



Pedagogical Rejuvenation and Quality Deliverance for Effective Teaching

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ABSTRACT

"It is a truism that the way in which teachers have learnt will reflect itself in the way they teach"– Bigge & Hunt (1980)
Quality teaching is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. It involves several dimensions, including the effective design of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts i.e. collaborative learning, experimentation, soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes. The gap between theory and practice in teacher education has led to much criticism regarding the effectiveness of teacher education programmes. The intent of the present paper is on issues related to pedagogical foundation of teachers in India by focusing on the emerging issues & related concerns. Various issues of teacher education namely, experiential Learning, cooperative and Collaborative Learning, effective Use of ICT and Research need to be emphasised. The paper elucidates Measures to articulate pedagogical competencies and up gradation of pedagogical skills through professional development to build strong pedagogical foundation.

KEYWORDS : Pedagogical Rejuvenation, Experiential Learning, pedagogical competencies & skills

INTRODUCTION

The dictionary defines pedagogy as the science of teaching. What is science of teaching? Does our teaching need some sort of science for its effective functioning and better output? It is true that in our daily life we usually need science for making the things simpler and more workable for our living. As a result we can save our time and energy in accomplishing our task and try to get maximum output with the help of minimum input. Therefore anything referred to as science of teaching is also expected to help a teacher in his task of teaching in the same way as science helps in doing a task related to our day-to-day life. The phrase 'Science of Teaching' stands for the ways and means provided to or utilized by a teacher for managing his task of teaching as smoothly and effectively as possible by involving his efforts for drawing the maximum possible better teaching outcomes. A quality pedagogical process builds on the beliefs that care, learning, and nurturing from a coherent whole, and that every child's well-being and engagement are prerequisites for learning. While recognizing that learning happens in different ways and in diverse situations, the ultimate goal of the pedagogical process is to set high but achievable expectations for each child, and to promote curiosity, exploration, critical thinking, and cooperation, so that every child develops the skills and dispositions for lifelong learning. The strategies educators use to promote learning should reflect democratic values, cognitive development and academic achievement must be combined with social development. Strategies should develop the skills children need to become responsible members of society, such as a sense of empathy and concern for others and openness and respect for diversity. Educators should provide children with opportunities to form, express, and justify their opinions, as well as to make choices and intelligent decisions and to reach consensus. The educator is responsible for making the decisions and choices about which teaching strategies provide the best support for each child to be successful as a learner and to achieve outcomes defined by national requirements and personal development goals.

PEDAGOGICAL REJUVENATION: NEED OF THE HOUR

A major effort to rejuvenate school education as well as teacher education towards strong Pedagogical foundation has been made in 2005 and 2009 through the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2005), and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) respectively. During recent years the epistemology of learning has undergone a major change, i.e. learning does not involve discovering the reality, but constructing the reality. Knowledge and cognitions are to be constructed and affects are to be felt. Learning is no more passive absorption of knowledge and ideas, but the construction of ideas developed on one's personal experiences. Now the emphasis has shifted towards constructivist approach

of learning. Learning is also perceived as an integral part of learner's physical, social, and cultural contexts. This concept has come to be known as situated cognition and is the guiding principle of the National curriculum Framework for School Education (2005) developed by NCERT. The NCF 2005 expects a teacher to be the facilitator of students' learning in a manner that helps them to construct knowledge and meaning utilising their individual experiences. The whole pedagogical approach of teacher education programme, therefore, needs to be reoriented from traditional behaviourist to constructivist discourses. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) developed by NCTE tries to ensure that teacher education courses are reoriented to align with the epistemological shift envisaged in the NCF 2005 and develop teachers as facilitators of learning. It includes the contexts, concerns and visions of teacher education which calls for preparing teachers for learning society, empowering teachers in learning to learn, and making teacher education liberal, humanistic and responsive to the to the demands of inclusive education. It has tried to incorporate the changing school contexts and demands in the light of recently implemented Right to Education Act (RTE 2009), issue of academic burden of students, and universalisation of secondary education that have implication for teacher education. The major concerns addressed by this framework include inclusive education, ensuring equitable and sustainable development, utilising community knowledge in education, and integration of ICT and e-learning in the curriculum of teacher education which is in tune with the thrust of NCF 2005 and the needs of contemporary Indian society. Therefore, the traditional approach to teacher preparation based on philosophical, sociological and psychological orientation of courses has given way to 'carefully crafted curriculum design that draws upon theoretical and empirical knowledge as well as student teachers' 'experiential knowledge' (NCFTE 2009, p24). Three broad curricular areas identified by this framework are: (A) *Foundations of Education* which includes courses under three rubrics, namely, Learner Studies, Contemporary Studies and Educational Studies; (B) *Curriculum and Pedagogy* including Curriculum Studies and Pedagogic Studies; and (C) *School Internship*, leading to the development of a broad repertoire of perspective, professional capacities, teacher sensibilities and skills (NCFTE 2009, p24). An attempt has been made through this curriculum framework to not only address the issues, concerns and pedagogical shifts visualised by NCF 2005, but, also organise the entire teacher education curriculum as an organic and integrated whole. This framework envisages a two year teacher preparation programme along with the four year integrated teacher education courses. It is felt that longer duration of teacher preparation will provide enough time and opportunity for self-study, reflection and engagement with teachers, students, classrooms and pedagogic activities that is essential for developing professionalism

