

HOW TO SAVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA? AN AGENDA FOR RADICAL CHANGES

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Introduction

A whole lot of incredible changes take place in the world every day. Naturally the old is replaced by the new. The old ideas give way to the new ones because of which things, time, contexts, situations and people change. Owing to all these vital factors, education also undergoes changes and obviously some of the changes are desirable and others undesirable.

1. Since education is hugely influenced by the concomitant changes, how can teacher education be unaffected?
2. What major changes have recently taken place in teacher education?
3. Are they really required?
4. Have such changes really contributed to the qualitative growth of teacher education in India?
5. What are the major issues of teacher education in the changed and rapidly changing India?
6. What kind of changes do we really need?

In order to develop a holistic view, let us address the following cardinal issues of teacher education in India:

1. What is the goal of teacher education in India?
2. What is the current status of teacher education in India?
3. How is teacher education being managed in India?

4. How should it be better conducted and managed?

(1).The major concerns /bitter truth

A majority of enlightened, awakened, right -minded and concerned teacher educators would generally agree with the following harsh but true statements/bitter facts:

1. The teacher education (TE) in India is in a great peril.
2. It is largely devoid of desirable quality.
3. The curriculum of teacher education in India is still ill-conceived: it is neither need based, nor focused, and nor well-organized. It is poorly delivered and haphazardly conducted. There is no functional integration of the theory and practice of teacher education.
4. The management of TE is shockingly messy and chaotic.
5. Major significant changes have been made in TE since 2014 in the name of Justice Verma Committee (JVC) report whose recommendations have been cleverly, dishonestly and unfortunately deliberately misinterpreted by the vested interests.
6. Since the NCTE, the apex body of teacher education in India, has systematically and aggressively encroached upon the autonomy of universities, there is no scope of innovation at the university to which the colleges of teacher education are affiliated. This apex- body of teacher education dictates appalling terms and conditions to the universities and affiliated colleges on the strength of the NCTE Act 1993.
7. Unfortunately, universities cannot do anything but just play a perfunctory role in teacher education.
8. Corruption in teacher education is rampant at all levels; from the top to the bottom Millions of cases are pending against the NCTE in the Hon'ble High Courts and the Apex Court.

The following uncomfortable but pertinent questions need to be raised at this juncture;

1. What is the fundamental goal of teacher education? What should be its appropriate content and process?
2. On what empirical evidence has the NCTE introduced and launched two year courses of B.Ed., M.Ed. etc.?
3. Why should the prejudiced opinions and vested interests be allowed to play the game in their favour by damaging the fundamentals of teacher education?
4. How could teacher education be saved?

(2) How could the quality of teacher education in India be enhanced?

With the above perplexing background, the current chaos and turmoil in teacher education, it is essential to address the cardinal question of how to save teacher education in India.

It is my considered view that the following radical steps may be taken up to save teacher education in India:

S. N.	Agency/ Body /Institute concerned	Actions to be taken up: What to do? How?
1.	MHRD	<p>MHRD, through the hon'ble parliament, must immediately repeal the NCTE Act 1993 and liberate teacher education from the miserable, ineffective, toothless, unnecessary, vulnerable and formalistic law.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decentralize teacher education as far as possible so that continual corruption may be effectively minimized and largely checked. 2. Empower the UGC to provide more effective guidelines for the required academic autonomy to the affiliated teacher education colleges for more effective management of teacher education at the university level. 3. Ensure the establishment of State Higher Education Council in each state as per the NEP 1986. 4. Withdraw the provision of IASEs and CTEs which conduct In-service education programmes. Their role must be confined to the conduct of pre-service education programmes only. 5. Empower the Central University (CU) of each state to navigate, innovate, guide, direct, monitor and supervise all the academic aspects of secondary teacher education in the state concerned. The CU must cooperate with and contribute to teacher education.
2.	UGC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Since some universities are running teacher education courses without having their own Dept. of Education, UGC must instruct such universities to immediately start Dept. of Education in order to legitimize the teacher education courses

