Measures for Improving Quality of Teacher Education  
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Abstract

Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand in the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. Teachers are the torchbearers in creating social cohesion, national integration and a learning society. Teacher education plays a vital role in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country. Training of teachers has emerging global trends in education and the overall needs and aspirations of the people in India. As an integral part of educational system, teacher education in India has to be responsive to socio-cultural ethos and national development. The National Council for Teacher Education has to initiate suitable measures to make teacher education at various levels responsive to such developments as well as to quality concerns in future. This paper presents the development of teacher education, major problems facing in present time and probable measures for improving quality of teacher education in India in their new roles and responsibilities of the 21st century.

Key words: Education, Quality, Teacher Education, Knowledge Commission

Introduction

Teacher education is the process of providing teachers and potential teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach effectively in a classroom environment. Quality of education plays an important role in the process of development of nations. Hence, quality concerns in education are national priorities for all nations. Quality is multiple perspectives and is not a unitary concept (Newton 2007, p.14). The dimensions of quality in education include achieving pre-determined targets and objectives. Enlightened, emancipated and empowered teachers lead communities and nations in their march towards better and higher quality of life. They reveal and elaborate the secrets of attaining higher values in life and nurture empathy for the fellow beings. They not only disseminate knowledge but also create and generate new knowledge. They are responsible for acculturating role of education.

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When we talk about the quality of higher education before teacher education, it can said according to the London Times Higher Education (2009)- Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings, no Indian university features among the first 100. But universities in East Asia have been included in the first hundred. Hong Kong has three, ranked at 24, 35 and 46; Singapore two ranked at 30 and 73; South Korea two ranked at 47 and 69 and Taiwan one in the 95th position. Notably, China's Tsinghua University and Peking University are ranked at 49 and 52 respectively. There is no Indian university in the rankings from 100 to 200. It is only when one moves on to the next 100 that we find the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur at 237; IIT Madras at 284 and the University of Delhi at 291. During these years, large scale and far reaching developments as well as changes have taken place on the national and international scenes in social, economic, cultural, scientific and technological spheres as well as in information and communication technologies. These developments have affected education, including teacher education necessitating review and reform of Indian teacher education.

Education is the essential foundation of a thriving and innovative society. The quality of education in a society is no less important for economic development. As competition among economies becomes more intense, the importance of education as the key to future success intensifies. The quality of teachers is, to a large extent, determined by who are attracted to enter the profession and how they are trained. The community expects teachers to be sufficiently knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and proficient in pedagogy. One of the best ways to achieve this is to enhance teacher education programmes so as to train high quality teachers for schools. The task of bringing qualitative change in institutional efficacy of the teacher education system in itself is a huge and challenging one.

**Development of Teacher Education**

Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classrooms, school and wider community. It aims at imparting professional skills and techniques to the teachers under training. Various Commissions and Committees appointed by the Central and the State Governments in recent decades have invariably emphasized the need for quality teacher education suited to the needs of the educational system. The Secondary Education Commission (1953) observed that a major factor responsible for the educational reconstruction at the secondary stage is teachers' professional training.
Education Commission (1964-66) stressed that 'in a world based on science and technology it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people' and that 'a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education.'

The National Commission on Teachers (1983) studied in depth the problems of teacher education and the status of teachers in society. Its main recommendations were directed at enhancing the period of training, change in selection procedure of teachers, making the pedagogy of teacher education meaningful leading to enrichment of the theory courses and practical work. It suggested changes in the structure of M.Ed. programme also. On the basis of these suggestions, another curriculum framework was issued in 1988 but it could not catch national attention because the work on NPE (1986) had already started, and which opened new vistas in teacher education. In pursuance of the NPE 1986 a major step was taken by the Central Government to enhance the professional capacity of a large number of teacher education institutions. The DIETs were charged with the responsibility of organising pre-service and in-service programmes in addition to being the nodal resource centres for elementary education at district level. Likewise, the responsibility of introducing innovations in teacher education programmes at the secondary and higher secondary stages and in vocational education was given to Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutions of Advanced Study in Education (IASEs). NPE (1986) was followed by a Programme of Action (1986), which provided details about the needed transformation of policy into action. Its emphasis was on the enrichment of both in-service and the pre-service teacher education programmes, computer education and new as well as alternative models of teacher preparation.

