

**APPRAISAL OF PERFORMANCE OF A DECADE OF FUNCTIONING OF
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION**

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Recently, there have been reports that a Committee appointed by the Central Government has recommended abolition of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body set up in 1995 under NCTE Act of 1993. As per Report submitted by Anita Joshua "Teacher education council to be closed" published in The Hindu (May 26, 2007), the Committee has accused NCTE of allowing mushroom growth of substandard teacher education programmes. It is also reported that the Central Government, accepting the recommendations of the Committee has been taking steps for abolition of NCTE. In doing so, the present Government will knock a death blow to efforts to improve the quality of school education and shall roll back whatever qualitative improvements have been achieved through a decade of functioning of NCTE.

In 60s, the students of teacher training courses were mostly from in-service categories. Hence teacher training was restricted to a type of orientation. The teacher trainees during those days came with their full salary or were paid stipends and scholarships by the concerned State Governments. Payment of scholarship to teacher trainees was also in vogue in NCERT managed Regional Institutes of Education. The trivial nature of teacher training imparted during those days continued even when the majority of teacher trainees belonged to fresh category instead of in-service category. In eighties, lack of funds for managing universities motivated many universities to go for B. Ed. through distance education. If these universities would have been allowed to continue teacher training programme through distance mode, today, there would have been no necessity for teacher training institutions, as the number of B. Ed. degree holders would have become more than even fresh graduates. The establishment of NCTE brought in regulations for making distance education programme only for in-service teachers. In early days of NCTE, it had to fight with not only traditional universities offering distance education programmes but also with open universities and the University Grants Commission. After a long battle, there was agreement on Norms for distance education for teacher training.

There are various factors that have hindered proper functioning of NCTE. The foremost and first factor is the inappropriate interest of Ministry of Human Resource Development in proper functioning of NCTE. Although a decade has passed NCTE has not been able to get adequate number of academicians to look after quality aspect of teacher training. NCTE has been utilising services of part time consultants, who have not been able to do much as most of them are retired and are not sure of their tenure. The Ministry has not been able to ensure that the members of the regional Committees and their Chairmen have direct experience of teacher education. Even today, there are many who without having any qualification such as M. Ed. in teacher training are Chairmen and members of the Regional Committees which grant recognition to teacher education institutions for running various types of teacher education courses. Hence, it is the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy of the Ministry of Human Resource and Development that has to be accountable for under functioning of NCTE.

The second factor is the Central Government did not expand the infrastructure of NCTE to cope with the large scale no objection certificates issued by the State governments for starting of teacher education courses. It has been stated that the number of institutions for teacher training have doubled in some States although a number of them are substandard. Many State governments do not bother to adhere to Central government norms. There are today even Institutes of Advanced Study in Education (IASE) managed by the State Governments that have been functioning without a professor or a Regular Principal, in violation of the memorandum of understanding between the State and the Centre at the time of Centre sanctioning funds to the State for the purpose. Much before, NCTE came into existence; Orissa abolished teacher education in private sector to tackle the problem of unemployment of graduates with B. Ed. degrees. The process of starting of a teacher education institution is initiated by the No objection certificate issued by the concerned State Government. Hence, quality of teacher education can only be effectively ensured by NCTE, only when the State governments are willing to do so. In a federal set up, it is not desirable that the central statutory body will adopt legal steps to compel States to stick to certain guidelines. Hence, the State Governments are to be blamed for the dilution of teacher training, not the NCTE.

Again, the States control most of the examining bodies for teacher education programmes. As per NCTE Act, these examining bodies are expected to ensure that the concerned teacher education institutions carry out the programmes as per NCTE Norms. A large number of universities do not ensure UGC directive of 180 teaching days in an academic year for degree classes. Will they bother to ensure adequate number of teaching days for B. Ed. programmes? There are cases of University Departments of Education flouting NCTE Norms and admitting students a number of times more than sanctioned by NCTE. These examining bodies are under the control of the State Governments. Every State has the responsibility to ensure proper functioning of the examining bodies at least in respect of their own institutions. It is also a fact that the NCTE has been able to muster the courage to derecognize Government teacher education institutions. In view of large-scale violation, NCTE cannot achieve much in ensuring quality unless State governments join hands that are not forthcoming.

