



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT Quality in teacher education is indicated by the “educatedness” in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of the interns that they have achieved in the TEIs. In the present scenario, quality has become a defining element of teacher education. The issue of the quality of teacher education is becoming more critical with the quantitative expansion of teacher education institutions (TEIs). As our schools are short of teachers so there is need of quantitative expansion of TEIs but not at expense of quality. As TEIs are accountable for the actual teaching ability of the interns and quality of interns at the time of entry so it is essential that quality of these institutions should be maintained.

KEYWORDS :

Education plays an important role in the development of the nation and quality concern for education has become one of the most desirable goals for every nation. In order to achieve this goal, improvement of all aspects of quality education is essential (UNESCO, 2000). Among various ingredients like curriculum, teaching strategy, evaluation, institutional culture that contribute to the heights to which an educational system can rise, quality of teacher is one of the important ingredient (Iqbal, 1996) as she holds the destiny of future generations in her hand. The quality of teachers depends on the pre-service education that they receive in teacher education institutions. But teachers' education has been plagued by sub-standard institutions and policy confusion for years India is facing a double crisis of both quality and quantity of school teachers (Varma, 2014).

In India there are more than 1.5 million schools having as many 484 million students who are under the age of 18. There are 7 million teachers in our country which means the student teacher ratio is about 64: 1 (Fifth International Teacher Educator Conference, 2015). This data shows that our schools are short of teachers. To cop up with this problem of shortage of teachers there is need of quantitative expansion of teacher education institutions (TEIs).

Another reason for the quantitative expansion of TEIs is that globalization and advancement in the field of ICT has given the accurate information and knowledge at our finger-tips through a thirty-second search on Google. One can get any type of information on any topic. But the question arises whether such type of information or knowledge provides the quality teachers needed for 21st century schools. Answer is no, because quality teachers are equipped with not only knowledge but with values, skills, abilities, competencies and performance. We need the teachers who themselves are holistically developed and then only they can ponder over the wholesome personality of the child. So we need to expand TEIs quantitatively.

With the quantitative expansion of the teacher education, the issue of the quality of teacher education is becoming more critical. Quantitative expansion is necessary but not at expense of quality. It is well known fact that once the quantity is established, it is for lifelong. But there is need to know the quality of that quantity (TEIs). In the present scenario, quantity has become a paradoxical problem. Quality and quantity are at war with one another in teacher education.

At present we have good number of TEIs that are running M.Ed. and B.Ed. programmes. But there are very less number of TEIs that are accountable for the actual teaching ability of the interns and assure the quality of interns at the time of entry. This is due to the fact that most of these institutions do not have quality teacher educators. As per NCTE Regulations, 2014 for 100 B.Ed. students, institutions have to recruit 16 Assistant Professors and for M.Ed. there is a need of 2 Professors, 2 Associate Professors and 6 Assistant Professors. To run teacher education programmes as per New NCTE Regulations, many TEIs recruit inexperienced and poorly trained teacher educators. They are not paid salary as per norms, that leads to the deterioration of quality of teacher education. Salary is always a big issue. Better salary get professionals who teach students not subject matter.

norms and standards, many teacher educators got entry into the TEIs. But for providing quality in teacher education, teacher educators have to grow professionally and improve their quality of teaching. They have to keep themselves abreast with the latest techniques and subject matter of teacher education as well as have to be in touch with the life of school. Quality and professional development are synonyms that go on and on. Quality process is continuous and one has to develop professionally throughout their teaching career. It is the fact that for every one teacher educator who attend seminar, conference, congress and workshop, there are many who do not attend any one of these activities. For every teacher educator who read pedagogical research article/book, there are many who do not touch any such printed media. More recruitment has given the job to many but failed to create a culture of professionalism. This shows that quality of teacher education is at stake with the increase in quantity.

The quality of teacher education is further sacrificed for the change in the duration of M.Ed. and B.Ed Programmes i.e. two years. When the duration was one year, there were misfits i.e. square peg in round hole. For them teaching profession was the last resort. And the two years duration has created different type of problem such as less number of enrollment in B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses. Countrywide the enrollment in both the courses is meager. To maintain the quality of teacher education in such conditions is a big issue. Teacher education is an exciting space and to produce quality teachers is the greatest challenge for it.

