

SYNOPTIC PROFILE ON THE METAMORPHIC PATH OF INDIAN TEACHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY REVIEW ON QUALITY TRANSFORMATION

Dr. M. N. Mohamedunni Alias Musthafa * & Rini E Stephen**

* Associate Professor, Department of education, Central University of Kerala. Vidya Nagar Campus. Vidya Nagar. P. O. Kasaragod. D T Kerala.

** Research Scholar, Department of education, Central University of Kerala. Vidya Nagar Campus. Vidya Nagar P. O. Kasaragod. D T Kerala.

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ABSTRACT

Indian tradition of teaching and teacher has retained its strength even in adverse conditions. In ancient period, Indian teachers were well versed in spiritual as well as materialistic knowledge and the aim of education was self realisation. Medieval period also contributed some remarkable changes in Indian education. In the post-independent period, many efforts were made to nourish and transform teacher education. The teacher preparation system has come under great pressure as a result of the expansion and rapid growth of school education. After independence major efforts have been made to up-date the teacher education curriculum to meet the local needs and to make it more contexts based, responsive and dynamic with regard to meet the particular needs of India. The present system of teacher education scaffold by a network of national, regional and district level resource institutions working together to increase the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes from the pre-service level and through in-service programmes for teachers throughout the country. The changing role and definition of teachers and teacher effectiveness have been increasingly studied to facilitate the reformation in education. Through this paper the authors attempt to analytically reflect on the reformatory path of the Indian teacher education speculating on the quality concerns to face the challenges ahead. Effort is made to present a graffiti of the teacher education scenario at national level through a constructive critical lens.

Keywords: Indian teacher education, quality transformation,

Introduction

India has a rich heritage of education from the ancient period. In the early Vedic period knowledge was transmitted orally and the students memorized the lessons heard from the teacher, by repeating. The teacher was considered as the colossus of information and embodiment of Knowledge since no other ways of 'reference' was possible. Teachers used different methods to transfer the wisdom to disciples. In those days education has never been a commodity for sale.

From this glorious tradition, it is very interesting to trace how education, especially teacher education has categorically changed during the periods of invasion.

Development under Western Power

With the advent of foreign powers in India, a novel educational system, quite different from the existing system came to be established. European missionaries started many schools in various parts of the country. The need of more teachers in these schools leads to the inception of systematic training of teachers overriding the existing system. It was The Calcutta School Society which established in 1819, took early steps for teacher training. Later, the need for teacher training was noticed by Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras and made recommendations to establish central school for educating teachers. Normal schools were started in Bombay in 1847, Calcutta in 1849, and at Poona, Agra, Meerut and Banaras between 1850 and 1857. A revolutionary change in the education and educational policy was brought about by Wood's Despatch in 1854. The recommendations of Wood's despatch trigger the pace of educational administration, mass education and teacher education in India. The Hunter commission (1882) also recommended the establishment of Normal Schools, to provide training for the local requirements of all primary schools. In 1917, the Saddler Commission observed that, knowledge of the subject, theoretical and practical training as the three essential components of teacher education.

Teacher education in India - contemporary scenario

At present teacher education in India is on the brink of a major transformation. The current focus of researchers and policy makers with regard to teacher education is on professional competency development, and on the higher levels of commitment and motivation on the part of teachers. Teacher educators mainly concentrated in teaching curriculum, pedagogy and the disciplines of student development. But little time is spent to prepare the teacher trainees for their real life. Teachers need additional skills to cope up with real life situations. As such, they need to be self-reliant and skilled in

promoting community participation (UNESCO, 1995). The changing social, political and economic conditions demanding a restructuring of the system of teacher education. With this objective, the government of India appointed many committees and commissions to improve the teacher education scenario.

Teachers are expected to help to produce individuals with appropriate values, attitudes and a high commitment to their occupations. Teacher education should accommodate all these factors and updated with contemporary advancement in technology. If evaluation systems in education stress competition rather than cooperation often cause considerable tension amongst learners. Student teachers should be groomed to adopt professionally permissible approaches of assessment, evaluation and remediation. What is happening in the teacher education institutes determine the nature and quality of education.

