# Teacher preparation In a New Perspective: Quality Indicators in Teacher Education Programmes

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**Abstract**
At present a number of initiatives are being taken from various bodies for bringing qualitative reform in teacher education. To make these measures more focused and cost effective, there is a dire need to identify the significant areas/aspects of quality improvement. This paper presents the findings of the study which was focused on identifying the quality indicators in teacher education programmes and ranking them in the light of perceptions of teacher educators working at public universities. 'Teachers' professional development' received top most rating whereas 'publication of self assessment reports' was the bottom ranked indicator. This study is significant in the sense that it generated primary data about quality assurance in teacher education. The findings of this study have implications for NAAC, Accreditation Council for Teacher Education and TEIs' management for highlighting the important aspects which may he focused for quality improvement in teacher education programmes. For assessing quality of academic programmes using the suggested quality indicators, it is recommended that standards in the form of statements may be formulated for each indicator.

**Keywords**
Quality Assurance; Quality Indicators; Teacher Education; Education Quality; Quality Control; Self-assessment

## I. Introduction

The quality of basic education provided to our children is largely influenced by the quality of our teachers in the schools. As no nation can afford to provide poor quality education, it is necessary that we build a strong system of quality teacher education – on which depends the quality of the teacher and ultimately the Nation's education. The political and socio-economic conditions set insurmountable dilemmas for quality assurance systems. The present standards for the teacher education programmes in most of the Asian and African countries rests totally with Government agencies who have very little or no involvement and understanding of the profession . They are concerned only with the issues of growing teacher shortage and of ways and means to overcome the problem. It is high time we realize that it's not just the teacher shortage but the quality of 'so called' trained teachers that are primarily responsible for quality in the school systems.

Quality and caliber of teachers that serve the educational system of a country can serve as an index of development and progress for that country. " As is the school, so is society. And as is the teacher, so is the school. This is because in any process of education, there always stands the teacher, in front or the back, at the center or at the side . . . ., what he knows and does makes a great difference and what he does not know, cannot do or fails to do can be an irreparable loss to the child and the society at large" (Mallison 1975).

Teacher shortage and teacher quality coupled with the poor quality of teacher education programmes, both pre-service and in service, have been negatively influencing the education systems of Nations, reversing years of investment. If we have to attend to the growing concern of teacher quality and teacher shortage, then it is crucial to examine the core of the problem that is the type of teacher preparation and training being provided.

As a first step it is required that we identify the developmental needs of our schools, of our teachers and the teacher educators. Secondly, a framework need to be evolved which would provide a systematic observation and recording tool which will help the institutions to ascertain and assure their quality provision. While much work has been done and documented on the first issue not much has been attempted on developing an assessment strategy for self introspection and continuous development by the teacher education institutions.

Realizing that the quality of the teachers as long regarded is a professional responsibility rather than a policy issue, and the need to evolve a framework and evaluation tool to help institutions in quality assurance and continuous improvement, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has initiated the process of developing Quality Indicators for Teacher Education .The National Education Policy : 1998 – 2010 has rightly highlighted the quality problems by observing: " The qualitative dimension of teacher education program has received marginal attention resulting in mass production of teachers with shallow understanding of both the content and methodology of education" (Government of Pakistan, 1998, p.47). The said policy plans the standardization and institutionalization of accreditation and certification procedures in teacher education in the country. The Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (ACTE) has also been established currently at national level, which is working on development of specific standards and requirements for teacher education programmes and institutions. The recent development from the Council is formulation of "National Standards for Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs" which are related to following seven aspects: 'curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation system; physical infrastructure, academic facilities and learning resources; human resources; finance and management; research and scholarship; and community links and outreach' (National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education [NACTE], 2009).

## II. Indicators in Education

The initiative has brought together teacher educators quality assurance experts and policy makers from around eleven Commonwealth countries. Experts from Namibia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Botswana, United Kingdom (U.K.), Mauritius, Australia and Singapore participated in the initial workshop and subsequent development process. The Expert Group was tasked with identifying and short listing the potential indicators for quality teacher education. The experts met and deliberated in the series of workshops held in India over a year and through online discussions held during this period. The group worked in close collaboration with the officials of NAAC and COL, who initiated the activity. The discussions and deliberations resulted in identifying six priority areas henceforth called as the "Key Areas", which are central to the implementation of any programming. The expert group recommended 75 indicators covering the six key areas and 27 quality aspects.

The purpose of indicators is to "characterize the nature of a system through its components – how they are related and how they change over time". (Shavelson, Mc Donnell & Oakes, 1991). Effective indicators are those which directly measure system components; provide specific criterion-referenced information; are based on sound theoretical or empirical networks which relate the systems inputs, processes and outcomes. A lot of discussion went on in developing the indicators- such as whether the indicators should be developed from programming evaluation perspective or from the institutional evaluation perspective; whether to categorize the quality issues as an inbuilt assessment system within the institutions or they should be through the external agencies or they employers etc. In view of the diverse programming specifications and diffusion of the trained teachers across larger geographical areas, it was felt, for the present we should concentrate at the institutional level. Depending on the need the institutions may use the indicators for appraising/assuring the quality provisions of the programming or the institutional process.

