being used inputs in developing a new model. It is high time we take up most of these challenging tasks.

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