Regular in-service teacher education programmes contribute to the improvement of the relevance and quality of education. In-service teacher-education programmes in various forms, serve the renewal and updating of subject area knowledge and teaching techniques. The decentralization of the governance of education institution to the local level may bring local communities into direct contact of school performance and teacher assessment.

Policy Initiatives for augmenting teacher education

The recommendations of various commissions and committees on education over time developed the Teacher Education Policy in India. Some important policies include Kothari Commission in 1966, Chattopadhyay Committee in 1985, the National Policy on Education (1986/92), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee in 1990, Yashpal Committee in 1993, and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, has significant implications in teacher education sector of the country.

Implementation of various programmes and schemes and policy and legal framework on teacher education are undertaken largely by Central and State governments.

For planned and coordinated development of teacher education National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body of the Central Government is providing pre-service training in the country. The NCTE lays down standards and norms for various teacher education courses, minimum educational qualifications for teacher educators, and duration and minimum qualification for entry of student-teachers for the various courses. NCTE also grants recognition to institutions undertaking such courses and regulates and monitors their standards and quality.

Country has a network of government-owned teacher training institutions (**TTIs**), which provide in-service training to the school teachers. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (**NCERT**) and the six Regional Education Institutes (**REIs**) develop modules for different teacher education courses and initiate specific training programmes for the teacher educators. National University on Educational Planning and Administration (**NUEPA**) is also providing institutional support. Both NCERT and NUEPA are national level autonomous bodies. Specialised courses for teachers and teacher educators were conducted by the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (**SCERTs**). The Institutes for Advanced Learning in Education (**IASEs**) and Colleges of Teacher Education (**CTEs**) facilitate training for teacher educators and secondary and senior secondary school teachers. In-service training is given by the District Institutes of Education and Training (**DIETs**) at the district level. The Cluster Resource Centres (**CRCs**) and Block Resource Centre (**BRCs**) are also giving in-service training to school teachers.

National Curriculum Framework on Teacher Education

The National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education has prepared by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), which has been developed in the background of the NCF, 2005. The foundations of this framework is based on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 which advised a changed framework on Teacher Education which would be modified with the philosophy of school curriculum recommended in the NCF, 2005.

Reforms in Regulatory Framework

NCTE has undertaken many steps for systemic improvements in its functioning for quality of the teacher education system. In 1978, a comprehensive curriculum framework for teacher education was released with the emphasis of the development of pedagogical theory, community interaction, teaching methodologies and practice teaching. This curriculum framework recommended a task-oriented approach and considerable reduction of theoretical components in the teacher education curriculum. In 1988, the

National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education was published, and it has significant implications in the restructuring and strengthening of every stage of teacher education programs.

Due to a lack of resources Universities and state governments have not been able to expand their departments and institutions and so there has been a drift towards the commercialization of teacher education. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) by an Act of Parliament in 1993 established significant development in teacher education in India. National Council for Teacher Education acknowledges the need for creating the autonomy of institutions and organizations responsible for curriculum development in teacher education, being intended to lead to accountability to ensure optimum efficiency. The NCTE document (1998) endorses a time frame of two years professional preparation for both elementary and secondary school teachers. These programmes suggested are not exclusively classroom based it was expected that there will also be greater inputs from outside the education system regarding organizing a program in terms of social, cultural and economic imperatives which linked to the development of the education system.

Justice Verma Commission (2012) recommended that M.Ed programme should become a two year course with adequate provision for specializations in curriculum studies, pedagogic studies, policy, finance and foundational studies. To improve the quality of M.Ed programme, NCTE has also brought out four National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education during 1978, 1988, 1998 and 2009. The UGC and RCI also made various efforts on this direction.