in teachers. It also tries to address the criticism regarding the unrelatedness of theoretical discourses of teacher education institutions to the classroom realities by incorporating the socio-cultural contexts of education, giving more emphasis on the field experience of student teachers in all courses through practicum, visits to innovative centres of pedagogy and learning, classroom based research, longer duration of internship i.e. minimum duration of six to ten weeks for a two year programme (four days per week), and 15-20 weeks for a four year programme, including an initial phase of one week for observing a regular classroom with a regular teacher. It also emphasises developing unit plan and maintaining Reflective Journals which is currently missing from our teacher education programmes, especially, at the secondary level.

Before moving on to the roadmap for building strong pedagogical foundation of teachers, let's first discuss the impediments to the same.

HINDERENCES TO STRONG PEDAGOGY

- We still find teacher education programmes in certain parts of the country which continue to prescribe traditional approach of psychological, philosophical and sociological basis of education instead of focusing on the approach of how the knowledge of these cognate disciplines can be related to understanding how children grow and learn.
- Huge gap between the actual classroom realities and theoretical discourses of a teacher training institution.
- Another contradiction that can be observed is, that, in spite of constructivism being regarded the acceptable approach for both school education and teacher education institutions, efforts and achievements of learners are still being evaluated using behaviourist approaches and quantitative grading systems.
- In addition to this the pressure for 'teaching for understanding' as opposed to rote memorisation, and 'innovative' as opposed to time tested traditional methods add to the challenges of teacher preparation which the system has to respond.

There are mismatches between the subject and pedagogy. There are mismatches amongst the profiles of the learners and their education. Every subject has its own structure and functions. Each subject has its own ethos and discipline. Every Education level has its own tenderness. In spite of the presence of all the global and regional attempts we have not been in a position to even sustain the identity of elementary education. Every moment there are slogans and predicaments to universalize education. Has the Right to Education ensured Education? We ought to make sincere & exhaustive attempts to realize the matches and provide strong pedagogical foundation of Teachers.

AN ECLECTIC APPROACH TO PEDAGOGY

Mere change in teacher curriculum does not guarantee its successful implementation. It calls for reorientation of teacher educators in the emerging pedagogies who are trained in conventional methods and are used to conventional pedagogies. The problem is further aggravated from the lack of experiences of majority of teacher educators in teaching at school level. Nothing can change significantly in the preparation of teachers if the corresponding changes are visualised in the preparation of teacher educators. Therefore, they themselves need de learning of conventional approaches and re learning of emerging approaches and pedagogical content knowledge to act as facilitators of learning. The NCF 2005 focuses on pedagogical and curricular approach which behests a lot of responsibility and ownership on the part of teachers such as use of culture specific context, examples, folk stories, and experiences of individual learners in the classroom. This requires a more realistic and empirically established model of teacher preparation to enable them to develop the required skills, abilities and attitudes among teachers.

Experiential Learning

'Learners are told about the world and are expected to replicate its content and structure in their thinking'. Learning is thus viewed as the acquisition and accumulation of a finite set of skills and facts. The role of a teacher here is to 'deliver the goods'. The teacher is to plan, prepare and deliver the content in such a way as to impart the knowledge of the subject matter. Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasizes the construction of knowledge, while objectivism concerns mainly with the object of knowing. Central to the tenet of con-

structivism is that learning is an active process. Information may be imposed, but understanding cannot be, for it must come from within. Instruction refers to providing learners with a collaborative situation in which they have both the means and the opportunity to construct 'new and situational-specific understandings'. Cognitive approach emphasize on discovery approach and problem solving methods so as to result in retention and transfer of the knowledge imparted. Bruner emphasized on structuring of instruction in such a way as to foster conceptualization and the development of problem solving skills through the processes of inquiry and discovery. He advocates autonomy in learning. Bigge emphasized that thinking is to be fostered through conceptualization. Ausubel advocated providing ideational anchors as advance organizers to make verbal learning meaningful. Gardner advocated the use of multimedia in instruction. Gagne's conditions of learning provide guiding principles for instructional designing.

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

The major theme of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD): a level of development attained when children engage in social behaviour. Full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. The range of skill that can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration exceeds what can be attained alone. From a constructivist perspective, the primary responsibility of the teacher is to create and maintain a collaborative problem-solving environment, where students are allowed to construct their own knowledge, and the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide.

