



## TEACHER EDUCATION: PRESENT CONCERNS AND ISSUES

### KEYWORDS

**Sheerein Humaira**

Research Scholar Institute of Advanced Studies in Education Faculty of Education Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Dr. M.H. Quasmi**

Assistant Professor Institute of Advanced Studies in Education Faculty of Education Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**ABSTRACT** *The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 moves away from the 'textbook culture' to "child centered pedagogy" which means giving utmost importance to child's experiences, their voices and their participation. It thrusts upon the constructivist approach to knowledge. Thus, when the concept of knowledge and learner changes, the role of teacher needs to be viewed afresh as well. NCF (2005) advocates that the role of a teacher is not to impart knowledge i.e. but rather be a facilitator and being to supportive to learning so that a learner constructs knowledge on his/her own. It provides a broad framework for preparation of teachers. It talks about the ongoing professional development of teachers. It talks about the pedagogic and curricular approach which bears a lot of responsibility and ownership on the part of the teacher. It emphasis a lot of teacher-initiated activities in the classrooms. The question is: Whether the present teacher education system is able to fulfill the expectations outlined in the NCF? Or is NCF merely setting up altitudes which are far from reach? This paper highlights the issues and concerns which needs to be resolved in order to bring about a paradigm shift in teacher education.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Since long various policies and documents have articulated the importance of teacher education. The professional preparation of teachers has been recognized as pivotal since 1960s. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) advocated 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."

Recognizing 'quality' as the essence of a program 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 program of internship. The Chattopadhyaya Committee (1983-85) proposed that the length of training for a secondary teacher should be five years following completion of class 12. It also suggested that colleges of science and arts introduce an Education department to allow students to opt for teacher education. Yash Pal Committee Report (1993) recommended that the emphasis in teacher education program should be on enabling trainee teachers to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking. In the affect of all these policy documents the Indian teacher education system has gained momentum in the last few years.

The NCTE Regulation 2007 were revisited and modified by the NCTE and notified in 2009. The Elementary School Teachers' qualifications were worked out and notified in August 2010. The TET inclusion in qualifications has been widely appreciated, wherein, it was provided that even after obtaining the necessary qualifications the teacher will have to obtain at least 60% marks in TET. Norms and Standards for Two Year Diploma in Performing and non-performing Art Education were worked out by the Council and notified in August 2009. Teacher Education New Curriculum Framework was designed and released during March 2010. However despite repeated attempts to im-

prove teacher preparation, there seems to be some gap in the preparation. This paper highlights the current concerns of teacher education system in India.

### RITUALS FOLLOWED DURING TEACHING PRACTICE:

Current teacher education programs provide a rationale for pragmatic or constructive classrooms with little reference to the reality of the Indian classrooms. According to Levine (cited in Hartocollis, 2005, p. 2) a widely-held concern is that "one of the biggest dangers we face is preparing teachers who know theory and know nothing about practice." There is no relationship between the teaching practice (practical work) and the theory taught to pupil teachers. Moreover the teaching practice involves delivering of lesson plan which are otherwise not prepared by an in-service teacher. Repeated 'practice' in the teaching of a specified number of isolated lessons is considered a sufficient condition for professional development. Only a few lessons delivered by the trainees are supervised and in most cases the teacher educator's remarks lack specificity and substance. Any model or theory cannot be implemented or evaluated within such a short period of time. The theory and practical work are two different realities. There is absence of link between practical work and ground realities of classrooms.

Adding to this crisis are Para-teachers. Their large-scale appointment in many states has been a debatable issue due to their lower qualifications and lack of professional training. Studies conducted on the quality of teaching learning in the presence of Para- teachers analyzed that they do not receive any pre-service or in-service training which is evident in their teaching method which is usually rote learning. Pandey and Rani (2007) and Pandey (2006) found that Para-teacher training programs were ineffective in focusing on the actual training needs of the teachers and the training was supply rather than demand-driven. Moreover it has been reported that the minimum qualifications for recruitment have been lowered in order to embrace Para-teachers. All this has diluted the identity of

teachers as a professional.

