

EDITORIAL RESEARCH AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Three years ago, the editor, as a member of a Teacher Education Resource Group inspection team had visited a State Government managed College of Teacher Education. Majority of faculty members of this institution, including its principal, did not have B. Ed. Degree. The principal said that there was no necessity of M.Ed. or even B. Ed. qualification for its faculty members, as the students taught by such faculty were doing well in the university examinations. During visit to two other States, it was also found that the principals of the government training colleges did not have B.Ed. qualification. There are examples of persons having no Ph. D. in Education subject, no M.Ed. and even no B.Ed. Degree occupying posts of professors of Education in Regional Institutes of Education of NCERT and in University of Delhi. Recently, a national body organised a national conference on teacher education, wherein a large number of resource persons having no M.Ed. or Ph.D. (Education) were invited to talk on teacher training programmes. Although the university Grants Commission requires any Master degree in Education (M.Ed. / M.A. (Education)), many universities insist on another PG Degree for their posts of Lecturer in Education. This indicates that teacher education in India has not been able to assert its genuine place in the field of higher education. In order to come out of deplorable situation, teacher education requires a strong research base that can seek answers to a

number of questions and suggest remedies for various types of frailty in the system of teacher education. Studies comparing different aspects of initial teacher training in India and in certain other developed countries undertaken from time to time can be useful in developing an effective teacher training system. Comparative study of the efficiency of the products of teacher education programmes and case studies of effective teacher education institutions and their programmes facilitate improving quality of teacher education. The international review of curriculum and assessment framework Internet archive (<http://www.inca.org.uk>) describes teacher training curricula in a few developed countries. Is there a necessity for a web site in India to display essential aspects of teacher training curriculum in Indian States and UTs? Should there be increased stress on having national / state level researches on teacher education? A few of the issues that may need immediate attention may be as follows:

INNOVATIONS IN INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Deliberations on innovations make teacher trainees aware of importance of undertaking innovations for bringing improvements in the school system. "In a global knowledge economy, where the touchstone of competitiveness will be capacity for innovation, the fostering of a culture of innovation is a matter of encouraging the rapid spread of inventions

and new ideas throughout a society” (UNESCO 2005, p. 59). Effective teacher training programmes promote a culture of innovation that promotes rapid spread of innovations and new ideas. Do courses of studies of the examining bodies encourage innovation? If not, how these can be modified to encourage innovations in initial teacher training programmes?

Innovative Courses to suit to Changing Needs

More than three decades ago, the Education Commission 1964-66 stated that “New courses required to meet special needs should also be developed” (Kothari 1966, Art. 4.26, P. 136). The nation has not been able to develop courses to fit to the requirements of different categories of candidates and keeping in view effective utilisation of time and energy for teacher training. However, certain examining bodies such as Jamia Millia Islamia have started a few innovative courses - B. Ed. (Special Education), B. Ed. (Nursery Education), M. Ed. (Elementary Education), M. Ed. (Special Education), M. A. (Educational Planning & Administration). Should such types of innovative courses be started by other examining bodies?

Advanced Level and General Level Initial Teacher Training

In spite of having cent per cent trained teachers in secondary schools, many States have large numbers of institutions where general initial teacher training courses such as B. Ed.; D. Ed., are being provided. Should these States go for Advanced Level of Training Courses so that products of their courses can get preference for teacher recruitment by

developed countries? In an era of global competition, introduction of advanced level of teacher training, no doubt, is a necessity. There are special government schools for gifted children. There are also high fee charging private schools which look for talented teachers at higher salary than the Government rates. Countries like UK have developed standards for excellent teachers and advanced skills teachers. Are special training programmes necessary for teachers for teaching gifted children? Should such programmes have provision for internship experience in the special schools? Should this advanced level course be a self-financed course? Can DIETs run such courses for preparing teachers for elementary school teaching and also for pre-school teaching? Should existing two year B. Ed. courses be geared to teaching in Navodaya Vidyalayas, Sainik schools and Public schools and be renamed as B. Ed. (Gifted) courses? Will the Central Government provide a higher scale of pay for products of two year courses? Should there be separate advanced level courses for primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary teaching? In view of single subject method, what should be the duration of B. Ed. (Gifted Higher Secondary) course? Should admission for M. Ed. course be restricted to only a student having passed Advanced Level B. Ed. Course of two year duration?