Effective Use of ICT

A few studies conducted on the use of Internet in Teacher Education Institutions revealed that the student teachers largely lack in info savvy skills and techno-pedagogical skills. Some of the teacher trainees make use of Internet for surfing, e-mail, research, core courses, and special areas. But, the Internet is rarely used for web designing, reflective dialogue and outsourcing. Measures of Internet safety are rarely employed. There is a need to develop Net-Savvy Skills in Teacher Educator Trainees. Educational technology and ICT in education have demonstrated their values. But, Technology in Education is not yet fully integrated. Technology in Education is still underutilized. There is a need of technological revolution in teacher education. There is a wide scope for transformation of teacher education through technology.

Research Scenario

A prospective plan for research and innovations should be framed with regional and national developmental priorities. The research methodology must be compatible with the local problems. There is a need to be innovative. There are mismatches between research trends and problems. Philosophical & historical studies are very rare. There is more of quantitative research than qualitative. There is more of descriptive and evaluative research than suggestive. There is more of borrowed methodology than indigenous. Taxonomy of research needs to be evolved. There is lack of continuity, cumulativeness and synthesis in most of the studies. Most of the studies are descriptive rather than preventive. Culture for incubation of ideas is grossly lacking, what to talk of inculcation. Statistics and psychometrics are superimposing reality. Research in education must incorporate the solutions to problems related with pedagogy.

'HOW' OF STRONG PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATION

The programme designs and pedagogies should attend specifically to the how of teacher education and training. It is important to organize prospective teacher's experiences so that they are able to integrate and use their acquired knowledge in a skilful manner in the classroom, especially incorporating research in whatever is taught so that the 21st century teacher becomes teacher-researcher at heart. Often times, this becomes the most difficult aspect of constructing a teacher education and training programme. Let's see some of the measures for improving pedagogical competencies.

Measures to articulate pedagogical competencies Engage in a collaborative process to identify and articulate the pedagogical competencies that teachers need to deliver quality teaching and learning that reflects the institution's mission and core values.

- Ensure that individual teachers, along with deans, heads of programmes and other team leaders who are drivers of change are involved in defining these pedagogical competencies and any associated quality benchmarks or performance standards.
- Ensure that all teachers are aware of these pedagogical competencies and use them as an anchor for professional development and as a basis for assessing improvement in their teaching practice.
- Define a set of indicators of excellence in teaching (as well as in other areas) that the institution may use to encourage improvement, evaluate performance, and take into account in decisions concerning tenure and promotion.

Upgrade pedagogical skills through professional development

- Provide professional development that responds to the educational goals of the institution and fits in with its core values, reflects the pedagogical competencies required for quality teaching.
- Assign explicit and more specific objectives to professional development ("embedding learning outcomes in assessment methods" rather than "improve teaching").
- Provide resources and ensure that appropriate experts are available to support the professional development of teachers (course and programme design, teaching skills and competencies required by the labour market, assessment of student learning, using technology in teaching, etc.).
- Include professional development for academic leaders (transformational leadership, community building) to strengthen their contribution to quality teaching as well as the development of the institution.
- Provide an effective venue for discussions and experience sharing on teaching and learning practices (a Learning and Teaching Centre), which is visible and valued by the academic community, either at institution, department or programme level.
- Encourage peer-evaluation, constructive feedback and coaching as ongoing practices to foster a "learning community" approach to quality teaching.
- Monitor the effectiveness of professional development through its impact on teaching quality.
- Adapt professional development to different places and paces according to the mission of the institution
- Professional development within the institution-wide teaching and learning framework, to meet the needs of specific groups
- Newly-recruited teacher might need to receive initial training, either before commencing teaching or during the first year. They could also benefit from being assigned a teaching mentor.

Encourage innovation within system

- Encourage experimentation and innovation in teaching practices, while recognising that experiments that fail are also important learning opportunities.
- Foster exploratory approaches and incremental changes, including pilot testing and careful evaluation of innovative teaching methods.
- Involve students in the design, implementation and evaluation of innovative teaching and learning experiments.
- Open up programme design, implementation and evaluation to external stakeholders, such as employers and local communities, via project-based learning or work-placement.
- Instil a research mindset at every level as it brings about fundamental changes in the way education is delivered: research-minded students are more used to engaging in critique, challenging tradition and contradicting existing academic practice.
- Encourage collaborative innovation across the institution, including through multi-disciplinary programmes, and support team approaches to innovative teaching and learning.
- Adapt the evaluation of teacher's performance to encourage and reward innovation appropriately.

CONCLUSION

The pedagogic reform from this perspective need to invest on building on teachers capacity to act as autonomous reflective groups of professionals who are sensitive to their social mandate and to the professional ethics and to the needs of heterogeneous groups of learners. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) promises to translate the vision into reality and prepare humanistic and reflective teachers that has the potential to develop more professional teachers and improve the quality of education. Through pedagogy teachers observe and assess students in the context of ongoing classroom situation like collecting and interpreting a variety of types of evidence to evaluate where each student is in a sequence or continuum of learning and development and know how to move from assessment to decisions about curriculum, social support, and teaching strategies, to increase the prospects for successful learning.

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