

Teacher Education in Modern Scenario: Issues and Their Remedies

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Abstract: Teaching is a profession and teacher education is a process of professional preparation of teachers. Preparing one for a profession is an arduous task and it involves action from multiple fronts. Teachers themselves should know what they know and they should use that knowledge to make new knowledge and to continually reconstruct their professional understanding. Teacher educators are found to construct their knowledge from and with teacher's personal practical knowledge and understanding of their professional knowledge contents. Teacher educators need to have a very broad knowledge base, which traditionally has been thought of as base in both theory and practice. A distinction is made between knowledge of theory and practice and knowledge of context. This contextual knowledge is seen as an essential part of the teacher educator's knowledge, located in the 'real' world where the theory and practice articulate. Thus, teacher education has a crucial role in preparing teacher educators. In fact, it becomes a core condition to ensure high proficiency and quality of teacher education. Thus, effective teacher education anticipates effective teacher educator. This article focuses on the value that teacher education adds to the prospective teacher's ability to face challenges of facilitating the development of critical and creative students and subsequently adults. Global ideas are to be taken into the context to visualize the role of teacher and shaping the teacher education. This would definitely lead to innovations leading to renovating teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Professional Development.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a profession and teacher education is a process of professional preparation of teachers. Preparing one for a profession is an arduous task and it involves action from multiple fronts [1]. Role of teacher as a nation builder is universally accepted. Teachers help in transmission of skills, values and knowledge that are required to sustain in society. They help in shaping and reshaping of society by enabling individual to reflect upon societal practices. Efficient teachers are required to achieve aims and objectives of any society. A country could not progress economically, socially, culturally or politically unless its citizens are educated. This requires competent teachers who can nurture individuals to achieve these aims which demands extensive professional preparation. It is crucial to think about the kind of professional preparation required in addition to mastery of subject. Thus, teacher education has to build the ability in the teacher to evolve one's own knowledge to deal with different contexts based on understanding and analysis of experience. The overall quality in education depends on the quality of teachers and that a sound program of professional education of teachers is essential for imparting desired type of education. Professional preparation should thus include subject

matter that is based upon understanding of how children grow and develop. India has one of the largest systems of teacher education in the world and most of the teacher education programmes are nearly identical but their standards varies across institutions and universities. Francis Bacon, 1597 rightly said, "knowledge is power" which implies that teaching is an art that can be acquired through a series of well-designed series of activities, its imperative, therefore due emphasis should be laid on the education of the teachers[4].

According to NCFTE [1], "Knowledge is essentially a human construct, a continuously evolving process of reflective thinking". So it becomes necessary for teachers to know what they know, and that they should use that knowledge to make new knowledge, and to continually reconstruct their professional understandings. It is also important for teachers to learn, unlearn and relearn and thus remain as a constructivist learners throughout their lives. Adaptation to new in order to survive has always been demanded, this requires a person to know how to learn, unlearn and relearn. This process of constructing knowledge and transforming a person into one who knows how to learn, unlearn and relearn demands inputs from multiple

fronts, especially professionally the person needs to be strong. According to The Educational Commission (1964-1966), "a sound program of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small when measured against the resulting improvement in the education of millions." Teacher who is being considered as nation builder must have the skills that helps a person to be skilled enough to contribute to the development of society, culture, nation. Teacher education means programs of education, research or training of persons for equipping them to teach at primary, secondary, and senior secondary stages in schools and includes non-formal education, part time education, adult education and correspondence education[5].

Teacher education aims at holistic development of a person demanding development of both personal and the professional competencies as these are interconnected in the construction and reconstruction of professional knowledge. A professional knowledge of teaching has many dimensions - cognitive, social, organizational, practical, moral, aesthetic, person, political and interpersonal [2]. The theory and the practice are inseparable. Learning to teach involves beginning with ourselves, learning to be responsive to others and reconstructing what is known in the light of new experiences. Learning to teach and teaching to learn require experiences and settings which support reflection, collaboration, relational learning and the creation of communities of inquiry. The construction and reconstruction of professional knowledge is a career-long process not a single event. It is a work in progress.

NCFTE [1] says, reflective practice should be the central aim of teacher education. For quite some time the term reflective practice has become the part of discourse of teacher and teacher educators. Dewey considered reflection to be a deliberate holistic , cognitive process that takes account of underlying beliefs and knowledge[6]. It allows time for learners to personalize learning, absorb material and reprocess ideas. Thus a critical reflection is essential to become independent learner[7].