One Year B. Ed. Courses for Pre-School Teaching for Graduates

As the 86th amendment of the Constitution, has made pre-school education part of Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the Constitution and has made it responsibility of the Government, is there a necessity for creating

examining bodies for pre-school teacher education in each of the States and UTs and expanding facilities for pre-school teacher training? Should DIETs start pre-school teacher training courses? Can Jamia Model of One Year B. Ed. (Nursery Education) course be suggested for other examining bodies? Is it necessary to make this qualification equivalent to two year Diploma course for pre-school teaching after higher secondary?

One Year B. Ed. Courses for Elementary School Teaching for Graduates

Kothari (1966, P. 136). Stated that “The employment of graduates in primary schools - even at the lower primary stage- has been increasing and a special course designed for them could be of great value.” After three decades, is this recommendation still valid? Recently, an analysis of qualifications of primary school teachers in Puducherry found that majority were graduates. NCERT had instituted B. Ed. (Elementary) course which was withdrawn. Many developed countries have increased minimum qualifications for primary school teachers to degree level and are also providing their teacher training at the university level. University of Delhi has been providing Bachelor of Elementary Education (integrated course) for higher secondary passed candidates. Is it necessary to have provision for teaching of content, as found in case of two year Diploma courses for higher secondary passed candidates? Is it necessary to have same quantum of practical work? What should be the duration of such a course? What should be the duration of practical training? Can it be a credit based course having Grading system for evaluating performance of teacher trainees? Will appropriate bodies take steps to make such

a course viable by making one year B. Ed. (Elementary) courses equivalent to two year Diploma/Certificate courses for elementary school teaching to encourage upgrading of elementary school teacher training to higher education level?

PG Diploma for Higher Secondary Teaching

Teachers in lower secondary schools generally teach two subjects for which B. Ed. courses provide two method subjects. A teacher at the higher secondary school stage teaches only one method subject and requires training in teaching of one method subject. School teaching experience may be restricted to teaching of school students of classes XI and XII. Instead of prescribing one year B. Ed. course for such teachers, should there be a new course such as PG Diploma for Higher Secondary Teaching? What should be the duration of such a course? There are States like Orissa, where most of the higher secondary classes are attached to junior colleges as part of higher education and their teachers need not be trained. Should there be a PG Diploma for Higher Secondary Teaching Course (Distance Mode) for such teachers?

B. Ed. (Education)

While recommending introduction of Education as a subject at both undergraduate and post graduate stages, Kothari (1966, p. 126) stated that.

“In all these courses – undergraduate or postgraduate- a minimum teaching practice should be obligatory just as laboratory work is a compulsory part of the study of sciences. It should be possible for a student who has taken these courses, to become a teacher, after a

period of internship and, if necessary, after some in-service education provided through summer institutes.”

There are States (e.g. Orissa) where ‘Education’ is a subject taught even at the higher secondary stage and it includes training of teaching skills and practice teaching in primary schools. The ‘Education’ graduates do not deliver lessons in secondary schools and do not cover all types of practical training and all methods of teaching covered in a Diploma or Certificate course for elementary school teaching, a special course is required for them- What should be the duration of such a course?

Bridge Courses to Switch Over from One Stage to Another

A programme is being provided by the government of Uttar Pradesh to make B. Ed. passed candidates eligible for primary school teaching job through their participation in special BTC programme of 6 month duration. Should such attempts be tried out in other parts of the country?

TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULA

As the society advances, new techniques appear to take care of various concerns. What are the techniques applicable for initial teacher training curricula of this century?

