

REDEFINING QUALITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

"If you want to think one year ahead, plant rice If you want to think 10 years ahead, plant trees But if you want to think 100 years ahead, give education to people."

The process of teaching learning is as old as human beings on the earth. It has been from informal learning to formal learning with the passage of time. Teaching is a profession and teacher education is a process of professional preparation of teachers. The main challenge faced by the teaching profession today is both one of numbers and quality. Achieving quality education for all, calls for more and be

tter trained teachers, as pedagogical processes lie at the heart of quality education. Teachers make the highest impact on quality in the classroom. They are at the heart of education, but the status of overall teacher education in India is pathetic, to put it mildly, there is a need for high quality teacher educators. The vicious cycle of poor quality in-service teacher development begins with the absence of high quality teacher educators. Education functionaries need to be well equipped. The challenge of providing democratic, accessible and equitable education at each level continues to be a major task before the policy makers, along with changes/improvements in terms of access, equity, infrastructure, preparation, motivation and deployment of teachers, and provision of quality textbooks etc. This paper discusses about some of the issues and challenges to be implemented in education for achieving quality in teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS: Quality Education, Teacher Education, Policy Makers, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Education has always been an important component of education since time immemorial. This is because all societies in the world have always needed teachers to propagate/transmit their cultures from one generation to another. Teachers need to be seen as creators of knowledge and thinking professionals. Education is a dynamic, continually evolving concept that keeps adapting to the changes around it. Likewise, the methodology used in teaching is equally transitory in nature and demands contemporary approaches too. Quality education means that the majority of the students, if not all, is able to meet the expectation of the "Minimum Level of Learning". It means stimulating creative thinking, developing problem-solving skills and life skills and laying emphasis on application of knowledge. Quality is the basic or essential character, for the product of service of an organisation, or entity.

Quality of Teacher Education Programme

Quality is not just the quantum of knowledge imparted to students but also the effectiveness with which they are able to apply that knowledge in meeting the challenges of tomorrow. Quality of teacher education programme also depends on the quality of teaching. The quality of education we provide to our children depends on the quality of education of teachers we inject into the education system, which in turn depends on the quality of teacher education programme. Only competent, committed and resourceful teachers can give quality education. There is a need for training teachers in community health, guidance and counselling, research, strategies, competitions, personal development and student support

services. Training in the use of computers has become a major priority for teachers both nationally and internationally. Quality determines how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits. Dakar Framework for Action (2000) emphasises the need of a stimulating pedagogy. It is the teaching and learning process that brings the curriculum to life, which determines what, happens in the classroom and subsequently the quality of the learning outcomes.

Three Pillars of Quality Education

- **Quality Teaching** is ensured through the recruitment of high calibre candidates to teaching profession and the support given to them throughout their career. Teachers are the most important educational resource and a critical determinant of quality. They must be treated as respected professionals. Teaching must provide an attractive career choice, and must remain sufficiently attractive, in terms of salaries and conditions of employment, to retain the best teachers in the service;
- **Quality Tools** include appropriate curriculum, inclusive teaching & learning materials and resources to be provided, through the application of information and communication technology (ICT) i.e. by harnessing the enormous power of the internet and the capacity and accessibility of modern technology to assist and support teaching and learning;
- **Quality Environment** through supportive, comfortable, safe, secure, with appropriate facilities to encourage student learning and to enable teachers to teach effectively. A quality environment engages parents, students, teachers, school authorities and supporting staff to work together in order to achieve the goal of providing quality education.

Quality vs Quantity

Achieving quality education for all, calls for more and more better trained teachers, as pedagogical processes lie at the heart of quality education. The challenge of quantity must be met head-on, while ensuring quality and equity. Teachers make the highest impact on quality in the classroom. They are at the heart of education but the status of overall teacher education in India is pathetic, to put it mildly. The main challenge faced by the teaching profession today is both one of numbers and quality. With an estimated 1.7 million new teachers required to reach universal primary education by 2015, the recruiting of new teachers must go hand in hand with improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Quality Enhancement & Assurance

Quality enhancement should exploit and use the knowledge generated within the system and build on both national and international research in the field. Quality assurance and quality enhancement are coordinated and integrated in the overall work on quality. Quality enhancement requires that teachers, course and programme directors and students are given the opportunity to carry out, on an ongoing basis, active improvement efforts for which they receive some form of credit. Further, this work must be based on evaluation findings and relevant research and development in higher education. The aim is to promote a quality culture in which the results of work on quality are recognised and rewarded. Development of teachers' skills through training in higher education teaching methods will be integrated with work on the development of teaching.