As per the new regulation, the teacher education graduation and post-graduation have been considered as professional courses with duration of two academic years instead of one-year course. The new curriculum possess a significant departure from the previous one-year programme in few areas instead of merely a kind of course-extension, but many educational experts are not satisfied with the new curriculum. Some criticism are raised that philosophical foundation of education are not given their due importance in the model curriculum prepared by NCTE. It is a fact that teacher education sector is facing admission crisis in every state after increase of course duration.

Educational experts from the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Regional Institute of Education (RIE) have pointed out the need for a four-year integrated B.Ed. course to increase the quality of teacher training. The recommendations are sent to important educational institutions in different States to generate a debate on the subject by all stakeholders such as educational administrators, educational planners and policymakers. The major recommendation is to introduce an integrated four-year B.Ed. course to help students imbibe teaching methodologies over a period of time while completing their graduation in their areas of interest.

The integrated teacher education programme aims at integrating general studies comprising science subjects (B.Sc.B.Ed) and social sciences or humanities subjects (B.A.B.Ed), and professional studies comprising foundations of education, pedagogy of school subjects, and the practicum related to the tasks and functions of a school teacher. The B.Sc.B.Ed and B.A.B.Ed programmes shall be of four academic year or eight semesters including internship in teaching and school based experiences. It keeps a balance between theory and practice, and coherence and integration among the components of the programmes, representing a wide knowledge base of a secondary school teacher. The programme aims at preparing teachers for upper primary and secondary stages of education.

Present issues and concerns in teacher education in India

The present teacher appraisal systems depends heavily on teaching performance being connected to the examination results of learners, while other indicators such as innovativeness, interactive abilities, community acceptability and productivity in terms of the production of novel teaching and learning materials and strategies receive negligible attention.

Since educational system is diverged in terms of society, state and judiciary, education system is not an independent institution rather it has been governed and influenced by various other social factors. This would contribute to the problem of institutional inertia which is very prevalent in Indian teacher education system.

The quality difference between the public and private educational institutes leads to commodification of education and to quality crisis. There exists a considerable difference in the actual and expected quality of teacher education. Uneven distribution of teacher education is another problem which affects the accessibility of the education.

Besides these problems, the most important crisis is the degradation of teaching quality. Along with content knowledge and teaching proficiency, a teacher should have a holistic personality which can be a model to the students. But unfortunately teachers with positive teaching attitudes and ethics are decreasing day by

day. Appropriate life skill training is essential for the teacher educators as well as to teacher aspirants. Teacher education should ensure the enhancement of the emotional integrity of the teacher aspirants.

Another concern in this area is related to the inappropriate or inadequate usage of technology. Present teacher education is more or less traditional and there is no apt space for the technology infusion. Technology is not used properly for knowledge construction.

Research in the field of education especially teacher education are repetitive in nature. More productive and innovative research should be done in this area which is very essential for the quality enhancement. The research methodology also be renovated accordingly. Also the laboratory practices of the teacher education programmes are very poor till now. The Psychology lab, educational technology lab etc are not equipped with essential tools and no proper instructions are provided.

Along with these issues like vision and mission mismatch, and invalid accreditation and recognition of universities and institutes are also making considerable problems in the quality of teacher education

In this regard, NCTE has recently identified main areas with regard to teacher competency, performance and commitment, including: contextual, conceptual, transactional, content and management competencies. The inappropriate exchange between researchers and practitioners indicates the essentiality for action research in education, particularly in teacher education, to improve the quality of school education. Furthermore, it has been observed that despite the increase in educational research, there is still an unfortunate lack of emphasis on research concerning teacher education. Researches considering the choice of teaching as an occupation, professional interests of teachers and the demographic characteristics have been sporadic. There are some research studies on the supervision of student teaching and the relative effectiveness of various feedback mechanisms for student teachers.

The casual nature of the supervision of student teachers and the urgency of strengthening student teaching programs, particularly supervisory practices has drawn by Srivastava (1970). Existing supervisory practices for student teachers are found to be defective by Mehrotra (1974) and attribute the ineffectiveness of student teaching to this factor. In addition, teaching supervisors are often not clear about their supervisory role and do not receive any special training.