A Few Concerns

MHRD (1986) mentioned a few concerns such as Education of Girls & Removal of Gender Bias (P. 6); Inclusive Education (P.8); Education of Children from Minority Groups (p. 8); Education of Children from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Groups (p. 6);

Secularism (p. 3); Democracy and Equality of Educational Opportunities (p. 4); National Integration (p. 4); Value Education (p. 4); Peace and International Understanding (p. 4). Should initial teacher training curricula take into account all these concerns?

Improving Quality of Training in School Teaching

Minimum number of lessons to be delivered per method subject varies from one State to another and from one examining body to another. What is the magic number? Should it be a specific number of lessons or a specific period of attachment to school?

Giving Stress on Freedom and Flexibility

Flexibility is an accepted principle of good initial and continuing teacher education programmes. Good curricula have in built freedom to develop its own curriculum keeping in view resources available and national standards for teacher preparation. In an ideal situation, each teacher trainee develops his/her own curriculum. They set their own goals and develop action plans to explore issues that matter to them and develop varieties of lesson plans and teaching learning tools. Effective programmes give freedom to their faculty members to carry out innovations. Will it be possible for examining bodies to allow freedom and flexibility in their initial teacher training courses?

Providing Opportunities for Self-Learning of Teacher Trainees

Modern strategies suggest that initial teacher training is possible through a more personalised training route. In order to have optimum utilisation for self initiated learning of teacher trainees and teacher educators, is it necessary

to have the library and the computer room kept open during morning and evening hours? Advancements in science and technology have brought in newer sources of learning than available in formal traditional sources. Now, there are ample opportunities for self-learning for teacher trainees, who are exposed to Internet. Are initial teacher training courses giving scope for self-learning of teacher trainees? If no, how to ensure it?

Utilising Modern Teaching Techniques

Good programmes train their trainees in skills such as engineering effective discussions, questions and tasks that elicit evidence of learning; providing feedback that moves learners forward; clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success; and activating students as the owners of their own learning and as resources for one another. They provide training in skills of developing and using graded worksheets and in undertaking project work. They encourage peer learning, group learning, collaborative learning, learning through dialogue and learning from assessment of learning. They utilise innovative methods. To what extent teacher training programmes are utilising modern techniques in training their teacher trainees? Is it necessary that the teacher training courses of studies do specify methods to be utilised in transaction of theory?

Utilisation of ICT including Internet Resources

Effective utilisation of ICT techniques changes the role of the teacher from teacher as a “presenter” to that of a “problem-poser”, to a “co-learner” with learners in a problem centered classroom. Is it advisable to make ICT a compulsory paper in each initial teacher

training programme? Will utilisation of ICT improve the skills of teacher trainees in all types of situations? What will happen, if they are posted in schools away from urban locations? Will ICT skills be of no help in such locations? UNESCO (2005, p. 22) states that “There is no point in linking populations with fibre optics unless the development of skills and efforts to produce appropriate contents keep pace with that “connectivity”. Information and communication technologies still require the development of new cognitive and legal instruments in order to realize their full potential.”

Will the training programme cover training in traditional audio-visual aids, in addition to modern aids, so that there can be effective teaching even during the power cut period, when electrical gadgets are not used?

Action Research

The initial goals of an action research project develop and change as teachers share and reflect on experiences. Some nations provide training in research skill development (OECD 2005, p.107). In case of many examining bodies, trainees submit action research reports for evaluation as part of course requirement. Are they real action researches? Do the trainees get time to undertake action research during their internship? Is it necessary for teacher educators to have action research in training their trainees in different skills and even in taking theory classes?

Lifelong Learning & Learning to Learn

Effective teacher educators make the teacher trainees acquire lifelong learning skills for their own initial training as well as for continuous professional development. Do teacher

educators employ innovative, activity and learner centred strategies in theory classes? Learning to learn requires abilities such as locating, classifying and sorting of the information. Do teacher training programmes develop the skill of learning to learn among teacher trainees? Do they make the trainees develop skills of using lifelong learning tools such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, thesaurus, index, maps, and globe?

