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Teacher Education Programme: An Important Aspect

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Abstract

Education has vital role in building the society and the nation. It plays an important role in the upliftment of an individual and the society. There are many ways to increase the learner's knowledge. Education is the most efficient tool for this purpose. Our experience has shown us that while technology is critical, it cannot supplement the teacher. Rather, it should be seen as an aid in the teaching-learning process. This is arguably more so in today's age of ICT where children can access information at the click of a button. A teacher is the key person for any educational programme. Therefore, it is very important to deal with teacher education programme in effective manner.

Teacher education should provide space for engagement with issues and concerns of India's pluralistic nature; issues of identity, gender, equity, poverty and diversity. This would enable teachers to contextualize education and evolve a deeper understanding of its purpose and its relationship with society and humanity. It is also important to understand the classroom as a social context, as it provides a setting for interaction, generation of dialogue and the opportunity to appreciate diverse perspectives on a given issue.

This paper deals with brief historical view of teacher education. Some functionary bodies deal with teacher education programme and provide a base to pre-service and in-service teacher education. Further, there is a lot to do with teacher education. An effective teacher education programme is the need of the day. We have to reorganize teacher education for wellbeing of the citizens of India and place the teacher in a focus area. Some measurable points which should be considered during the teacher education programme, are also given in this paper.

Introduction

Teacher Education Policy in India has evolved over time and is based on recommendations contained in various Reports of Committees/Commissions on Education. The important ones are the Kothari Commission (1966), the Chattopadhyay Committee (1985), the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986/92), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990), Yashpal

Committee (1993), and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which became operational from 1st April, 2010. It has important implications for teacher education in the country.

A teacher is the key person for any educational programme. Teacher education should provide space for engagement with issues and concerns of India's pluralistic nature of students; issues of identity, gender, equity, poverty and diversity. This would enable teachers to contextualize education and evolve a deeper understanding of its purpose and its relationship with society and humanity. It is also important to understand the classroom as a social context, as it provides a setting for interaction, generation of dialogue and the opportunity to appreciate diverse perspectives on a given issue.

We have two patterns for preparing teachers in our country (a) preparing teachers for the school system (pre-service training) and (b) improving skills of existing school teachers (in-service training).

For pre-service training, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body of the Central Government, is responsible for planned and coordinated development of teacher education in the country. The NCTE lays down norms and standards for various teacher education courses, minimum qualifications for teacher educators, course and content and duration and minimum qualification for entry of student-teachers for the various courses. For in-service training, the country has a large network of government-owned teacher training institutions which provide in-service training to the school teachers. The spread of these teacher training institutions is both vertical and horizontal. At the National Level, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), along with its six Regional Institutes of Education (REIs) prepares a host of modules for various teacher training courses and also undertakes specific programmes for the training of teachers and teacher educators.

Institutional support is also provided by the National University on Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). Both NCERT and NUEPA are national level autonomous bodies. At the state level, the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), prepares modules for teacher training and conducts specialized courses for teacher educators and school teachers. The Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes for Advanced Learning in Education (IASes) provide in-service training to secondary and senior secondary school teachers and teacher educators. At the district level, in-service training is provided by the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). The Block

Resource centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource centers (CRCs) form the lowest rung of institutions in the vertical hierarchy for providing in-service training to school teachers. Apart from these, in-service training is also imparted with active role of the civil society, unaided schools and other establishments.

For in-service training, financial support is largely provided by the Central Government under the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), which is the main vehicle for implementation of the RTE Act. Under the SSA, 20 days in-service training is provided to school teachers, 60 days refresher course for untrained teachers and 30 days orientation for freshly trained recruits. Central assistance for in-service training is also provided to District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASes) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education. State Governments also financially support in-service programmes. Several NGOs, including multi-lateral organizations, support various interventions, including in-service training activities.

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) has prepared the National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education, which was circulated in March 2009. This Framework has been prepared in the background of the NCF, 2005 and the principles laid down in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 which necessitated an altered framework on Teacher Education which would be consistent with the changed philosophy of school curriculum recommended in the NCF, 2005. While articulating the vision of teacher education, the Framework has some important dimensions of the new approach to teacher education, as under:

- Reflective practice to be the central aim of teacher education.
- Student-teachers should be provided opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas.
- Developing capacities for self-directed learning and ability to think, be critical and to work in groups.
- Providing opportunities to student-teachers to observe and engage with children, communicate with and relate to children.

The Framework has highlighted the focus, specific objectives, broad areas of study in terms of theoretical and practical learnings, and curricular transaction and assessment strategies for the various initial teacher education programmes. The draft also outlines the basic issues that should guide formulation of all programmes of these courses. The Framework has

made several recommendations on the approach and methodology of in-service teacher training programmes and has also outlined a strategy for implementation of the Framework. As a natural corollary to the NCFTE, the NCTE has also developed 'model' syllabi for various teacher education courses.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers

The terms 'teacher' and 'teaching' invoke a classroom full of students who are being taught. However, the role of a teacher, especially that of a government teacher, is far more diverse. According to section 24 of the RTE Act, all teachers should perform the duties mentioned below

- Maintain regularity and punctuality in attending school
- Conduct and complete the curriculum
- Complete entire curriculum within specified time
- Assess the learning ability of each child and, accordingly, supplement additional instructions, if any, as required.
- Hold regular meetings with parents and guardians and apprise them about the regularity in attendance, ability to learn, progress made in learning and any other relevant information about the child
- Perform other such duties as may be prescribed. Most state governments have incorporated the RTE provisions into their own rules and regulations and, therefore, these duties are applicable for all teachers in government elementary schools at least. However, translating these duties into practice in spirit is a challenge that is yet to be addressed fully in almost all states.

