

SHOULD THE NATION INTRODUCE PROVISIONAL AND PERIODIC LICENSE FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS?

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INTRODUCTION

In 1985, The Challenge of Education document of the Government of India stated that:

“It is widely believed, particularly by teachers themselves, that selection of teachers is not based entirely on merit. Consequently, quite a few people, who have neither the inherent competence nor the aptitude for teaching come into this profession. This happens largely because no screening worth the name is attempted while admitting students to teacher training schools and colleges. The teacher training too is not planned and organized to develop the spirit of inquiry, initiative, scientific temper, manual dexterity, conceptual clarity and linguistic skills for effective speaking and writing which teachers are expected to impart to their students. Adequate attention is also not given to develop communication skills which are crucial to the function of the teachers. The training programme also does not provide for developing receptivity to induction of modern educational aids nor does it impart skills to operate even audio-visual equipment. While it is increasingly emphasised that education should become an instrument of national integration, cultural cohesion and development of humanitarian values, the trainees in teacher training institutions are not exposed to these ideas. No wonder, then, that they should fail to discharge this function. (Ministry of Education 1985, pp.55 -56)

Has the situation improved? If the situation has not been improved should there be a teacher licensing system, to be renewed at intervals to persuade the teachers to utilise self-directed learning strategies in making them fit to changes in school curricula and also innovations in ever changing teaching and learning strategies?

A number of developed countries have teacher licensing system. Seventeen years ago, in the United States, (National Research Council, US 2001, p. 5) stated that “Licensure systems should be designed to rely on a comprehensive but parsimonious set of high-quality indicators.” Shuls and Trivitt. (2013, p. 1) analysing situation of licensing procedure and alternative routes of teacher training in United States stated that “there is little difference in terms of quality between traditionally and alternatively certified teachers. However, licensure exams do have some predictive power.” Analysing findings of PISA 2015, OECD (2018, p. 47) pointed out that “Certification requirements can add another layer of selection. While teacher certification, credentials and licenses offer no guarantee of excellence in teaching, they may help ensure that only the most motivated candidates progress in their career. ” The study reported that Australia has a system of teacher registration renewal every five years, till the teachers achieve “Proficient” level, in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. In South Australia, once an individual is in his/ her final semester of study in an Australian teacher education program, or his/ her overseas qualifications have been assessed as meeting the Board’s registration requirements, s/he can apply for teacher registration (Teachers Registration Board of South Australia 2018 September 8). In Singapore, the country which had topped in the latest PISA, does not have any system of licensing. “However, teaching graduates in Singapore must successfully complete a probation period in which their competence for the job is evaluated” (OECD 2018, p. 48). Singapore ensures better

teacher candidates by offering teacher trainees competitive monthly stipends for which the top third of the secondary school graduating class students opt for teacher training.

In United States, Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standard Board (2017) states that “applicants of a first professional teaching license must provide evidence of completing the skills examinations in reading, writing, and mathematics using the examinations adopted by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.” In Germany, there is provision for initial teaching certificate, which needs to be renewed at intervals. Provision existing in Alabama State for initial teaching certificate as found on 2018 September 9 is given below:

There are 3 classes of Professional Educator Certification in Alabama - Class B, Class A and Class AA. Each class is connected with differing pay structures (exact pay will depend on the county where you wish to teach - contact your desired county to learn the exact compensation). The following are educational requirements for each certification Class.

Prior to qualifying for Alabama teaching certification, you will need to pass the Alabama Prospective Teacher Testing Program or APTTP. The APTTP is a statewide testing program to ensure new teachers are proficient in 3 basic skill areas - Mathematics, Reading, and Writing - as well as any prescribed subject or instructional support areas (e.g. Chemistry, Biology, Calculus, etc.). Subject area testing will be provided through the Praxis II subject assessment examinations. Official scores of all examinations need to be sent directly from examining organization to the Alabama Department of Education to be considered official.(Alabama Department of Education 2018a)

In our own country, there was a system of probationary period in teaching jobs, and a teacher was confirmed, only when the head of the institution

gave a satisfactory certificate. It may be necessary to have appropriate changes in teacher recruitment rules making a Provisional License to teach that may be valid for one year. A person with provisional license may take up the work of a regular teacher on a lower rate of remuneration than applicable to a fully licensed teacher. In order to be entitled to appear at the test meant for issue of regular license, the person with provisional license may need to undergo further training for a period of one year under the guidance of a carefully selected experienced teacher called mentor. A mentor may be a duly selected experienced teacher. Selection of teachers to act as mentors may be carried out by the Directorates of School Education of the concerned State /UT School Departments through their Inspectors/Supervisors on the basis of analysis of records of performance. A mentor at the class XI-XII stage may be for a particular subject. The mentor may be paid remuneration for the work at a rate to be fixed by the concerned State Government.

