



## COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES AND SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

*Teachers are the furthestmost assets of any education system. They play a vital role in the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. Teachers can create social cohesion, national integration and a learning society. Teacher education plays crucial role in restructuring and strengthening the education system of any country.*

*Teacher training has promising global trends in education and it is an integral part of educational system. Teacher education in India has to be responsive to socio-cultural ethos and national development. The National Council for Teacher Education has to initiate suitable measures to make teacher education at various levels responsive to such developments as well as to quality concerns in future.*

*This paper discusses the collaboration between the teacher education institutes and schools for quality teacher education in Indian context. It includes aims, importance and Models of collaboration. It also explains the benefits, difficulties and conditions for successful collaboration between TEIs and schools.*

**Keywords:** *Collaboration, Teacher Education Institutes, Schools*



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### 1. Introduction

Teachers are the furthestmost assets of any education system. They play a vital role in the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. Teachers can create social cohesion, national integration and a learning society. Teacher education plays crucial role in restructuring and strengthening the education system of any country.

Teacher training has promising global trends in education and it is an integral part of educational system. Teacher education in India has to be responsive to socio-cultural ethos and national development. The National Council for Teacher Education has to initiate suitable measures to make teacher education at various levels responsive to such developments as well as to quality concerns in future. The collaboration between the teacher education institutes and schools will be helpful for improvement of the teacher education in India.

Traditionally, schools and Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) have worked together in a relatively loosely organized relationship to prepare pre-service teachers for the classroom. In a common circumstances, a teacher educator contacts a school principal and begs for a field experience or student teaching placement, hoping all the while the teacher accepting the placement will be reasonably good (Goodlad, 2004; Walkington, 2007).

The professional relationship between school teachers and teacher educator is often minimal due to frequent principal and teacher turnover, which is a contributing negative factor in working out internship placements (Heath, 2005; Heath & Johnson-Taylor, 2006).

Additionally, understandings at the school level of

Teacher Education Institute expectations regarding field experiences of preservice teachers are a mixed type – some good, some bad, others not so good or bad. Teacher Education Institutes normally have very specific expectations for what students will learn through each internship and student teaching, yet it is not surprising these expectations are often not fully met.

There is absence of clear information regarding the roles and responsibilities, TEIs and schools for teacher training. The teachers generally try hard to provide teacher candidates with what they believe to be important. Because the danger exists that a disparity between what Teacher Education Institutes expect to happen in internships or student teaching, and what may actually happen, it is critical that close relationships be developed between schools receiving preservice teachers and their TEI programs. Therefore, the collaboration between TEIs and schools should be developed.

## **2. Collaboration between TEIs and schools**

The interactions between TEIs and schools, which supports for the best teaching opportunities for practicing the teaching of student teachers is the collaboration between TEIs and schools. This collaboration has three important aims:

- i. To improve methods for teaching and learning,
- ii. To raise the quality of teachers, and
- iii. To develop knowledge about teaching and learning through research

TEIs and schools should play an active role in developing teaching methods, improving the quality of teaching, and extending knowledge about teaching and learning through the collaboration. The changing demands of society create heavy expectations on teachers to help young people become fully autonomous learners by acquiring key skills, rather than memorising information; they are asked to develop more collaborative and constructive

approaches to learning and expected to be facilitators and classroom managers rather than trainers.

As with any other modern profession, teachers also have a responsibility to extend the boundaries of professional knowledge through a commitment to reflective practice, through research, and through a systematic engagement in continuous professional development from the beginning to the end of their careers. Systems of education and training for teachers need to provide the necessary opportunities for this. Collaboration between schools and TEIs can provide support system.

### **3. Importance of Collaboration between TEIs and Schools**

Meaningfully and effectively training preservice teachers cannot happen at the TEIs level only and must be a shared enterprise with schools (McEwin, et al., 1995). Schools need high quality teachers, and Teacher Education Institutes strive to provide programs which will develop them. As relationships between schools and TEIs grow and become more and more symbiotic, preservice teachers engage in continuously improving levels of structured, well-defined, and implemented experiences.

Preservice teachers must have access to students in a classroom setting, and must be expected to, and have opportunities to, prepare high quality, standards-based lessons, and then teach them to diverse groups of students. Clearly, when preservice teachers have more highly structured opportunities working in a setting geared to support their preparation as teachers, they will have a much greater likelihood of becoming truly highly qualified to teach.

TEI and Schools partnerships will have a higher capacity toward developing collaborative relationships, improving teaching skills and strategies, and providing opportunities to update and improve preservice teacher education programs.

