

Quality Issues Beneficial for Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

To conclude, numerous are the issues relating to the quality aspects of Teacher Education. The current discussion in Teacher Education is on prime. We have to bear in mind that quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort. Quality is fundamentally the product of sufficient investment of assets, natural endowment and hard work. Quality is not a finish line; it is a constant journey. We never reach there. We have to keep on upgrading the quality of Teacher Education on a continuing basis. Assessment and accreditation of Teacher Education for quality assurance has become imperative to help maintain and further enhance the quality of Teacher Education. It is great that NAAC and NCTE are working together closely to achieve this goal.

Keywords: Quality, Teacher Education, Beneficial Issues, Advance Learning

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Teachers are the kingpins of any educational system. It is said that teachers alter eternity that no one can tell where their determination finish. Our new National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/1992 says that no nation can rise above the level of its teachers. Hence, Teacher Education to develop teachers of eminent quality is of extremely important. But, detailed studies undertaken in recent years have shown that the quality of pre-service and in-service Teacher Education programmes in our country is deteriorating and that the professional commitment and overall ability of teachers allow for much to be coveted. Therefore, everything necessary has to be done to ensure that our Teacher Education institutions produce teachers of high quality and calibre. Conscious initiatives are necessary to influence the quality of Teacher Education at various levels.

New Methods and Materials of Teaching-learning

Education today has become more complex due to the vast societal changes and the new insights in the field of pedagogy. There is an explosion of knowledge in every field. New knowledge is generated in every field in every country of the world. There have been tremendous advances in science and technology, and more so in information and communication technology (ICT). All these developments have brought about substantial changes in the methods and materials of teaching and learning. Alas, our Teacher Education organizations have not been able to keep step with these evolutions. Researches on classroom processes and present practices of teaching indicate that teaching in our schools remains mostly didactic and that emphasis is still on memorisation of facts, and assessment of these through achievement tests.

ICT Literacy

Yet nowadays our classroom works are mostly based on chalk and talk. This has to change. All teachers have to be made ICT literate. All pre-service and in-service Teacher Education plans should include qualifier training in the use of advanced tools of ICT, including offline and online electronic inventories such as CD-ROMs, multi-media, Internet and the world-wide-web (Www) Phase particular Teacher Education Programmes. It is known that children

must be talked to at their level of understanding and provided learning experiences they can process respond to and make meaning of. There exist significant qualitative differences at various stages of school education, i.e. pre-primary primary, upper primary and secondary, because learning abilities and learning capacities of children at these stages are different. In the context that children change as they grow from one stage of development to another, the corresponding professional competencies needed by teachers to teach at various stages of schooling considerably differ qualitatively and quite a few of these are unique to a particular stage. Thus Teacher Education programmes have to be stage-specific to be useful and effective. This is not happening in our country. For example, Teacher Education for middle classes (VI to VIII) is neither covered by B Ed nor by primary level teacher training. Stage-specific pre-service Teacher Education (PSTE) programmes should be launched without any further delay. After stage-specific PSTE programmes such as M.Ed. (Pre-school), M.Ed. (Elementary) and M.Ed. (Secondary) are launched for Teacher Educators, the norms and standards in respect of teacher educators should be revised and made stage-specific. For example, M.Ed. (Elementary) should be prescribed as the essential professional qualification for elementary level Teacher Educators.

Learner-centred Pedagogy

We have been talking about child-centred or learner-centred pedagogy for the past well over 16 years; but even today our classroom practices mostly remain what they were 25 years ago. Large over-crowded classes, ill-trained and untrained teachers poorly equipped classrooms, single teacher schools, and multi-grade teaching are some of the stark realities that severely restrict the use of learner-centred pedagogy. It is high time that we switch over from teacher-centred education to learner-centred teaching and learning. Teachers need to be trained and facilitated to handle learner-centred pedagogy.

Inclusive Education

Another central concern of Teacher Education relates to what is known as 'inclusive' or 'integrated' education. Inclusive/integrated education should cover not only children with mild disabilities (who are 'educable'), but also street children, children from remote and nomadic populations, and children from other disadvantaged and marginalised areas or groups. There is a rising consensus that children with special educational needs should be added in the educational systems made for the most of children. This is the essence of inclusive/integrated education.

Inclusive/integrated education is a pre-condition for social justice and empowerment. It is a growing concept and evolving practice, and it needs to be supported in every way and by all means. At present, the capacity of Teacher Education programmes to take care of disabled and disadvantaged children in inclusive/integrated settings is quite limited. To do justice to inclusive/integrated education and to provide it to the challenged learners in the manner it was conceived, Teacher Education programmes have to be suitably strengthened incorporating relevant components. Needless to add that challenged learners receiving inclusive education should be facilitated in their learning by providing them with necessary equipment and customised learning materials.