Quality Improvement

Quality improvement is a survival practice for any organization in this globalization, liberalization and privatization era, for which the educational institutions cannot escape from this global phenomenon. The teacher education

programme play a great role by providing essential components of teaching process to the teacher trainees who are directly responsible for producing future citizens to the nation. Hence it is essential to develop the teacher education programme, which can cater the changing needs of the society, as the change has been universally accepted as essential features of modern life in a society. The whole educational system needs to be re-structured itself to meet the requirements of the fast changing society.

Teachers' Role in the Present Scenario

- Teachers should be prepared for the love & care of children, love knowledge and be constantly learning, own responsibility towards society and work to build a better world, develop sensitivity to the problems of the learners, commitment to justice and zeal for social reconstruction;
- Teachers should change their perception of child as a receiver of knowledge and encourage its capacity to construct knowledge; they should ensure that learning shifts away from rote methods. Learning is to be viewed as a search for meaning out of personal experiences and knowledge generation as a continuously evolving process of reflective learning;
- Teacher education should engage with theory along with field experiences to help trainees to view knowledge not as external to the learner but as something that is actively constructed during learning. Teacher education should integrate academic knowledge and professional learning into a meaningful whole;
- Teachers need to be trained in organizing learner-centred, activity based, participatory learning experiences – play, projects, discussion, dialogue, observation, visits, integrating academic learning with productive work;
- Teacher education should engage teachers with the curriculum, syllabi and textbooks to critically examine them rather than taking them as 'given' and accepted without question;
- Teacher education should provide opportunity to trainees for reflection and independent study without packing the training schedule with teacher-directed activities only;
- Need to appreciate the potential of productive work and hands-on experience as a pedagogic medium both inside and outside the classroom; work is integral to the process of education;
- The programme should engage teachers with children in real contexts than teach them about children through theories. It should help them understand the psychosocial attributes and needs of learners, their special abilities and characteristics, their preferred mode of cognition, motivation and learning resulting from home and community socialization;
- The programme should help teachers to develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities;
- Need to broaden the curriculum (both school and teacher education) to include different traditions of knowledge; train and educate teachers to connect school knowledge with community knowledge and life outside the school, and thereby enrich the curriculum so that it goes beyond the textbooks and contextualizes educational experiences;
- Need to re-conceptualize citizenship training in terms of human rights and approaches of critical pedagogy; emphasize environment and its protection, living in harmony within oneself and with natural and social

environment; promote peace, democratic way of life, constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty, fraternity, secularism and caring values; and

- In view of the many sided objectives of teacher education the evaluation protocol should be comprehensive and provide due place for evaluation of attitudes, values, dispositions, habits and hobbies (in addition to the conceptual and pedagogical aspects) through appropriate quantitative as well as qualitative techniques.

Towards Qualitative Teacher Education

The essence of teacher education is quality. In its absence, teacher education becomes not only a financial waste, but a source of overall deterioration in educational standards. Reorganisation is needed at all levels and in all courses. The following are some of the principles for reorganisation:

- Proper manpower planning of teacher education to estimate the number of teachers required during the next five years and accordingly adjusting the admissions in training colleges.
- Improvement of physical infrastructure and learning conditions in the training institutions.
- Developing individual building capacity and leadership skills in training institutions.
- Establishment of extension service departments in the training institutions for regular guidance of schools.
- A comprehensive program of in-service teachers training for existing teachers.
- Improvement in methods of teaching and evaluation with internal monitoring and performance measures.
- Since, teachers have to build up the character of students, it is necessary that teacher's education should inculcate those values which the teachers are supposed to strengthen in society and to inculcate in their students.
- The faculty of training institutes should be adequately trained for their work of preparing teachers through in-service programmes or special orientation courses.
- Need for the reorientation of curriculum in training institutions for better academic and professional preparation of teachers.
- The leading teacher educators should come together to discuss about the curriculum, methods of work, activities, evaluation etc.
- For the teaching faculty, there should be educational research and teaching improvement units in every institute or university to advice teachers on improving their own teaching.
- Implementation of NCF 2005, the guiding light of Indian Education at every level of teacher education programme.

CONCLUSIONS

A teacher needs the appropriate knowledge and skills, personal characteristics, professional prospects and motivation if they are to meet the expectations placed upon them. The most significant quality perspective is the need to realize the importance of the teacher preparation program to ensure professionalism in the processes and practices. This professionalism can be achieved only by total commitment, devotion and continuous efforts on enhancing quality in transaction.

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