Learner Centered Teaching Strategies

Knowledge does not come from the teacher; it is constructed by the learners. Knowledge society requires use of varieties of strategies suited to each learner's intelligence. Effective teaching requires varieties of teaching methods so as to cover preferences of student groups for any modality. Do teacher educators employ learner centred strategies in teaching theory? Do they utilise constructivist approach, which points out that learning is a personal process? Personalising teaching and learning strategies enable students receive support tailored to their needs, interests and abilities (Gilbert 2006). These strategies are renewed commitment for learner-centered education. Do teacher training programmes provide training in facilitating personalised learning in the classrooms? Do they go for personalised learning of teacher trainees?

EVALUATION OF INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULA

Having physical or human resources is not enough for delivery of high quality initial teacher training programmes. Many developed nations carry out periodic evaluation of the programmes at national, state and institutional levels. The strategies employed include portfolios,

interviews, performances and direct observation. Is there a necessity for such types of evaluation in Indian situation? What should be the mechanism? Broadly, teacher education programmes are delivered by four types of institutions: University Departments of Education, Departments of Education in general colleges, Government Training Colleges and Private Training Colleges. Is there any difference in quality of the programmes delivered by these institutions? There is a Central Government scheme for improving quality of teacher education. Three types of institutions have come up: Institute of Advanced Study in Education (IASE), College of Teacher Education (CTE) and District Institute of Education & Training (DIET). Are IASEs, CTEs and DIETs providing better quality initial teacher training programmes? If not, should these be abolished? Is there a necessity of such institutions being managed by the Central Government?

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) OF SCHOOL TEACHERS

Inter-school sharing of experiences by teachers working at elementary school level is being carried out through the activities of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres. Is there a necessity for having such centres for secondary and higher secondary school teachers? Is quality of cluster resource centre activities getting negatively affected due to absence of highly knowledgeable and skilled master trainer, who is available in case of extension service centre? Many old teacher education institutions have extension Services Units. Should every teacher education institution have an extension services centre?

TRAINING COURSES FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Kothari (1966, p. 469) stated that "... special training courses (which do not exist at present) should be organized for headmasters. They should include short induction courses for those who are newly promoted as headmasters as well as periodical refresher courses for others". MHRD (1986, P. 27) stated that "Heads will be specially selected and trained." MHRD (1992, p. 117) stated that "Each State government should formulate a training policy and perspective plan for organising training programmes for educational planners and administrators at different levels." Chapman (2005, pp. 24-25) suggested induction programmes, mentoring programmes and leadership coaching. What factors are obstructing national government as well as State governments to provide a training programme for heads of schools delivered as Diploma courses though distance or face to face mode? What should be the duration of such a course? Can there be a degree course such as One Year Bachelor Educational Leadership (B.E.L.) course? Can such a course, be made available for supervisors / inspecting officers of schools?

TEACHER EDUCATORS

Updating of Knowledge and Skills

Recently, in two workshops being conducted for developing skills for writing research papers, it was found that all the participating teacher educators was not aware of the 86th amendment of the constitution. They did not know that elementary education had become a fundamental right and ECCE had a place in Article 45 of the directive Principles.

Continuous updating of knowledge and skills of teacher educators is essential for implementing an excellent initial teacher training curriculum. Should there be periodical tests conducted at various levels? Should there be a mechanism to make teacher educators aware of what changes have taken place in the materials they had learnt during their own training? Which agency should take lead in the matter? Is it necessary that quality assurance in teacher education need develop and operationalise resource centres for continuous updating of knowledge and skills of teacher educators?

Qualifications of Teacher Educators

The minimum qualification for a Lecturer in Education varies from State to State and from Central University to State University inside a State. Qualification wise, there are five types of Professors of Education, who besides a Ph. D. Degree in Education or any other subject has qualifications such as: (a) B. A. / B. Sc. & M. Ed.; (b) M. A. /M. Sc. & B. Ed.; (c) M. A. / M. Sc. & M. Ed.; (d) M. A. (Education); and (e) M. A. / M. Sc. Which of these is most effective? Many examining bodies require that a Lecturer in Education need to have another PG in addition to M. Ed. Do such teachers perceive that they are inferior to their counterparts teaching general subjects, who joined teaching profession two years earlier? Does this inferiority feeling affect quality of their performance?

