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Curriculum Design and Transaction in Teacher Education: Present and Future

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Abstract

Enlightened, emancipated and empowered teachers lead communities and nations in their march towards better and higher quality of life. Teachers are the torch bearers in creating social cohesion, national integration and a learning society. They not only disseminate knowledge but also create and generate new knowledge. They are responsible for acculturating role of education. No nation can even marginally slacken its efforts in giving necessary professional inputs to its teachers and along with that due status to their stature and profession. Kothari Commission (1964-66) stated, "The essence of programme of teacher education is quality and in its absence, teacher education becomes not only a financial waste but a source of overall deterioration in educational standards". Accepting that the existing teacher education programme are largely divorced from the realities of school, it is recommended that there should be reorientation of subject knowledge, vitalization of professional studies and to root the entire curriculum in Indian condition; development of special courses and programme, revision and improvement of curriculum in the light of globalization and need of the nation.

Key Words: Curriculum Design, Transaction, Teacher Education

Introduction:

"The destiny of India is being shaped in its classroom"

- Kothari Commission

In a new era of globalization and information technology, knowledge becomes the most important asset of a society and the driving force of nearly all types of economic, social and political developments. In this context, education is often expected to be the key for the future and can build up the necessary knowledge forces among young generations. It is common knowledge that the quality of education highly depends on teacher's abilities.

Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand in the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. They are accepted as the backbone of education system. Teacher quality is; therefore, crucial and has been globally accepted to be significantly associated with the quality of education in general and students learning outcomes in particular. The Education Commission (1964-66) accepted this influence of teachers in powerful words, "No people can rise above the level of its teacher." The most effective way to develop good teachers in a dynamic and changing environment is to begin with a well developed pre-service teacher education programme and continue with career long learning opportunities.

Teacher education is an integral component of the education system; it is intimately connected with society and is conditioned by the ethos, culture and character of a nation. The constitutional goals, the directive principles of the state policy, the socio-economic problems and the growth of knowledge, the emerging expectations and the changes taking place in education call for an appropriate response from a futuristic teacher education system.

The Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) observed that "... What obtains in the majority of our teaching colleges and training institutes is woefully inadequate...." However, in reality even after a approximately five decade of the observation made by the Education Commission (1964-66) in this context that "Vitality and realism are lacking in the curriculum and programme of work which continues to be largely traditional with disregard for the present day need and objectives" (Para.402;p.68), remains relevant, though a number of policy initiatives have been taken by the government, from time to time, to modernize and bring qualitative improvement in teacher education curriculum of our country.

Current concerns of Teacher Education programme

The National Curriculum framework for Teacher Education has described the current concerns of teacher education as follows:

- Experiences in the practice of teacher education indicate that knowledge is treated as 'given', embedded in the curriculum and accepted without question; there is no concept of engagement in the curriculum.
- Language proficiency of teacher needs to be enhanced, and the existing programmes do not recognize the centrality of language in the curriculum.
- Teacher education programmes provide little scope for student teachers to reflect on their experiences.
- Disciplinary knowledge is viewed as independent of professional training in pedagogy.
- 'Repeated practice' in the teaching of 'isolated lessons' (of required number) is a sufficient condition for professional development.
- It is assumed that links between theories of child development and learning, instructional models and methods of teaching specific subjects are automatically formed in the understanding developed by student teachers.
- There is no opportunity for teachers to examine their own biases and beliefs and reflect on their own experiences as part of classroom discourse and enquiry.
- Theory courses have no clear link with practical work and ground realities.
- The evaluation system followed in teacher education programmes is too information-oriented, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehension.
- Apart from conceptual and pedagogical aspects, existing programmes need to develop certain attitudes, dispositions, habits and interests in a teacher. The present evaluation protocol has no place for evaluation of these aspects.
- The present teacher education programmes train teachers to adjust to the needs of the existing system through (a) the meticulous planning of lessons in standardized formats, (b) the ritual of fulfilling the required number of lessons delivered and supervised, (c) the ritual of organizing school assemblies and other routine activities, and (d) the ritual of completing the required number of written assignments and projects.

An overhauling of teacher education has become imminent for ascertaining effective and immediate measures to enhance its impact potential.

Redesigning Present Teacher Education Curriculum

To make teacher education curriculum more effective the existing one year B.Ed programme must be structurally transformed to a two year which will lead to deeper and more protracted engagement with school based experiences and reflective and critical engagement with theory.