Another question that can be raised is should teaching practice be distributed over a period of several years? The current teacher preparation programs are of one or two year duration which is mainly attributed to the teaching of a few educational theories and teaching methodology courses e.g. the duration of B.Ed program is one academic year which comes down to 6-7 months. Due to shortage of time, theory courses are covered hurriedly and practice teaching is performed as a ritual. Under such circumstances, there is hardly any scope for professionalism. Professional preparation requires maturation which can only come if it is extended for a long period of time. Moreover the student teachers do not any chance to reflect on their school experiences. They just follow the 'ritual' of delivering lesson plans. Their only task during teaching practice is to deliver some 30-40 lesson plans. Such preparation does not provide adequate opportunities for them to analyze the school experience and reflect on the issues in the school. It is not enough to know which subject the student teacher need to specialize in but also to know what functions a teacher performs at school. Only these parameters will determine the requirements to be met by the teacher education institutions. There should be a close matching between the work schedule of the teacher in a school and the program adopted for teacher preparation in a training college. Teacher education programs must make a conscious effort to design courses to provide greater 'space' to generate a deeper understanding of such linkages.

#### **INCREASING GAP BETWEEN PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS:**

The National Policy on Education (1986) advocated that "pre-service and in-service training are inseparable, teacher education being a continuous process". Its vision led to the establishment of the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). These institutes are responsible for providing training to the pre-service and in-service teachers. However several empirical studies have revealed that the capabilities of these institutions fall much shorter than the needs of pre-service and in-service training and the quality of training has also much to be desired. The quality of both pre-service and in-service training needs to be improved.

Once pupil teachers gets into a school and becomes an in-service teacher, she becomes intellectually isolated from the field of research in education. They are oblivious of the current developments or issues in the field of education. Empirical evidence has also suggested that there is a yawning gap between the educations of pre-service and in-service teachers. With little effort in linking the two, there is absence of connectivity between both the programs. The real need of teachers remains unaddressed and they remain intellectually isolated and arid from centers of higher learning. This creates a negative attitude and lack of interest in teaching. There should be a continuity in the both the programs in the sense that the pre-service teacher after completion of the program remains well updated with the latest trends in teacher education and research by ensuring quality training of in-service teachers. Such a quality in-service training is needed for the teachers to explore, reflect and develop one's own practice, to deepen one's knowledge of and update oneself about one's academic discipline or other areas of school curriculum. This can be done by exchange of ideas, sharing of classroom practices, enhancement of knowledge base in terms of content and pedagogical theory, Short and Long

Term Courses, Use of Distance Media, Professional Conferences and Meetings, Faculty Exchange Visits and Fellowships etc

#### **NEED FOR PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED TEACHER EDUCATORS:**

Professionalization of teacher educators is as important as professionalization of teachers. It is so because the education and training of student teachers will be effective to the extent it has been delivered by teacher educators and such educators should be competent and professionally qualified to take up this rigorous task. Persons without school teaching experience are appointed as teacher educators on the basis of their academic and professional qualifications. Such teacher educators loose the competency to teach the contents of subject and also are not able to integrate the content and pedagogy as they are not in contact with their teaching subject due to lack of school teaching experience. There is a shortage of professionally qualified teacher educators at all levels especially at elementary level. Large number of private colleges offer B.Ed program. However these colleges do not meet the required teacher pupil ratio and the quality of teacher preparation suffers. While there a number of colleges offering B.Ed, the irony is that there do not exist sufficient number of M.Ed producing institutions. Thus the demand for teacher educators is not met in spite of M.Ed being a crucial qualification requirement. Another irony is that although teachers are trained/appointed for specific levels of schooling (even this is not strictly adhered to nowadays with B.Eds. being allowed to teach in primary schools), teacher trainers are not. There seems to be a hierarchy in this as B.Ed is taught by elementary teacher educators and M.Ed by secondary teacher educators even though B.Ed., it may be noted, is basically a course for preparing secondary school teachers.