As a statutory body responsible for the coordination and maintenance of standards in teacher education, NCTE issued a Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education in 1998. Before issuing it, the Council sought and ensured a national consensus in its favour. This is a comprehensive document that deals with almost all aspects of teacher education including its context, concerns and also the social philosophy of teacher education in Indian society which contemplates a synthesis between unity and diversity, freedom and compulsion, social planning and individual initiative. Its salient features were:

* Increased duration and multiple models of teacher education;
* Updating of theoretical and practical components of teacher education by giving new orientation and adding new inputs to the existing programmes;
* Emphasis on developing professionalism, commitment, competencies and performance skills;
* Optimal utilization of the potentialities of community, university and information and communication technology for preparation of teachers;
* Making provisions for preparation of teachers for the neglected sections of society, and
* Suggesting alternative educational programmes for teachers of gifted children, teachers of senior secondary schools and specialized programme of education for teacher educators.

Besides, there were other suggestions too which were well received by the nation. Some of its recommendations were implemented. But all of them could not be put into practice due to various reasons.

**Some Major Problems in Teacher Education**

Present teacher education is inadequate in respect of both quality and content. The teacher-student relationship is far more complex and demanding than ever before. The implication of this more diversified role for the teacher is what impelled a new view of the process of teacher education and training. Quality of teaching also depends on certain physical resources such as provision for power point presentation, separate cubicle or room for each teacher and facility for internet browsing, taking print out, Xeroxing therein. Availability of such facilities motivates the teachers to become more effective that upgrades the level of curriculum transaction. India possesses one of the largest systems of teacher education. Besides, the university departments of education and their affiliated colleges, government and aided institutions, private and self-financing colleges and open universities are also engaged in this venture. The programmes are almost identical but the standard varies. Certain institutions are being run with motives other than educational. In certain areas, the supply of teachers far exceeds the demand while in others there is acute shortage and unqualified teachers are working under different names. The manpower planning is practically absent in teacher education.

Institutes of Advanced Study in Education (IASEs) offer in-service and pre-service programmes of secondary education and also doctoral research programmes. A few other training colleges have been designated as Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs). One Education India Journal: A Quarterly Refereed Journal of Dialogues on Education, ISSN 2278-2435, Vol. 1, Issue- 3, August 2012
elementary teacher training institution in every district has been designated as District Institute of Education and Training. The situation at the elementary level in certain states is comparable to international standards, where DIETs, CTEs and IASEs are making tangible impact on pre- and in-service teacher education. In most of the cases, the scheme reflects a huge wastage of material as well as human resources. Most of the Principals are not well qualified even they have no M.Ed. or higher level degree. While some of these institutions do not function with heads and faculty members having at least B. Ed. qualification, a few function without adequate work load, as the concerned State governments do not give funds for conducting in-service programmes for school teachers. The scheme also gives support to State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) that even has Directors without a B. Ed. qualification or school teaching experience. The Regional Colleges of Education of the National Council of Educational Research and Training have been running their courses with the help of contract teachers who are paid on hourly basis. This is not a case of paucity of fund, but a case of ineffective management.

During the last two decades, the teacher education curricula have received severe criticism and their weaknesses have been well exposed. The students are not exposed to the realities of school and community. Internship, practice of teaching, practical activities and supplementary educational activities are not paid proper attention. The curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation of teacher education need improvement and radical transformation. Some educationists and social activists call it vapid, irrelevant because they do not prepare teachers who can impart quality education in our schools. One often hears that there is little difference between the performance of trained and that of untrained teachers because of the outdated and defective curriculum. To some extent, these charges may be somewhat; exaggerated often they seem to be correct.