Strategies for quality enhancement

In the Indian situation it will be very difficult to have a homogenous and uniform curriculum for teacher education throughout the country, because in our country plurality is to be used for strengthening social cohesion and national solidarity. In Indian tradition, teachers have been regarded as role models not only by the students themselves but also by the society. Teacher education programs should be alert to these requirements and so strategies that would assist teachers to develop commitment among students to protect the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Researches in teacher education institutions need greater support and motivational inputs to ensure higher quality. The content of teacher education programs in India requires substantial change according to the changes in society and technology but the rigidity of the system is one of the major obstacles. There exist a persistent resistance to change in the system of teacher education in the country, with no effective mechanism being developed to facilitate the radical reform of teacher education. Many changes have been attempted in the areas of academic content, pedagogy, and organizational structures, but without much success. It has been found that efforts to consolidate existing structures overrule essential professional considerations. The issues of teacher education planning, pre-service education programs and in service education of teachers need to be handled with much more comprehensive manner.

To improve and reform the teacher education sector, a comprehensive national plan and its implementation is required. Pre-service teacher education need to reflect the range of diversity within India that should satisfy the needs of teachers working in different situations such as those in tribal and rural areas, schools in remote areas and urban slums.

There is a need to develop effective training strategies for multi-grade teaching which requires specific preparation during the pre-service stages of teacher education and followed by career-long professional enhancement. Effective use of community resources and active community involvement especially in areas such as health education, work experience, physical education, social and cultural education, is an urgent present need. Through this approach the teacher educators can relate their curricula to various areas of occupational activities may provide school learners to gain valuable work experience. Teacher education needs to develop a sense of cultural belonging, sense of history and national pride among the learners.

High motivation and wholehearted commitment of student teachers needs to ensure to perform at a high level and acquisition of renewable competencies and skills. Teacher education institutes also need to form

area-specific networking to ensure sharing of resources and expertise. Relevant research studies and the provision of appropriate in-service training for teachers and teacher educators need to be further developed along sound professional development. Educational research base is weak when compared to other streams so its impact on later research is also inadequate. Our present system has not yet succeeded in encouraging innovations, or the integration of substantial innovations undertaken within the teacher education institutions.

Furthermore, new perspectives and opportunities are emerging which pose enormous challenges for those working in the Indian education system, such as the growing impact of privatization, liberalization and globalization, and the need to effectively tackle highly sensitive issues such as religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. Teachers build the new societies: they help develop and nurture the young and so they contribute to the type of society that exists tomorrow. The teacher educator of tomorrow, in efforts to develop in learners a sense of dignity, self-assurance and a commitment to work, shall therefore need to tread an uneven path. The teacher education system in India needs to give practical shape to the critical role of teacher education in the context of providing a good quality school education for all. The links between school education and teacher education need to be well established and continuously renewed and reviewed. Mere extension of the duration of the programme without meaningful curricular inputs transacted and evaluated in a meaningful way has no meaning other than eliminating the highly talented in terms of the time constraints.

Conclusion

While progress is being made towards the goal of Education for All, renewed efforts are needed to ensure that the education provided is of high quality and relevant to social needs. This is essential if the young are to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to lead active and productive lives in the knowledge-based societies of the future. More resources for education will be required not only to provide greater access to education but also to make that access meaningful. Teachers must be well prepared and appropriately rewarded for their work; adequate supplies of educational materials should be made available, and school conditions need to be healthy, comfortable and conducive to effective teaching and learning. Indian teacher education system has moved much to address the realities of the present day world and now is on a cross road. To form and reform contextualised multiple intelligent youth the teachers with multifaceted capacities have to be generated who in turn can accelerate process. To facilitate this, the functional isolation of teacher education institution has to be broken by materialising the recommendations made in the policy perspectives.

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