



Current Challenges For Teacher Educators

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ABSTRACT

In the globalised and technological changing society, there is hard need to prepare the students for life. The student's preparation depends on how teachers instruct them and equip them in accordance with the changing educational situations. In the changing societal culture we must recognize and accept the fact that knowledge is changing so fast that no traditional curriculum can sufficiently supply students with the fact-based learning needed for the challenges they will face. We must teach them the skills to continue learning independently long after they are out of school. Therefore, for the desperate students' achievement, we need to prepare the future teachers with all the professional competence. Developing a 21st century teacher requires the development of the spirit of creativity and enquiry, and intellectual and professional competencies among in-service and pre-service teachers. It also depends upon certain characteristics of teachers, the teacher educators, the environment as well as methods of instruction. To develop a teaching profession ready and able to meet the needs of 21st century, the overriding aim is to properly equip teachers to undertake their essential and demanding tasks, to enable them to continually enhance their professional competence and performance, and to raise the esteem in which they are held. Teachers must meet the social and economic needs of the country. The objective is to achieve a community of competent teachers dedicated to provide education of high quality, with high levels of performance as well as ethical and professional standards of conduct.

KEYWORDS

Introduction

Today, we ask much more of teachers than a decade ago and are asked to achieve significant academic growth for all students and at the same time they instruct students with ever-more diverse needs. Teaching has never been more difficult, it has never been more important, and the desperate need for more student success has never been so urgent. Are we adequately preparing future teachers to win this critical battle?" "To keep ourselves competitive, we need to recruit, reward, train, learn from, and honor a new generation of talented teachers.

It is believed that the increasing importance of powerful teaching has raised the standards for learning are higher than ever before in contemporary society as citizens and workers need greater knowledge and skill to survive and succeed (Darling Hammond 2006). Education is increasingly important to the success of both individuals and nations, and growing evidence demonstrates that among all educational resources—teachers' abilities are especially crucial contributors to students' learning.

21st Century and its Standards

The new millennium was ushered in by a dramatic technological revolution. As Bertrand Russell (2010) said that the greatest challenge to any thinker is stating the problem in a way that will allow a solution. We now live in an increasingly diverse, globalized, and complex, media-saturated society. Technological revolution will have a greater impact on society than the transition from an oral to a print culture. Today's kindergartners will be retiring in the year 2067. We have no idea of what the world will look in five years, much less 60 years, yet we are charged with preparing our students for life in that world. Our students are facing many emerging issues such as global warming, famine, poverty, health issues, a global population explosion and other environmental and social issues. These issues lead to a need for students to be able to communicate, function and create change personally, socially, economically and politically on local, national and global levels. Even kindergarten children can make a difference in the world by participating in real-life, real-world service learning

projects. You're never too young, or too old, to make your voice heard and create change that makes the world a better place. Emerging technologies and resulting globalization also provide unlimited possibilities for exciting new discoveries and developments. Therefore, it's a Challenging time for the teachers to cope up with the changing situations and follow certain standards. The Norms and Standards of Education require a teacher to be:

- a specialist in a particular learning area, subject or phase;
- a specialist in teaching and learning,.
- a specialist in assessment,.
- a curriculum developer;
- a leader, administrator and manager;
- a scholar and lifelong learner; and
- a professional who plays a community, citizenship, and pastoral role.

Challenging Time for Teacher Educators

A concern for teacher quality brought about an ongoing argument over what should constitute the significant portion of a teacher training programme — the knowledge of what to teach or how to teach it? It has been noted that gone is the past where all that was required of a teacher was subject matter knowledge. This platitude is becoming more apparent for the 21st century where rapid technological development implies that knowledge is no longer a 'once in a lifetime' experience for the individual. It is rather an asset, which constantly has to be updated. The teacher therefore needs to be equipped with an acceptable standards of education. Many Successfully Strategies are as follows:

- Providing high-quality alternative routes to teaching.
- Building on private and public partnerships that share common sets of ideas in advancing education reforms.
- Effectively partnering with urban schools to prepare teacher candidates to teach in urban environments with large numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.
- Playing a greater role with charter and other experimental/alternative schools.

- Effectively recruiting career changers to build the teacher workforce.
- Creating a robust clinical experience for teacher candidates, including year-long teaching residency programs.
- Goal of Teacher Education in Context of Higher Education

The goal of teacher education includes, among others, 'the encouragement of the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers, and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be adequate for their assignments and also make them adaptable to changing situations'. The teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in the methods and curriculum and teachers be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. By the policy stipulations therefore, the professional training of teachers is twofold: Pre-service and In-service training. To implement this, certain institutions are charged with the responsibility to provide professional training for teachers.

