

EDITORIAL
RESEARCH ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA¹

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The complexity in initial teacher training scenario has made it a Bermuda triangle. The teacher education policy is fragmented, incomplete and, more often than not, simply underdeveloped and many key problem areas frequently go unaddressed. Courses in initial teacher cannot, in a time table which is often tightly constrained, equip teachers fully for all the tasks that they will have to undertake. Not satisfied with effectiveness of initial teacher training programmes, many countries have started induction programmes for one year before a person is allowed to work as a regular teacher. With same training and same resources, teachers differ in their effectiveness. Studies have revealed no significant difference between pedagogically trained and untrained teachers. Such studies point out necessity of more researches in teacher education to improve the prevailing condition. The level of sincerity of teacher determines finally the quality of his/her work. Many teachers have been found not implementing the strategies learnt during their training programmes even on the first day of their entering into teaching profession. Functioning of a teacher is mostly influenced by internal forces such as state of physical and mental health, philosophy of life, etc. Attributes such as personal autonomy, morality, teaching aptitude, attitude towards teaching profession, love for students, creativity, resourcefulness, flexibility are difficult to develop in case of adult learners, especially those who enter teacher training programmes after obtaining a degree. However, there can be some possibility in case of teacher trainees, who are in their teen ages and take admission in four year integrated courses and pre primary and elementary teacher education courses at the age of 18+.

New areas in teacher education have been appearing at intervals, which require attention of teacher educators. Instead of depending on teacher education qualifications, many developed countries have started teacher recruitment testing agencies. A large number of good teacher education institutions have not bothered to get them accredited. Accreditation is also not a requirement for the State's teaching license and the hiring decision of a school district. Research in teacher education has not been able to give exact direction as the issues involved in teacher education are not as pin pointed as found in case of researches in physical sciences.

Research provides data for improving quality of system of teacher education. Research can be put into three main categories description, theory development and evidence of relationships. Other categories may be political inquiry, reflective practice, clinical analysis and action research. Research in teacher education has assumed importance in the present juncture, when teacher education has been taken lightly. Issues concerned with teacher education are teacher testing, basic skills testing, subject matter knowledge testing, professional skill testing, authentic assessment, portfolio assessment, case study examinations etc. Although follow up studies of products of teacher education provide valuable feedback for improving teacher training strategies, teacher education institutions rarely carry out such research.

Researches in teacher education are generally short lived. This happens due to fluidity in the situation on which researches are undertaken. Review of Indian researches in teacher education reveals that majority of researches are on training modalities of teachers at the pre service stage followed by researches on development of teaching skills. Majority of the survey studies pertain to the field of secondary teacher education, followed by elementary, higher secondary and pre primary. Least coverage of pre primary stage might be due to the fact that there are not many teacher training institutions at this stage. Most of the existing ones are also in the private sector and are not affiliated to any Board or State Govt. examination conducting body. Teacher training at elementary stage has not got its due importance. Researches pertaining to this stage are nearly 50% of those undertaken at secondary stage although number of elementary teacher education institutions is double of the number of secondary teacher education institutions.

There is an issue which is peculiar to Indian situation. Indian society is a caste based society. In ancient times the population was distributed into four categories priests, warriors, traders and service providers to above three categories. In course of time a section of people from the last category were termed as untouchables. At the time of independence, these were named as scheduled castes and special provision was given in the constitution for their integration with the main society. There were reservations for such children in all schools, except private not getting govt. aid and being run by minority institutions. Constitution provided also reservations for students from tribal communities, known as scheduled tribes. Special schools and hostels were created for such children in addition to reservation in other institutions. Whether such special schools and hostels facilitate or hinder the process of their integration with the larger community and whether special training is needed for teachers for such schools and general schools having such children and what should be the content of training are serious research issues, not yet found due place.

India is a miniature world. When one comes to certain urban areas one forgets that it is a developing country. There exists huge gap between high fee charging schools in urban areas and schools in remote rural areas. Whether, there is a necessity for area specific special teacher training is another issue. Similarly, there are central government run schools for talented children established in each district. Whether such teachers need special training to teach gifted children is another issue.

There are issues which have come up because of suggestions by agencies like UNESCO, World Bank and UNICEF to improve quality of school education. Whether education of physically handicapped children can be better given in special schools created by them or in the general schools having adopted inclusive education is another issue that has not been appropriately researched. Developed countries can afford to have equipment necessary for education of such children available in each school, which is a myth in case of a developing country like India. Whether each teacher can be trained in using Braille or in using sign language or a roving teacher trained in such skills can do justice by attending a school, once a week is another research issue.

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