School Teaching Experience of Teacher Educators

Many commissions in India and reports of many international bodies give stress on necessity of school teaching experience of faculty members

of teacher education institutions teaching method subjects. There are a large number of teacher educators without any school teaching experience. In earlier days, the faculty members used to have not only prior school teaching experience for enabling them to act as teacher educator, but also they had continued school teaching experience. Did this practice remove remoteness of staff in teacher education institutions from current classroom practice? Has non-specification of such a necessity by the UGC and other national bodies resulted in dilution of the quality of teacher training? In case of faculty members who do not have recent school teaching experience, do the demonstration lessons become stereotyped and ritualistic? In many systems, periodic school teaching was part of duty of teacher educators. In case of primary education in India, it was stated that "Without primary level teaching or research experience, particularly in rural schools, teacher educators are poorly prepared to educate" (World Bank, 1997, p. 161). Is this argument equally applicable for faculty members who teach B. Ed. courses?

Teacher Educators as Honorary Academic Supervisors of School Teachers

There are State Government institutions, where a faculty member has to teach for *less than three hours* a week. This is the worst kind of wastage of human resources. The teacher education institutions having only B. Ed. courses, on many occasions, are unable to provide any work to most of their faculty members, when admissions are delayed. Is it necessary to declare teacher educators as honorary academic supervisors of school teachers indicating their areas, so that the heads of the teacher institution can engage the fewer

hours working faculty members in observation and giving feedback of school teaching or in preparation of teacher support materials? Will feedback given by the faculty members of teacher education institutions help the school teachers, regular supervisors and heads of schools?

Test for Selection of Teacher Educators

As there is a difference in content covered in Method theory subject at B. Ed. and at M. Ed. or M. A. (Education), can a teacher educator selection test will take care of the differences in preparing teacher educator through M. A. (Education) or M. Ed. courses? M. Ed. course in many States are taught through State languages. Such students may not have acquired secondary school level English language. For example, it was found that a lecturer while filling up a Form for becoming member of an association, wrote "M. Phil" as "M. Fill". A Lecturer having studied M. Ed. through Gujarati medium generally can not teach B. Ed. Tamil medium students. Hence, is it necessary to have separate test for selection of teacher educators at each State level? Should there be national level and State level selection tests? Should the tests include assessment of classroom teaching performance through observation and analysis of video recording along with the applicant? Should there be a Test for issue of Provisional License and another Test for Issue of Regular License? If a national level test is suggested, which agency should take the responsibility of preparing test items, administering tests and declaring results

Orientation of New Teacher Educators

Adequately qualified persons starting career as teacher educators need orientation to the new

roles. Whether there is such a necessity? Studies conducted on existing teacher educators can help in answering this question. If the answer is yes, should studies be undertaken to suggest guidelines for such programmes?

CONCLUSION

Training teachers is a complex issue. "Teacher preparation has become a controversial issue all over the world." (Bray 2007, P. 11). Researches may not be able to suggest strategies that are effective universally, but these strategies can be adapted to suit to specific requirements. There has been no conclusive research evidence for teacher education that can be applicable globally. Various international bodies like UNESCO, World Bank and IIEP have been carrying out researches and encouraging nations to do research. In 2000, American Educational Research Association has set up a panel on Research and Teacher Education. Editors of this Panel stated that their job was to "recommend a new research agenda for teacher education by outlying topics that needed further study, identifying terms and concepts that required clarification and consistent usage, describing promising lines of research and processes most likely to define new directions and yield useful findings for policy and practice" (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner 2005, p. x). In this editorial, an attempt has been made to highlight a few research issues so as to provide a base for All India Association for Educational Research (<http://www.aiaer.net>) to set up a panel on Research and teacher Education.

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