#### **TEACHER: THE UNTRAINED MAGICIAN**

In the light of NCF 2005 and National Focus Group Paper on Teacher Education (TE), the vision of TE and the expected teacher's role can be described as:

Teacher Education must engage theory with the field experiences so that the student teacher is able to relate the two and appreciate the fact that knowledge is not external to the learner but is actually constructed during learning. For this to happen the professional development of student teacher should be a meaningful one giving them opportunities to relate them. However we see that theory and practice teaching are two different realities. They are expected as if to gain mastery in the delivering lesson plans rather than to understand how to integrate academic knowledge and professional learning. They train teachers to adjust to adjust to the needs of the existing system. The Programs have to provide an experiential scope to student teachers to explore, reflect, critically appraise, experiment, and own responsibility for one's decision.

A teacher is expected to an active member of the group of persons who make conscious effort to contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum to maintain its relevance to the changing societal needs and personal needs of learners. A teacher is the most crucial link between the learner and the policy makers. She is the one who is actually trying hard to implement the lofty aims of curriculum renewal. To be accountable for this task, teacher should be made a part of the policy making as she can tell which aims are difficult to achieve because she is encountering the ground realities and she may also

advise the possible ways to achieve it. However empirical evidence (CIE 2007) indicates that at present teachers and principals are not empowered enough to perceive that the teachers can be at policy making and program designing stage. The irony here is that it is the teacher who acts as a 'catalyst' to accelerate the reaction of social transformation.

There are a variety of school systems in our country with distinct features and purposes. They share the broader goals of different stages of school education at the national level. It has been seen in the last few years that the need for teacher education programs has increased due to the numerical expansion of schooling facilities at primary, upper primary and secondary levels. This has resulted in an increase in the demand for teachers. Is there enough number of teacher's educators to train such a big lot of student teachers when there does not exist sufficient number of institutions offering M.Ed? And when it is faced with criticism on a wide range of needs like training of teachers, educational research and extension etc. Moreover are the existing teacher educators appropriately professionally qualified when empirical evidence has revealed that there is a mismatch in the qualifications of teacher educators and their job requirements?

When practice teaching is merely seen as a formal routine preparing the new entrant to plan and deliver the required number of lesson plans, how can evaluation of such programs expected to be efficacious? The evaluation procedure is confined to the quantitative measurement of cognitive learning through annual or terminal tests. Skill measurement is limited to a specified number of lessons. Just a continuous and comprehensive approach is followed in schools for evaluation of learners; a similar approach should be undertaken for adult learners as well. It should be continuous in the sense that every stage should be evaluated with appropriate feedback from the teacher educator. It needs to be comprehensive in assessing the necessary knowledge, attitude, competence, commitment, enthusiasm, spirit of seeking new ways and means, capable of reflection, sensitive and perceptive etc. The Quantitative and Qualitative dimensions both should be considered during the whole period of teaching practice.

## CONCLUSION:

Education is a social system which enables an individual to make sense of life, to develop their potential, to define and pursue a purpose and recognize the right of others to do the same. The agency responsible for carrying out this task is the school of which the most integral part is the teacher. What students learn, acquire is directly proportional to the quality of teachers in the school. Thus teacher education assumes a very important role. As Education Commission (1964-66) remarked "The destiny of India is being made in its classrooms", a sound program of professional education of teachers is essential. Due to the growing demands of science and technology, privatization, globalization and socio-economic changes there is a shift within the school system. Another attribute of a teacher in contemporary society is to be an ICT savvy. In this above context the concept of learner and knowledge changes which automatically demands a change in the role of a teacher. Too much is demanded from the teacher, from being a facilitator of learning to being a catalyst in the process of social transformation. The question arises are the present teacher education programs equipping teachers to respond to this demand? Or are they mere agents of state expected to somehow magically translate the vision of Teacher Education? when the professional development of student teachers in the contemporary teacher education programs is merely seen as a formal procedure. There seems to be a radical reform in the school curriculum without changing the ground realities of teachers. Reform in the school curriculum should be in congruency with the reform in teacher education. Hiring an untrained magician can have disastrous consequences. An unskilled performer could be a turn off for the customers and hurt the reputation making an entire show look unprofessional. How can we hand over the future of India in the hands of an "untrained professional?" Therefore the teacher education programs need to be looked into.

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