		<p>being conducted by them.</p> <p>2. Constitute a high level monitoring team for ensuring the compliance of the UGC guidelines related to teacher education in totality.</p>
3.	Universities	<p>1. The Dept. of Education /Faculty of Education of the University concerned should design the need -based, research-based, culturally relevant curriculum of secondary teacher education. For such task, a wide range of consultations would help in developing the required curricula and syllabi.</p> <p>2. Universities should prefer Four Year BA/ B.Sc. B.Ed. integrated course which is a better programme and obviously such a new course of study not only saves valuable resources but also help in integrating theory and practice of teacher education to some extent.</p>
4.	NCERT	<p>1. The NCERT should empower and strengthen its own Dept. of Teacher Education.</p> <p>2. Conduct empirical studies in order to find out the desirability and feasibility of two year B.Ed. course, two year M.Ed. course, and four year integrated B.Ed. course.</p> <p>3. Disseminate the findings of the empirical studies among all the universities of the country for further affirmative actions at their level.</p>
5.	SCERT /SIERT	<p>1. SCERT/SIERT should design the curriculum of elementary teacher education in the state concerned in consultation with the state's DIETs, the state universities, the CU and NCERT.</p> <p>2. Conduct, monitor, supervise, guide, and direct the elementary teacher education programme through DIETs.</p> <p>3. Conduct the in-service education programme for the secondary school teachers.</p> <p>4. Conduct educational surveys related to school education of the state concerned in consultation with the NCERT, UC and the state universities.</p>
6.	DIET	<p>1. DIET should conduct the elementary teacher education</p>

		<p>programme in consultation with the SCERT / SIERT of the state concerned.</p> <p>2. Conduct the in-service teacher education programmes for the elementary school teachers.</p> <p>3. Conduct meaningful Action Research.</p>
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(3.) Why to repeal the NCTE Act 1993?

While comparing the scenario of teacher education in India, it is generally rightly believed that teacher education was comparatively better organized and better managed before the establishment of NCTE in 1995. It is extremely painful to mention that the post-NCTE era is largely chaotic and is generally full of corrupt practices. Consequently, NCTE has been miserably facing thousands of court cases and obviously losing a majority of such cases because of its inherent weaknesses and vulnerability to set the things right. The NCTE authorities have been caught red-handed by the CBI for taking bribe. All such unholy developments evidently prove that the NCTE is in perpetual sickness. NCTE has been suffering from pernicious anaemia. The general perception of NCTE is very low.

It is generally believed that after the establishment of inept, fragile and infamous NCTE, the teacher education is in turmoil and has become a laughing stock in terms of quantitative expansion, low quality of courses of studies, and poor management of teacher education across the country.

It may be incidentally mentioned here that a parliamentary committee on teacher education has already recommended that the NCTE should be demolished in the interest of the nation at the earliest.

Therefore, the pertinent questions to ask are:

1. Has the NCTE brought about any significant qualitative change in teacher?
2. Why should the country bear the heavy load of an unnecessary body like NCTE and struggle with an ineffective Act like the NCTE Act 1993?
3. Why should the tax payer's hard earned money be 'wasted' on a white elephant like NCTE?
4. Is it not high time that the NCTE Act be repealed?
5. Should the NCTE be not closed down as it is debilitating, manageable, unperturbed, unqualified, unpromising, unreasonable, unmentionable and unrepentant?
6. Should we not get rid of NCTE which has become deadwood?

(4.) Why should the UGC look after teacher education?

The NCTE recognized secondary teacher education institutes (STEI s) get affiliated to a university concerned and thus they start conducting teacher education programmes approved by the university which generally comes in conflict with the NCTE .Further, the university's rules and regulations are generally not in conformity with NCTE's norms and standards because of various solid reasons and factors .As a result, the dismayed teacher education institutes are sandwiched between NCTE and University and unfortunately they have to 'obey' both 'the bosses'. Consequently, the quality of teacher education programmes and management of teacher education silently suffer. Due to lack of 'single line of command ', sometimes utter chaos is created which is availed of by the vested interests and thus rampant corruption starts taking place at large.

Let it be mentioned here that it is the universities which award degrees of B.Ed. M.Ed., etc. But unfortunately, the curriculum of teacher education is unconvincingly 'imposed' by the NCTE. Universities generally do not have much freedom to 'deviate' from the 'prescribed curriculum'. Academically speaking; it is a very unfortunate development. Evidently, universities not only lose their 'academic autonomy' but also feel 'handicapped' to introduce changes, modifications which are required because of the local needs and changed contexts.