Imperatives for Higher Education

Arthur Levine (2006) had made point that the challenge facing education schools is not to do a better job at what they are already doing, but to do a fundamentally different job. They are now in the business of preparing educators for a new world. Increasing globalization and the emergence of the knowledge economy are calling into question traditional perspectives on the transformational capacity of education systems and the conceptions of teaching as a profession and the roles of teachers. Apart from the pressure of globalization, other challenges such as the rapid technological advancements, changing patterns of work, explosion in information access and use all make the inculcation of 21st century skills imperative.

Challenge to Deal with 21st Century Curriculum

Twenty-first century curriculum has certain critical attributes. It is interdisciplinary, project-based, and research-driven. It is connected to the community — local, state, national and global. The curriculum incorporates higher order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, technology and multimedia, the multiple literacy's of the 21st century, and authentic assessments. Service learning is an important component. The classroom is expanded to include the greater community. Students are self-directed, and work both independently and interdependently. The curriculum and instruction are designed to challenge all students, and provides for differentiation. The curriculum is not textbook-driven or fragmented, but is thematic, project-based and integrated. Skills and content are not taught as an end in themselves, but students learn them through their research and application in their projects. Therefore, to provide the skills and content needed by the students to complete their projects teachers should emphasis on the following four broad areas, namely: Life and Career Skills; Learning and Innovation Skills; Integration of 21st Century themes within the academic content of core subjects; Information and Media Technology Skills.

Challenge to Deal with Millennium Students

There's increasing evidence that millennial students are a distinct generation with very different learning styles from previous generations. They are more interactive and group-oriented than prior generations. They take technology for granted as a way to achieve desired ends. There's some evidence that they are less rule-bound than Generation X and define social connection and intimacy differently than prior generations. Having had exposure to a vast array of digital tools, it is unlikely that they will be satisfied with classes dominated by Power-Point presentations.

Challenge to Prepare Students for the 21st Century Economy

Today as never before, meeting our society's challenges demands educational excellence. Reinvigorating the economy, achieving energy independence with alternative technologies and green jobs, and strengthening our health care system require a skilled populace that is ready for the critical challeng-

es we face. However, they must be prepared in the following context:

- Preparing Students to Succeed in the 21st Century: We often talk about this as a goal. Lately, we've been trying to articulate what this really means. It is easy to say, but what does a school look like that is actually preparing students for the 21st Century? Many of these ideas are inspired by the 21st Century Skills Initiative.
- Preparing Students to Interact in a Global Economy: Teachers also need experiences collaborating globally. Online social networks, such as Ning, Twitter, and even Facebook, provide teachers with a way to meet colleagues from around the world and around the country. These Online relationships provide opportunities for classrooms to connect.
- Preparing Students to Navigate and Sift Through an Excess of Information: In order to prepare students to search for and evaluate information, we need to provide them with opportunities to do just that. We need to ask students to find answers to questions and then have them not only share their answers, but also describe their search processes and defend their sources.
- Preparing Students to Contribute To and Consume in a Media Rich Market: In order to prepare students to consume and create multi-media messages, student should be both evaluating and creating online video, podcasts and blogs.
- Preparing Students to Tackle New Innovations: In order to prepare students to face and conquer new technology tools, we need to provide them with opportunities to solve their own problems. We have to encourage them to seek out new tools, figure them out and communicate their learning with classmates.
- Preparing Students to Think Creatively, Take Risks and Come Up with New Ideas: In order to encourage students to discover new ideas, we need to create learning environments that encourage and support failure. Students must be provided with challenging questions to tackle that don't have obvious answers.
- Preparing Students for Digital Citizenship: The students need to learn how to interact Online in responsible and ethical ways. Students need to be given opportunities to share information with a larger audience.

Challenge to Deal with New and Changing Methodology

Today's students are engaging with new technologies that provide them with the same opportunities. Every day, many students are spending countless hours immersed in popular technologies—such as Facebook or MySpace, World of Warcraft or Sim City—which at first glance may seem like a waste of time, and brain cells. We as teachers don't need to be a teenager to use or understand these technologies, or to use them in our classrooms. With the use of new media and technologies, new things and new ways to communicate with people can be better created.