Teacher education curriculum has to become more sensitive to the emerging demands of school system. To achieve this objective teacher must be prepared for a dual role:

- Encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations who enables learners to discover their talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens.
- An active member of the group of persons who make conscious efforts to contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum to maintain its relevance to the changing societal needs and personal needs of learner.

The process to prepare such teachers requires a curriculum which will include:

- Opportunities to observe and engage with children; communicate with and relate to children.
- Providing opportunities for self learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas; developing capacities for self-directed learning and the ability to think, be self critical and to work in groups.
- Opportunities for understanding self and others (including one's beliefs, assumptions and emotions); developing the ability for self analysis, self evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation.
- Providing opportunities to enhance understanding, knowledge, examine disciplinary knowledge and social realities, relate subject matter with the social milieu and develop critical thinking.
- Providing opportunities to develop professional skills in pedagogy, observation, documentation, analysis, drama, craft, storytelling and reflective enquiry.

All the above mentioned opportunities are feasible if following suggestions are incorporated in the teacher education curriculum:

- Theory courses should have inbuilt field based unit of study leading to projects and assignments.

- Comprehensive, systematic and scientific approaches to health education and health awareness should be included in the curriculum.
- Provide opportunity for teacher trainees to engage with issues and concerns of contemporary Indian society: pluralistic culture, identity, gender equity, poverty and diversity which would provide a social, cultural and political context to locate education and its practice.
- Course that focuses on developing the proficiency level of student teachers in the appropriate language.
- Hands-on experience must be provided for developing curriculum and learning material.
- Internship must help student teachers to choose, design, organize and conduct meaningful classroom activities, critically reflect upon their own practices through observation, record keeping and analysis and develop strategies for evaluating students learning for feedback into curriculum and pedagogic practice.
- Training for life skills must be included in the syllabus. The Darkar framework for action draws on the Delors (1996) reports pillars of education to elaborate life skill areas: (a) Learning to know – Thinking abilities (b) Learning to be- Personal abilities (c) Learning to live together- Social abilities (d) Learning to do- Manual skills.
- Due to globalization curriculum must ensure that student-teachers have inter-cultural competence. It can be developed through subjects like comparative education, international education, education for sustainable development and education for developing entrepreneurial activities.
- Subjects like Science, Mathematics, Languages, etc. must be organized in such a manner that it shifts the focus from pure disciplinary knowledge and methodology to the learner and his/her context. This will facilitate to teacher to draw upon epistemological insights while teaching any of the key discipline.
- Provide hand-on experience in designing assessment tools that are qualitative in nature and assess children's developing capacities to think and solve problems rather than recall.
- New trends in teaching like data logging devices, Mathematics lab, Skype, videoconferencing, smart boards, etc. must be included in the curriculum, and also first hand experience must be provided of the same.

Curriculum Transaction of Teacher Education Curriculum:

In India teacher education are averse to innovations and experimentation in the use of methods of teaching. They use traditional methods of instruction like lecturing and dictating notes. Teacher education programmes are concerned with adult learners. They need to be based on an adequate understanding of how adults learn. Adults learners are autonomous and self directed, have a vast amount of life experiences and knowledge, are pragmatic and goal directed and response better to problem solving and task oriented learning. The emphasis therefore, has to be on developing professional knowledge and capacities through a variety of self directed tasks, including case studies, projects, seminars and research activity.

Teacher educators must be well equipped with skills related to teaching with use of new technological methods. Student-teachers must be encouraged to work in groups for presentation, discussion, seminars, and symposium.

Conclusion

One of the key problems in the present crises of education is the burden that it imposes on our children. This burden arises as much from an incoherent curriculum structure that is disassociated from life and culture of children and from the inadequate preparation of teachers who are unable to make connections with children and respond to their needs in imaginative and dynamic ways. Teachers need to be seen as creators of knowledge and thinking professionals. They need to be empowered to recognize and value what children learn from their home, social and cultural environment and to create opportunities for children to discover, learn and develop.

Identifying the need to view the teacher as central to the process of change in school education, the Chattopadhyaya Commission noted, "If school teachers are expected to bring about a revolution in their approach to teaching... that same revolution must practice and find a place in the colleges of education."

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