According to NCFTE [1], pre service teachers should be provided opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas. Teacher education programmes should aim at developing self-directed learning and ability to think, thus making them critical thinkers so that they in turn can become critical reflective practitioners. Not only this these programmes should provide ample of opportunities to pre service teachers to observe and engage with children. This will give them insight about

child's world and their thinking, helping them to understand the child better.

Every teacher education programme has following objectives:-

- To develop in prospective teacher educators necessary skills and competencies needful for the preparation of the teacher
- To impart the latest knowledge of the relevant disciplines
- To upgrade their knowledge and develop a critical awareness.
- To develop the capacity of elaboration, examination, interpretation and communication of ideas
- To enable them to undertake meaningful educational research for improving the condition of education and society.
- To develop among them the desire for life long learning for removing anachronism from them.

There is an interdependency between school and teacher education. For improvement of education it is thus mandatory to develop and strengthen both of these as they will mutually reinforce each other leading to improvement in quality of education. A competent, committed and professionally well qualified teacher is required to meet the demands of system is required which requires quality teacher education programme. According to NCF [3] following are the major shifts in school system:

- Passive reception in learning to active participation in learning.
- Knowledge is changed from "given" to created, fixed to evolved and teacher centric to learner centric.
- Teacher role as facilitator and supporter rather than guide and monitor.
- Learning was given only in the four walls of the classroom with teacher direction and decision and linear exposure but now learning is given in the wider social context and multiple and divergent exposure and learner autonomy is must.

This calls for a shift in teacher education programme, making them sensitive to the emerging demands of school system. Teacher education programmes thus needs to be reformulated and strengthened. Teacher educators need to become a catalyst for change in school practices. But our present teacher education system has certain drawbacks which NCF [3] points out:

- Current practices in teacher education take the school curriculum and text books as a 'given' and train teachers to adjust to the needs of the existing school system through fastidious planning of

lessons in standardized formats, fulfilling the ritual of delivering the required number of lessons.

- Repeated 'practice' in the teaching of a specified number of isolated lessons is considered a sufficient condition for professional development
- There is no opportunity for teachers to examine their own biases and beliefs and reflect on their own experiences as part of classroom discourse and enquiry
- Theory courses have no clear articulation with practical work and ground realities
- The evaluation protocol is too theoretical, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehensiveness.

Apart from what NCF,2005 points there are few more drawbacks which includes faulty methods of selection because of political, social and personal influences; Irrelevant methodology of teaching; Isolation between the colleges of education and the schools and Insufficient training in the art of communicating with the community.

Considering the shifts, drawbacks and keeping the objectives and vision of teacher education in mind various systemic reforms can be made in teacher education to make it more effective. The following sets of statements relating to perception of teachers' role, and philosophy, purpose and practice of teacher education can be made:

- ❖ Comprehensive changes need to be made in the curriculum of teacher education. It should be aligned to the present needs and emerging changes. It should not miss even minute aspects. It should be all inclusive reflecting ICT, diversities among children and society, experiential learning, Life skills, Vocational training etc.
- ❖ Teacher education curriculum should also incorporate non-academic components like yoga, art, craft, music, sports etc. Only then can it come out of the isolation it is said to be caught in.
- ❖ The curriculum of teacher education should help in achieving the goal of teacher education in preparing teacher as a perfect professional who is a facilitator, communicator, content and language expert, child psychologist, sociologist community leader, researcher etc.
- ❖ The curriculum designed should be the result of research and experimental findings.
- ❖ The practicum aspect should form the major part of the curriculum. Enough time should be allotted to translate the knowledge gained through theory into practice. Experiential learning helps in fine tuning the skills of the trainee.
- ❖ Teacher trainee should be given an opportunity to conduct research and have first hand information of

the present position of the component under study be it the child, the curriculum, the text book, the methodology, the school, the community etc.