Challenge of Promoting Different Skills Among Students

In our day, some skills, knowledge and expertise are required not only on the part of teachers but students as well. Commonly promoting different skills includes Global Awareness, Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy, Civic Literacy, Health Literacy, Environmental Literacy. When referring to 21st century skills following are increasingly recognized as attributes for progressively complex life and work environment.

- Learning and Innovation Skills: It comprises of Critical Thinking and Problem Solving; Communication; Collaboration; Creativity and Innovation.
- Life and Career Skills: Today's life and work environments require extreme skills than thinking skills and content knowledge. These take account of Flexibility and Adaptability; Initiative and Self-Direction; Social and Cross-Cultural Skills; Productivity and Accountability; Leadership and Responsibility.

What do Educators Need to Know and do?

Students across the achievement and socio-economic spectrum need and deserve motivating, supportive instructional environments, engaging content, and the opportunity to learn in settings that support collaboration with peers, teachers, and the larger world community. Darling Hammond & John Bransford (2005) have given number of ideas for teachers that they should learn and be able to do. Donald E. Hanna and associates (2000) discussed upon critical knowledge and perspectives that will guide teachers in building a new system of higher education. Even John Canuel Jefferson County (2012) has emphasized that teachers should be highly effective, highly qualified but still not very effective. That's why we have to start thinking more comprehensively about how we are going to step into a digital learning environment to strengthen our professional development and support. Students today live digitally every day while they are using the Internet, text messaging, social networking, and multimedia. They expect a parallel level of technology opportunity in their academic lives. There is a detachment between the way students live and the way they learn, and student involvement ultimately suffers. Closing this gap is a challenge for our current school systems.

New ways of Combining Present Day Needs and Role of Teachers

When the teacher retention outlook combines with the proven importance of teacher quality and efficacy, it's clear that systemic reform initiatives must encompass programs, strategies, 21st century learning tools and commitments to create supportive, productive environments for educators. Now the question is not just about retention, it's retention of effective teachers. According to the TASBO report (2011) Carroll said that there is a new role and new need for tools and strategies to help teachers become not just qualified, but effective. There is also a need for continuous process of development for teachers in schools with more systemic process that can be used to empower teachers to manage their teaching. Teacher quality continues to rank as the most reliable predictor of student achievement. Students now see their teachers modeling effective, productive use of technology and students perceive that teachers are engaging in their world. Eric Klopfer, Scot Osterweil, Jennifer Groff, Jason Haas (2009) make the use of digital games as a part of today's technology in the classrooms for simulations. Thus following are considered some important factors in child's education facilitated by teachers (NCATE 2010):

(a) Learning Environments: The learning environment within an educator preparation program is a key component of any systemic reform initiative. Tara D. Thompson (2006) has discussed about the strategy of students with handful of skills to meet the educational, occupational and even personal needs. Determining the enabling structures, policies, and strategies that can best support 21st century knowledge and skills acquisition among teacher candidates is a first step toward creating the kind of environment that will promote this kind of learning. The issues involving 21st century learning environments program includes:

1. Establish a 21st century vision for learning environments in the program and the university.
2. Ensure that the physical infrastructure supports 21st century knowledge and skills.
3. Project-based work and competency-based measures of student progress.
4. Ensure technical infrastructure sufficiently supports learning.
5. Empower the "people network" in learning environments.

(b) Continuous Improvement: In the 21st century, all educators play a significant role in shaping the lives and careers of their students. When teaching and learning is at its best, our students, our communities and our nation thrive. Educator preparation leaders are right to challenge themselves with the question: "What is our role in the changing landscape of 21st

century knowledge and skills?" If educator preparation leaders come together to define and implement approaches that support the teaching and learning of 21st century knowledge and skills in more purposeful ways, we all benefit. We recognize that this is extraordinarily difficult work. It requires expanding the vision of what it means to prepare educators for their future roles. It takes dedicated planning, strategic consensus-building, systemic alignment: and robust partnerships to be effective and sustainable. Following are the continuous improvement steps:

1. Clearly identify measurable goals.
2. Track progress regularly against these goals.
3. Communicate progress to all stakeholders.
4. Engage all participants in refining and improving success over time.

Conclusion

In the Information age, students must be able to purposefully access information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the information, and then integrate it to construct a personal knowledge base from which to make intelligent decisions. To foster these capabilities, educators must re-examine their assignments and teaching strategies. "The educational system will not be modernized until the whole system is drastically overhauled, stimulated by pedagogical research, made intellectually richer, more challenging and extended beyond pre-service training into a system of continuous professional renewal and career development for all teachers".

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