Quality and quantity have surfaced as major areas of concern for teacher education. Quality management has become necessity for institutions to remain competitive. Many TEIs only aim for quality label to run B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses rather than to create human talent pool. This is due to the lack of the quality culture. To meet the challenges of 21st century, TEIs has to develop culture of quality teaching and organizational values which is the foundation of development of “quality culture”. A new era in quality management is developing which “is moving away from a mechanistic to a holistic and cultural view of quality in education” (Ehlers 2009: 343). In the view of Bendermacher, oude Egbrink, Wolfhagen, Dolmans, 2016, quality culture is an organisational culture in which all stakeholders, internal and external, through critical reflection contribute to the improvement of quality. An organisational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently and is characterised by two distinct elements: on the one hand, a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality and on the other hand, a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts (EUA, 2006, p. 10).

It is clear from the above discussion that quality of teacher education is deteriorating with the mushroom growth of TEIs. But numerical data mentioned above depicts that the schools are in need of qualified trained professionals. Thus, there is a need to have balance between quality and quantity so that the issue of quality of teacher education can be resolved despite of quantity. Regarding this, following are the some of my perceptions for maintaining the quality of teacher education:

1. Due to change in duration of B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses, enrolment

No doubt, with the mushroom growth of the TEIs and new NCTE

of students is less. TEIs cannot afford to recruit the teacher educators as per NCTE regulation and pay salary as per norms. So norms regarding the student teacher ratio in TEIs for B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses should be revised. This will not only lessen the burden of institutions in terms of salary rather trained and professionals teacher educators get the opportunity to serve the society by giving best quality of training to interns.

2. Very crucial aspect of two year B.Ed. course is rigorous six months internship programme. TEIs that do not have well trained teacher educators cannot do justice towards this programme. As they are not aware of what to do exactly in this period such as journal writing, action research and many more activities. If possible, enrichment programmes should be organized so that teacher educators must be oriented with the changed syllabus of teaching practice (internship).
3. Internship should be conducted in highly good quality schools which can mentor the inspiring interns and help in inculcating values and developing skills among the interns. Activities related with moral and social values should be organized. As one of the school of Hyderabad -MS Mission School, has organized the foot-washing ceremony to inculcate respect for their mothers among the students.
4. When the interns go for internship in third semester, they are not in touch with the theory that creates a gap between teacher educators and interns. Again here I will suggest this programme should be in fourth semester and to improve the quality of teacher education, some kind of incentives should be given to interns.
5. If we are really thinking of quality of teacher education then culture of professionalism should be developed in the institutions. This culture is the product of collective thinking and collective commitment. Teacher educators should be encouraged to write research paper or article individually or collectively. This will develop their reading flavour and they will come to know about the latest trends in teacher education at all levels. Only highly skilled and professional teaching force does make a difference in the quality of teacher education.
6. As teachers are not aware of teacher standard towards which they have to work as professional. So some steps should be taken in this direction.
7. Another aspect of the personality that should be developed among the teacher educators from quality purpose is the mental hygiene that affects the quality of teaching. Mental hygiene is the cleanliness of our thoughts, ideas and views. As the thoughts govern our deeds so our thought must be clean for being happy and successful in any aspect of life. Mental Hygiene of teacher educators involves not only the mental hygiene of teacher herself rather it includes students whom she is going to teach and relationship between teacher and taught. There is need to change the mindset of teacher educators as US author Ralph Waldo Emerson used to think, "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year". It means we need to change our mindset to have good days for ourselves and also for others. In the similar, before going to classroom, if we will fill our mind that today we will give the best to students then quality of teacher education will be definitely improved.
8. Very essential ingredient which is considered as a priority for the teacher education in these days is Quality culture (QC). But to establish a quality culture in an institution is a challenging affair. It requires thorough planning that includes the identification of changes to be incorporated. Once the culture of quality is established, it is essential to maintain and promote it. To enhance the quality teacher education, cultural/psychological and structural/managerial elements of quality culture must act in harmony. For promoting quality culture in teacher education, atmosphere of collective thinking, responsibility and commitment should be created in the institutions. Workshops or the development of leadership qualities should be organized.
9. Last but not the least is the quality of the leaders as leaders are the driving force of any institution. Quality leaders and quality teacher educators can improve and enhance the quality of teacher education despite of quantity.

Conclusion:

There is dilemma between quality and quantity of teacher education. To meet the challenges of the 21 century schools we need quality teachers and quality culture in an organisation. The quality of teachers depends on the quality of teacher education programme and the quality of teacher educators who are teaching in TEIs. So there is need to have

muliprogrammed attempt including quality while we foster the quantity.

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