Close collaboration with schools is an important piece toward the continuous improvement of teacher education programs in TEIs. When TEI faculties, classroom teachers and principals are actively involved in determining teacher education programme improvements, school teachers gain a higher level of confidence in preservice teacher preparation, content knowledge and instructional skills. Additionally, program improvements developed with both best practices research and practical application experiences of teachers add meaning and depth to preservice teacher training.

Collaborations such as those described allow TEIs and schools to develop a sense of common purpose, in that Teacher educator and school teachers work together to provide the best possible circumstances. In turn, a common knowledge set is created, providing school

teachers with understandings of the TEI program and its goals, a common knowledge of the workings and needs of schools, their educational goals for students and professional development goals for teachers, as well as two-way input into the preparation needs of preservice teachers.

#### **4. Models of collaboration**

Depending on local and national structures, conditions, traditions, a wide variety of collaboration models can exist. Collaboration may vary according to:

1. the nature of the contract or collaboration agreement;
2. number of partner institutions involved
3. type of partner institutions involved (TEI, local authority, national agencies, one school, several schools
4. focus of the collaboration (the training of student teachers / in-service training of school staff / school development / research
5. The geographical extent of the collaboration (involving local partners, regional or national stakeholders or also focusing on international exchange and networks

#### **Types of collaboration models**

- i. TEI initiated collaboration (TEI- Schools collaboration)
- ii. School initiated collaboration (School- TEIs collaboration)
- iii. Collaboration with research (Research department of TEI – Schools collaboration)

#### **5. Benefits of collaboration**

The Collaboration benefits for the school as follows:

1. Involvement in the initial education of new teachers;
2. In-service development of staff within the School;
3. Increase school's capacity for innovation and knowledge development through support from teacher educators and through student-teachers' development and research activities;
4. The feedback of the outcomes of education research into the reality of the professional within schools.

#### **The Collaboration also benefits for TEIs:**

1. Opportunities to relate the curriculum of teacher education more closely to the complex reality within the school;
2. To provide student teachers with a realistic learning environment;

3. To get realistic and relevant research questions and assignments for student teachers

**The Collaboration also benefits for the student teachers:**

1. involvement in the reality of schools helps to reduce the ‘practice shock’ sometimes experienced by students at the end of their studies;
2. Students will get a more realistic view of the profession and the demands that it places on teachers;
3. Students will be involved in a wider variety of activities, better reflecting the breadth of the profession.

**6. Difficulties in collaboration between TEIs and schools:**

1. Lack of value recognition from school personnel of a need for their involvement in preservice teacher preparation.
2. It has often been a ‘one-sided’ relationship, in which the school is the passive recipient of trainee teachers and in which most power lies with the TEIs;
3. Communication between the two parties has not always been optimal;
4. Schools may have negative perceptions of TEIs, and vice versa;
5. A gap is sometimes perceived between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’;
6. The contribution that a TEIs can make to a school’s programme of continuous professional development for its staff, the contribution that student teachers can make to school development, or the contributions that school staff can make to Teacher Education have not always been recognised, leading to wasted opportunities.
7. Schools have not developed systemic procedures to handle preservice traffic in schools.

**7. Conditions for successful collaboration**

1. The collaboration should be based on a national framework, identifying aims, expectations, outcomes, conditions and resources.
2. The partners need to be clearly identified. This can be done on two levels: the institutional level (schools, TEIs, local authorities) and the participants level (teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, school leaders). On both levels it is important to identify the benefits for each involved.
3. The collaboration is based upon, supported and strengthened through concrete activities.
4. For each of the institutions and participants, the contribution, roles and

responsibilities need to be clearly stated.

5. The collaboration model, the activities and the roles and responsibilities should fit the local context of the partnership; therefore, the concrete structure of the partnership may vary.
6. Collaboration should have clear mechanisms for creating a shared understanding and involvement, e.g. through the exchange of staff or by creating pairs of participants (one from each partner) which work closely together.
7. Collaboration should explicitly take responsibility to exchange, spread and disseminate the partnership results to schools and institutions outside the partnership.
8. Collaboration should have the opportunity to grow and to extend their focus beyond the initial education of student teachers and to extend to Professional Development of staff, innovation and research.
9. For each of the partners the benefits must be clear, leading to a 'win-win' situation in which each partner understands the tangible benefits to be obtained by taking part.
10. An essential condition for effective collaboration is to have a shared vision, purpose and understanding between all participants in the collaboration.

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