Therefore, the moot questions are:

1. *Why can't the UGC- recognized - universities have full academic freedom and launch their own innovative programmes of teacher education?*
2. *What are these universities for?*
3. *Are universities not meant for research and development?*
4. *Why should anything constraint university in introducing new ideas and prevent them from innovations which is one of the cardinal aims of university?*
5. *Why are students not given a wide range of choices related to the type, duration and quality of teacher courses of studies?*
6. *What is the use of scores of Ph.D. degrees in Education awarded by the university if all 'academic 'decisions are finally taken and unthinkingly and brutally executed by a central agency like NCTE by conveniently ignoring and proudly crushing the autonomy of the university?*
7. *Does the NCTE Act 1993 permit the NCTE to act as a dictator especially in relation to the academic policy of the UGC recognized universities?*

8. *How can university autonomy be curbed in the name of NCTE Regulations, Norms and Standards' which are basically related to the management of teacher education?*
9. *How can democracy flourish if universities themselves are 'captive institutes' and are subservient to the draconian controls of the NCTE?*

The above mentioned rationale should help us get convinced that it is the universities which should ultimately look after teacher education, not any 'foreign' agency like NCTE. The UGC is competent enough to exercise necessary control over universities if need be. It is believed that under the hegemony of NCTE, teacher education cannot and would not grow qualitatively.

(5) Why should we get rid of the undesirable impact of NGOs on teacher education?

Undoubtedly some NGOs have played a major and significant role in teacher education. However, there are some crafty NGOs in education which are exclusively working with the vested interests. It is these NGOs which have cleverly entered the powerful bodies of teacher education at various levels and have secretly introduced major undesirable changes in teacher education by successfully misguiding the central management of teacher education. Unfortunately, these NGOs are taking an undue advantage of their powerful position in the apex bodies. These NGOs with the vested interests have heavily considerably damaged teacher education of the country. It is these NGOs which have grossly misinterpreted the Justice Verma Committee (JVC) report and consequently the norms, standards and regulations 2014 of the NCTE contain such desirable impact of these NGOs' secret plans. Therefore, it is imperative that such vested interests of guileful NGOs are immediately removed from the apex bodies of teacher education.

(6) What is the remedy?

On the basis of the above discussion, the following suggestions may be put forward and considered for metamorphosis of teacher education of the country:

1. We need to go for some fundamental and radical changes in teacher education of the country, not just cosmetic changes.
2. Effective corrective measures need to be taken up on a war-footing for the intended changes. A surgical strike is required for resurrecting, revivifying and rejuvenating teacher education in the country.
3. Accountability also needs to be fixed. We need a liberal and democratic management of teacher education, not an authoritative, dictatorial and brutal management of teacher education through NCTE.

4. NCTE is ineffective and inefficient by default. A white paper on the miserable failure of the NCTE must be produced and the guilty punished for sabotaging the desirable reforms in teacher education.
5. Creative writings in teacher education need to be encouraged and nurtured which would eventually help innovative ideas to float.
6. Structuralism in teacher education would help pave the way for critical understanding in teacher education.
7. Refurbishment of the curriculum of teacher education is the need of the hour which should address the following issues;
 - a) What kind of teachers do we require in the schools for the current and future generations of students?
 - b) What kind of curriculum do we need for preparing such teachers?
 - c) What could be more effective strategies for conducting such curriculum?

(7) Concluding Remarks

Let us respect the glorious past but not be a slave to the illogical, stale, impractical and impracticable ideas and methodology. Let us be bold to accept the desirable changes with a positive frame of mind. The old may be gold but all that glitters is not gold.

The more sensible teacher educators ought to come forward, voice their genuine concerns for teacher education and try their level best to disseminate their valuable ideas for saving and improving upon teacher education of this country at the earliest. Since the ivory-tower plans do not fully work, a more pragmatic approach to the management of teacher education is the real need of the hour. Our quietness would cost teacher education dearly.

WE MUST SAVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY AT ANY COST.

I sincerely hope somebody is listening.

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