Para Teachers

The scheme of appointing Para-teachers started in the 1980s when Rajasthan started the 'Shiksha Karmi' Project in 1987 to overcome the problem of dysfunctional schools due to teacher absenteeism. Under this project, a local person with class VII qualification in the case of male candidates (and ever less in the case female candidates) was appointed Shiksha Karmi. The main purpose of this project was to achieve universalization of primary education and improvement in primary schooling by adapting the form and content of education to local needs and conditions. Unfortunately, of late, Para teachers are appointed under several schemes and for a variety of reasons including financial. In some states like Madhya Pradesh, Para teachers are appointed even up to higher secondary stage mainly to economise teacher's salary.

Para teachers are not adequately qualified academically and they are totally untrained. No scheme of appointing Para teachers should be resorted to as an economy measure. It is estimated that today there are more than two lakh Para teachers all over the country. They pose a serious threat to quality-related aspects of school education. If the growing trend of appointing Para teachers is not checked, quality aspects of Teacher Education is sure to be jeopardised. No Para teacher should be regularised as a teacher against a regular post unless he/she acquires the qualifications

prescribed for that post. Subject-specific Teacher Education Programmes Quality in pedagogy largely depends on the professional competence of teachers. Competence here includes academic qualifications, pedagogical skills and commitment. In the years to come, Teacher Education programmes may have to be more and more subject-specific. The Teacher Education institutions may have to offer more specific programmes separately to prepare teachers in the areas of science, social science, languages, physical education and vocational streams. Such subject-specific courses in Teacher Education will provide greater scope and appropriate opportunities to delineate and discern suitable theoretical inputs and conceptualisation in relation to practices in education. They will alleviate the procedure of adding theory and practice unitedly.

Imbalances in Teacher Education

Teacher Education in India is plagued with imbalances and mismatch. There are large variations in the States/UTs in respect of teachers' qualifications at different stages of education, recruitment procedures and conditions of service. There are also variations in the parity and cadres of teachers and teacher educators, and transfer and secondment policies. Such differences are bound to exist in a large system of education in a country like India, which is a huge subcontinent. However attempts should be made to bring them to comparable levels at least in respect of the major dimensions of the teaching profession. Data on the existing variations should be collected state-wise and then collated suitably with a view to bring them to comparable levels.

Education in Human Values

India is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi religious society. The pluralistic nature of Indian society needs to be reflected in the pedagogical approaches to make learning meaningful. We need to develop culture-specific pedagogy for the various stages of education. In our culturally plural civilization education should nurture universal and perpetual values pointed towards the unity and uniting of our people. Prospective teachers have to be made aware of the critical issues facing our society and have to be consciously exposed to education in human values.

Enriching Pedagogical Inputs

It is time to initiate a process of curriculum changes in the Teacher Education programmes on a continuing basis. Regular discourses and discussions should be held to enrich the academic and pedagogical inputs of teacher education at various levels and stages. Teacher Educators should be encouraged to undertake doctoral and post-doctoral research to provide direct inputs for the improvement of teacher development programmes. For this purpose, fellowships at senior levels should be instituted and provision made for sabbatical leave. Educational research should be made field-related and practice-oriented.

Coordination of In-service and Pre-service Teacher Education Programmes

At present, there is hardly any coordination between in-service and pre-service Teacher Education programmes. To be effective, these two categories of programmes should supplement and complement each other. Teachers need to continuously enrich their competencies and enhance their professional performance. Efforts should be made to actualize mobility of teacher educators across the various stages of education.

Pre-school Teacher Education

Pre-school or pre-primary Teacher Education is the least developed sector of Teacher Education in our country. As on March 31, 2002, we had only 66 recognised pre-primary teacher training courses all over the country. It is reported that the entire Eastern Region does not have even a single recognised pre-primary teacher training programme! Pre-primary Education covers two areas: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Nursery Education. Pre-primary education is an essential preparatory stage for the development of a child. Pre-primary Teacher Education should strive to develop teachers who are sensitive to the developmental needs of children and are competent to provide enriched childhood experiences that facilitate their further growth and development. High quality pre-primary Teacher Education programmes need to be introduced and promoted a big way all over the country.

NCTE Initiatives

NCTE was established as a statutory body on August 17, 1995. This is perhaps the most significant development that has taken place in the field of education after India became independent. The main objective of the legislative act of NCTE was to make planned and organized development of Teacher Education across the country and to guarantee proper maintenance of norms and values in the entire Teacher Education system. During the past more than seven years of its existence, the statutory NCTE has taken several initiatives to take care of the quality aspects of Teacher Education at all levels. Unfortunately, it is not at all adequately equipped to carry out the mandate given to it.

Conclusion

To conclude, numerous are the issues relating to the quality aspects of Teacher Education. The current discussion in Teacher Education is on prime. We have to bear in mind that quality is never an accident; it is always the result of intelligent effort. Quality is fundamentally the product of sufficient investment of assets, natural endowment and hard work. Quality is not a finish line; it is a constant journey. We never reach there. We have to keep on upgrading the quality

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