- ❖ Teaching profession is facing the allegations of degraded value system. Teacher education curriculum should aim to eliminate this allegation.
- ❖ Teacher Education institutions should also function with commitment to achieve the aim of teacher preparation in its totality thereby fulfilling the needs of education system and achieve progress.
- ❖ All teaching skills should be practiced through micro teaching. Teacher educators should also guide and equip the teacher trainees with all teaching skills through demonstration lessons in training institutions and also by observing the lessons given by trainees in schools. Senior Teachers in schools should also observe the classes of trainees and guide them.
- ❖ Teacher has to be encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners 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.
- ❖ Teacher education programmes has to be reformulated to place thrust on the active involvement of learners in the processes of knowledge construction, shared context of learning, teacher as a facilitator 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.
- ❖ Teacher education should engage with theory along with field experiences to help trainees to view knowledge not as external to the learner but as something that is actively constructed during learning. Teacher education should integrate academic knowledge and professional learning into a meaningful whole.
- ❖ Teachers need to be trained in organizing learner-centered, activity based, participatory learning experiences – play, projects, discussion, dialogue, observation, visits, integrating academic learning with productive work;
- ❖ Teacher education should engage teachers with the curriculum, syllabi and textbooks to critically examine them rather than taking them as 'given' and accepted without question.
- ❖ Curriculum of both school and teacher education need to be broadened to include different traditions of knowledge; train and educate teachers to connect school knowledge with community knowledge and life outside the school, and thereby enrich the curriculum so that it goes beyond the textbooks and contextualizes educational experiences

- ❖ Technology has revolutionized every other industry segment and component of our society, economy, and culture and yet has not done so in education, although we think that that revolution is near. And consequently, we think it is important that teachers be prepared not only to use today's technology but also to think systematically and analytically about it because obviously the technology is going to continue to change and evolve. And if we are to effectively integrate today's technology and tomorrow's technology and instruction, then educators need to be well prepared to work with it.
- ❖ Selection of teachers needs procedural changes. The entrance and recruitment tests instead of testing the content knowledge should test the teacher's perspective, interests and attitudes towards teaching profession.
- ❖ All teacher education institutions should mandatorily have model schools.
- ❖ Teacher Educators should be made to work for at least one hour in a school so that the experience gained from working with children will be utilized in guiding the trainees.
- ❖ To ensure effectiveness, in-service education programmes should be essentially need based and related to contemporary issues. They should be made mandatory for all teachers and their career advancement should be linked to such courses. The system should allow teachers to pursue courses of their choice that help in their professional development.
- ❖ In Teacher education programme, performance appraisal is shifted from an annual affair to a continuous. The teacher-educator should train future teachers to evaluate the student performance. Several kinds of appraisal take place in the form of continuous and comprehension evaluation. The appraisal mostly will not be given in marks (quantitative), but on a scale (qualitative), where the student's achievement is evaluated as a continuum and he/she is placed according to his/her performance in various activities.
- ❖ Student teacher should be made competent to clear TET exam which has become a critical filter for jobs. Today every school whether government or private has made it a mandatory qualification, without which prospective teachers will not be getting good jobs. This will have repercussion on both RTE and their own life.
- ❖ Continuous professional development of teacher educators is must for which few things could be done:
 1. Mechanisms need to be evolved to promote the entry of talent in teacher education programmes.
 2. A nation-wide review of teacher education curriculum in the light of the school

curriculum renewal exercise would need to be undertaken.

3. Nation-wide seminars and workshops could be held to initiate discussions and possible strategies for operationalising the institution of redesigned teacher education and development
4. Teacher education programmes should be redesigned to respond to the school curriculum renewal process and in accordance with the state and regional context in which they are situated.
5. The Curricular Areas presented should form the basic framework for redesigning teacher education programmes at the pre-primary, elementary, secondary and senior secondary stages of education across states and districts through a proposed linkage between SCERT/DIETs with University-based institutions.
6. With advent of ICT in education, it becomes important to strengthen Technological skills among teacher educators as well.

CONCLUSION

Teacher preparation is a dynamic activity which operates in a self learning environment through participatory mode in the context of changing learner and social needs. It should emphasize experiential and constructivist approach in learning. It should cater to the development of teacher for the multifaceted role ranging from a class room manager to that of a community leader. The curriculum and methodology cannot be patterned i.e. to say that as a liquid takes the shape of the container teacher education should take the shape of the current needs. However, it has to function within the broader outline of the objectives of education. It has to focus its attention on the new role of teacher educator. Hence education is a potent instrumentation for bridging about the desired changes in the society and teacher are to play a crucial role in this noble venture, human rights can be achieved and sustained mostly through education and training .

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