The Centre on International Education Benchmarking (2016, p. 7) points out that in Singapore, all teacher trainees are selected on the basis of performance on a written test and interview to test attitude, aptitude and personality and are closely monitored and if necessary are asked to withdraw from teacher training. On joining a school, beginning teachers pass through an Induction process spread over two years, in which they are given 80% of workload and work under supervision of mentor teachers. May be our nation study the system of Singapore and introduce such an induction programme for our beginning teachers and bear the cost of training of mentor teachers and incentives / remuneration to mentor teachers. After successful completion of induction programme, the candidate may apply for Regular License as a Teacher.

Present teacher selection test may be treated as test for provisional license for teaching. It may be improved by including certified video recording of Classroom Teaching Skill Test and interview based on the video recorded teaching..

The system of renewal of registration is in vogue in a large number of developed nations. In a study conducted in United States, Buddin and Zamarro (2008, p. 31) reported that “More experienced or better educated or more skilled teachers (as measured by licensure exams) may inherently be better able to teach, but they may not persistently practice those abilities in the classroom.”(Buddin and Zamarro (2008, p.31). Teachers Registration Board of South Australia (2018 September 8 b) states that “Your teacher registration is active until 31 January of the third year following your last registration or renewal. Prior to your registration expiry date you can apply to renew it for a further 3 years. You can check your expiry date on the [public register](#).” Provision existing in Alabama for teaching certificate renewal as found on 2018 September 9 is given below:

“To renew a Professional Educator Certificate (valid for 5 years) that expires June 30th, all requirements must be completed by September 1st of the same calendar year. And your application must be received by the Teacher Education and Certification Office of the Alabama Department of Education no later than December 31st of the same calendar year.”

As per this document renewal is granted, after three years of service. (Alabama Department of Education 2018b)

In India, the license may be initially issued for a period of three years. During this period, the teacher may have to produce evidence of 1.Successful participation in in-service programmes for at least a period of three months, on own initiative, 2. Record of at least 12 action researches, 3. Presentation of at least three papers in conferences / seminars for school teachers and publication of at least two articles in state level monthly journal, on school education, if any brought out by state government agency / association of school teachers.

If teacher licensing system-provisional and regular is introduced, it may be necessary to have two levels of teacher eligibility tests. Of course, the regular licenses may need to take into consideration other aspects of teacher performance such as portfolios, video recording of lessons, student assignments, etc. Introduction of licensing system-for specific duration may motivate teachers to update their knowledge and skill through self-directed learning strategies including use of online resources that may take care of the damage caused due to loss of periodic teacher in-service programmes carried out through extension services department of teacher training institutions.

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AFRICENTRIC EPISTEMOLOGIES AND ONTOLOGIES DIRECTING RESEARCH ON AFRICAN ISSUES FOR AUTHENTIC OUTCOMES

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The focus of research in Africa has often been limited only to areas where funding exists, accordingly failing to address the all-important issue of Africentricism (Sawyer, 2004). Such research outcomes impacting policy respond to narrowly defined objectives of the funding agencies thus missing out in documenting the held ideals and values of the people and culture. Studies of this nature use research methods built on Eurocentric theories, not well equipped to handle typical contextual issues relevant in understanding African epistemologies as valid frame of reference for Africa that address African reality. Peoples' philosophy and psychology depict their mind theory in the way they think, feel and function, given the relational nature of the culture. This paper therefore advocates for a change in the conduct of research relevant to Africentric epistemologies and ontologies. The responsiveness of research is of value to what constitute a people's behaviours; how these behaviours patterns are acquired, represented and the purpose these serve in human existence. Africentric epistemological experiences are deeply rooted in the logical processes of induction whereby knowledge is socially constructed from specific observations and interdependent behaviours to broader generalizations and theories. This paper advocates the adoption of an inductive approach to understand the reality of the context before subjection to deductive methodologies.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, it of importance to develop in people research skills that are essential for production of useful knowledge that can lead to development. Critical creation and dissemination of knowledge is vital