During the last decade, new thrusts have been posed due to rapid changes in the educational, political, social and economic contexts at the national and international levels. Teacher education by and large, is conventional in its nature and purpose. The integration of theory and practice and consequent curricular response to the requirements of the school system still remains inadequate. Teachers are prepared in competencies and skills which do not necessarily equip them for becoming professionally effective. Their familiarity with latest educational developments remains insufficient. The system still prepares teachers who do not
necessarily become professionally competent and committed at the completion of initial teacher preparation programmes. A large number of teacher training institutions do not practice what they preach. Several of the skills acquired and methodologies learnt are seldom practiced in actual school system. In the National Knowledge Commission’s final report which states that “The training of teachers is a major area of concern at present, since both pre-service and in-service training of school teachers is extremely inadequate and also poorly managed in most states” (NKC 2009, pp. 44-45).

Frequently criticized as being theoretical in its nature, the curriculum of teacher education is only partially theoretical. It is information loaded which are disconnected from each other. The curriculum framework of 1998 pointed out this weakness to an extent but the situation could not improve for reasons known to all. There is the pressing need to integrate scattered information’s for giving them the shape of a discipline capable of promoting educational theory and practice. During the last five decades certain efforts have been made to indigenize the system. The gaps, however, are still wide and visible. The imperatives for building the bridges may be as follows:

- to build a national system of teacher education based on India's cultural ethos, its unity and diversity synchronising with change and continuity;
- to facilitate the realization of the constitutional goals and emergence of the new social order;
- to prepare professionally competent teachers to perform their roles effectively as per needs of the society; and
- to upgrade the standard of teacher education, enhance the professional and social status of teachers and develop amongst them a sense of commitment.

These are but a few of the major concerns which call for an immediate action. A comprehensive, dynamic and responsive system of teacher education needs to be continually evolved keeping the overall scenario in view.

Few Measures for Improving Quality of Teacher Education

Quality of an institution or a programme is generally considered on the basis of placement of its products. It is ascertained from quality of material and human resources. Various factors that affect quality are: finance, sincerity of faculty and students and management, skills of
management, skills of teaching of faculty members, and quality of brain of students. In order to accelerate qualitative improvement in higher education, National Knowledge Commission (2009, p. 166) recommended establishment of 30 new Central universities, 16 in States where they do not exist and 14 as World class universities (all India admissions, course credits, regular syllabi revision, incentives for faculty, strong linkage with industry and research institutions, no affiliated colleges, outsource nonteaching functions (P.166). The main indicator of the quality of teacher education can be visualized in terms of its products the learners achievement both in scholastic and co-scholastic areas i.e. the performance in various subjects of study and habits, attitudes, values and life skills necessary for becoming a good citizen. The need of teacher manpower planning has resulted in mushrooming growth of teacher education throughout the country. The following measures may be helpful for improving quality of teacher education:

1. To provide professional development for practicing in-service teachers by updating their knowledge and skills;
2. Effectiveness of the new initiatives curricular reforms;
3. Intensive use of ICT for school education and also involvement of the community;
4. To adopt innovative Teaching strategies in teacher education and Improving educational administration practices;
5. To evolve strategies to enhance professional competency in teacher education;
6. To provide expert advice to local schools upon request;
7. To analyse the future of teacher education institutions;
8. To provide Infrastructure facility in teacher education;
9. Teacher education and professional competence of teacher educators;
10. Spreading sense of ethical values in teacher education; and
11. Modern and latest communication and knowledge management for quality teacher education.

It’s the right time that every institution and educationalist should take care, that quantitative expansion should not slip the quality.

Conclusions

Quality issues in teacher education will therefore, revolve around the quality of infrastructure and support services, opportunity time, teacher characteristics and teacher motivation, pre-service and in-service education of teachers, curriculum and teaching-learning.
materials, classroom processes, pupil evaluation, monitoring and supervision etc. Indeed improvement of quality in these parameters and its sustenance is a matter of grave concern for the whole system of education. Academic and professional skills are not independent of each other. Teacher Education curricula have to integrate and blend them into a composite whole likes the curricula of medical sciences. The reconstruction of teacher education curricula has, thus, become a pressing need of the hour. It has to be transformed from information based to experience based. Since the teachers play a major role in education of children, their own education becomes a matter of vital concern. The National Council for Teacher Education has to initiate suitable measures to make teacher education at various levels responsive to such developments as well as to quality concerns in future. Teacher education must, therefore, create necessary awareness among teachers about their new roles and responsibilities.

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