The second factor is inadequate study by NCTE of experiences in other developed countries. IN USA, efforts for norms for teacher education programmes had been initiated in 1954 by the American Association for Colleges of Teacher education. Later there were a few other agencies which took up the responsibility including development of standards for teacher trainees and for teachers and testing of teachers even if they had a teacher training qualification. In that country teacher education standards vary from State to State. In UK, its Scotland differs from England. Although a more than two decades have passed since the nation had a new National Policy on Education, the Central Government has not been able to bring higher secondary classes in every State under school education. No wonder that although a decade has passed since NCTE has been established, it has not been able to make every State make its teachers of higher secondary classes have B. Ed. qualification.

In order to improve the functioning of NCTE, the Central Government needs to take following measures. It should increase the number of Regional Committees of NCTE so that at least there is one Committee for each large State. The power to appeal should also vest with the Regional Committees. In order to improve the quality of granting recognition, the Chairmen and members of the Regional Committees should have not only qualifications in teacher training but also experience in teacher training. Each Regional Committee should have at least one member from each of the stages of teacher training - pre-primary, primary and secondary. In order to control fake faculty, NCTE has introduced computerisation. NCTE also needs more staff for monitoring this programme. Since there is large scale deterioration of standards in teacher training, the quality of school education can only be ensured by a proper selection test for teachers. The Head office of NCTE at Delhi has delegated the power of granting recognition to Regional Committees. Hence quality assurance mechanism varies from Region to Region. Orissa State has the system of teaching of Education as a subject with practical in teaching from higher secondary Stage onwards. The Graduates with Education as a subject were allowed to appear at B. Ed. examination as private candidates. The Eastern Regional Office of NCTE banned such a practice. Whereas, the Northern Regional Office could give recognition to colleges having majority of faculty members without any M.Ed. or M.A. (Education). Thus, there is much variation in implementing Norms from one Regional Office to another.

Formulation of Norms for the whole country was a blunder. Hence, in practice, NCTE Norms are not being applicable in all States. In 1985, the Central Government brought out the Challenge of Education document and circulated it widely to get viewpoints for their utilisation in formulation of National Policy on Education 1986. This lesson was not followed by NCTE. In 1998 it brought out a Curriculum Framework for teacher education that suggested a two-year course for B. Ed. Even after eight years of publication of this document, two-year B. Ed. courses are found only in four Regional Institutes of Education of NCERT. Today, one can find in NCTE web site, a curriculum framework for teacher education that has been developed in collaboration with NCERT. Because of repetitions of sentences and wrong facts, one doubts about the capability of NCERT in carrying out the task of qualitative improvement of teacher education. It is also a fact that like many University Departments of Education and State Government institutions, NCERT institutions have not bothered to abide by NCTE Norms. If NCTE is strict in applying its Norms, the

teacher training courses being run by Regional Institutes of Education of NCERT, these courses may be derecognised. In such a situation, it is not proper to suggest that NCERT can take up quality aspect of teacher education.

NCTE needs to develop standards for pre-school teachers, primary school teachers and subject specific. teachers for upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary classes. The quality of teacher training has to be modified to give more stress on school experience. After attaining the qualification, a teacher trainee also needs to undergo a process of induction for at least one academic year under supervision of an expert teacher as found in developed countries. The Inspection Report of the Examining bodies for giving affiliation for various courses should for the basis for initial recognition to be given by NCTE. This will reduce the corruption in the system. NCTE should go for evaluation of the programme at the end of the academic year and give a decision on its continuance. NCTE needs to establish a National Resource Centre per Teacher

education with a full-fledged library with reading room facilities at the headquarters and also Regional Resource Centres at its Regional offices. There are a number of lecturers, who are retired school teachers, who had completed their M. Ed. degrees through distance mode, ten or fifteen years earlier. NCTE needs to give orientation to these new teacher educators through distance mode. NCTE also needs to disseminate information about high quality teacher education programmes. NCTE has a web site (<http://www.ncte-in.org>). The list of recognised teacher education institutions in the web site is full of mistakes. Even NCTE File No. has been quoted as a course of study. This has happened as data supplied from Regional offices have not been correctly fed. Again, this problem hinges on the lack of appropriate academic faculty at the Regional Offices of NCTE.