More than ever, the future of our country lies in the hands of those who teach our children in the classrooms. Radhakrishnan believed that "teachers should be the best minds in the country", and that a guru is someone who teaches specific types of knowledge, but also help mould values and experiential knowledge as well as specific knowledge; an exemplar in life. Let us recall this definition and not overlook the central role of teachers and teacher education in ensuring quality education.

When we imagine the scene about teachers in present days, the need of a lot to do with teacher education emerges. No education system in the world has excelled without making a significant investment in building a cadre of quality teachers. Yet, teacher education is one

of the weakest links in the education system. Key challenges that need to be addressed relate both to a shortage of teachers and their training. For instance, as on March 2016, 5 lakh sanctioned teaching posts are vacant country-wide. As a result, several schools have pupil-to-teacher ratio of 80:1 and single-teacher schools account for 8 per cent of elementary schools in the country.

There is a great need for improvement in standards and regulation of pre-service teacher training institutes, majority of which are in the private sector and are largely sub-standard and unregulated. Even the state-run institutes suffer from multiple deficiencies and most of them are far from being effective. Thus, developing institutional mechanisms for periodic monitoring of teacher training institutes and strict adherence to quality parameters is vital. Additionally, clear selection criteria for testing aptitude needs to be in place before accepting students into teacher training colleges.

We should move with an opportunity to review and redesign the current teacher education programmes. Teachers need to be viewed as professionals who require multiple skills to do their job, and accordingly professional standards need to be built into all teacher education programmes. These programmes must focus both on building an essential knowledge base, as well as skill sets required for making a difference in the classroom. Importantly, they must locate the professional development of teachers within the larger socio-cultural, economic and political context of contemporary India.

Teachers, especially those who serve in the poorest of urban and rural areas need to be well trained and prepared to deal with extremely diverse classrooms of mostly first generation learners. 50 years ago, school going children were mostly from the elite and middle income groups. Today, with the success of SSA and the RTE, classrooms are often diverse and many students are first generation learners who may not have any academic support system at home. Teachers need to categorise the socio-economic backgrounds of children, for instance a hungry or an abused child will not be able to learn effectively. Programmes must guide teachers on how to nurture and develop this set of children. The more a teacher knows about a student, the better they will be able to support their learning and progress.

About 1.1million untrained teachers appointed in various schools under the Right to Education (RTE) act have been given a chance to qualify basic teacher training qualifications. According to an RTE amendment bill passed in the parliament, these teachers will now get time till 2019 to acquire the prescribed minimum qualifications for firming up their appointments. These untrained teachers need to acquire B.El.Ed (Bachelor of Elementary

Education) or D.El.Ed. (Diploma in Elementary Education) qualifications to continue in their jobs as teachers.

The Teacher Training Programme launched by MHRD through National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is designed for all Untrained Govt. /Govt. aided /Private unaided recognized in- service Untrained teachers of Elementary Schools & 15 lakh (approximately) teachers have been enrolled so far. According to a report large number of untrained teachers are engaged in elementary schools in India. Total number of untrained teachers yet to enroll is 245637: number of teachers going under training is 263470, the total number of untrained government teachers in India is 511679 while total no of untrained teachers in private schools are 597765

It is an initiative in Online and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for upgrading the professional competence and Information and Communication based capacity building for teachers. With an objective of enhancing quality, NIOS has been focusing its attention on the quality and excellence in the training aspects of the in-service teachers of Govt. /Govt. aided /Private unaided recognized schools across the country. It is important that trainings are put in place to help develop skills through their job & to retain knowledge, skills need to be refreshed on regular basis.

Teachers need to be made more accountable through enhanced involvement of the school management committees, recognizing the need for supportive supervision and incentives to ensure teacher performance and accountability, as well as use of technology to monitor teacher attendance and curb absenteeism.

In today's time of rapid technological advances, we aim to make sure that technology is integrated into education. Our experience has shown us that while technology is critical, it cannot supplement the teacher. Rather, it should be seen as an aid in the teaching--learning process. To be able to guide and facilitate this process, teachers should help children build skills such as critical thinking, analysis as well as social values and good behaviour. These could range from punctuality, to cleanliness, to non-violence and teaching children to respecting one another.

While learning outcomes are important, we are in danger of thinking that all of education is about "learning outcomes ". Reading and writing are of course the bare minimum that a child should get by going to the school. But learning is as much about the "how" as it is about " what". There is a need therefore to develop centers of excellence and establish new

exemplary elementary and secondary pre-service teacher education programmes. Teaching standards and assessment should also therefore include areas such as behaviour management and subject knowledge.

Lastly it is essential to look teacher education seriously. Additional training courses and seminars should be organized regularly, especially in the teaching of Hindi, Science and English. There is need to popularize the publications of the teacher education institutions and to insure better and more frequent use of the library. Faculty of the teacher education institutions should visit associated schools more often to help teachers in solving specific classroom problems. Faculty must seriously participated in in-service activities. Follow-up activities should be planned for teachers who participate in in-service activities. Efforts should be made to improve the arrangement for the payment of travel expenses and daily allowances. Funds should be provided for the appointment of competent persons in the field of teacher education.

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