## III. Some Issues Regarding Indicators

Some of the issues which the user may encounter while using these indicators for appraising the quality of the programming offered by the institutions are given below:

For some the measure, the reporting on the suggested indicators may be ubiquitous. It is still worthwhile to use this as a measure, but it is important for policymakers to recognize that the data/ information identified by this approach does not necessarily represent the intensity of the problem.

For many other measures such as teacher quality, progression to higher education, and employer satisfaction, secondary review is required of individual cases if it is desirable to assess whether any individual event actually has an impact on the quality of the programme offered by the institution.

Several of the measures overlap, for example the technology integration, assessment procedures, teacher effectiveness and use of ICT etc. In some instances, indicators from only one quality aspect need to be used and in some others indicators from different quality aspects and key areas may need to be used. Overall it is worthwhile to examine indicators covering various quality aspects and depending on the use and the context eliminate overlaps and duplications or merge the related indicators.

Although these indicators do not focus totally on the quality improvement of the Teachers per se, they provide focus on what institutions can do improve teacher quality and the quality provision of the programme. The current indicator set thus represents a good selection, based on good practices and concentrate largely on the processes rather than on inputs and outcomes. However as the system is prone to constant change the indicators may be unstable, and it will be important revisit these over time.

## IV. Methods of Indicator Selection

In developing the quality indicators the NAAC – COL team took into account the key areas many of the pioneering teacher education institutions across the Commonwealth Countries have developed and put to use for the quality training provision and effective functioning of their institutions. The indicators were conceptualized so that they can be used either to capture the quality aspects relating to the overall performance of the institutions, or the performance of a unit such as education technology. Most of the indicators are a combination of the "inputs ", "process" and 'outcomes' but are a largely process based.

Yackulic and Noonan (2001) hold that indicators in teacher education reflect the important components of teacher education programme. Indicators may perform several roles such as describing current situation, quantifying pre-determined objectives, providing continuous feedback about advancement towards achievement of objectives, and identifying factors that contributed to results achievement (European Commission, 2001).

Several research studies have been untaken either to identify indicators of education quality or to assess quality of education in the context of indicators. Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) has identified three major quality indicators that include learner engagement, employer satisfaction, and competency completion (AQTF, 2007). The indicators of education quality suggested by Thaung (2008) include learners, teachers, content, teaching-learning processes, learning environments, and outcomes. According to Moosa (2006), quality issues may be grouped into six basic educational processes including teacher, curriculum, assessment, research, communication and students. Out of 33 quality indicators identified for Scottish schools, Her Majesty Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) has selected seven important indicators for evaluations of enterprise in education. They include courses and programmes, overall quality of attainment, pupils' learning experiences, meeting pupils' needs, personal and social development, curricular and vocational guidance, and planning for improvement (HMIE, 2004).

Six core domains henceforth referred as "Key Areas":

- Curriculum Design and Planning.
- Curriculum Transaction and Evaluation
- Student Support and Progression
- Research, Development and Extension
- Infrastructure and Learning Resources
- Organization and Management

Following the methods adopted by the experts in developing indicators for various other fields, the Expert Group agreed on the following three selection criteria. First, it had to capture an important performance aspect. Second, it has to have an impact on the overall quality improvement and third, it had to be potentially feasible. While quantifying the indicators and assigning the weightage the indicators were viewed on the following dimensions:

1. Impact on students
2. Improving performance
3. Policy importance
4. Susceptibility to being influenced by the school system and the other agencies
5. The scientific soundness:
   - Face validity – does the measure make sense and in practice?
   - Content validity – Does the measure capture meaningful aspects of the quality provisions?
6. The feasibility:
   - Data availability
   - Reporting Burden

## V. Results of the Indicators Selection Process:

Keeping the agreed framework in view, through a series of deliberation in small working groups followed by telephone and email discussions, the expert group converged on a final list of 75 indicators covering six "Key Areas" and 27 "Quality Aspects".

The existing situation of the teacher education sector, the quality of the provision and resource constraints which most of the organizations have in commonality, this work was limited to

identifying indicators which are essential for quality teacher education and applicable to both face to face (f-2-f) and open and distance learning (ODL) modes of teacher preparation. The indicators are expected to facilitate the quality improvement of institutions and their programme implementation strategy. The information will help design implementation strategies that would address both the complexity of the innovations of the institution itself and taking into account the complexity of the processes and the diverse classrooms situations. The indictors will be a beginning to bring in uniformity of the provision and positioning the teacher educators and institutional agendas in such a way that they address more directly the quality provision and the expressed needs of teachers and the conditions in which they work. Each of the indicators thus implicitly or explicitly is concerned with investigating teacher development in context of quality improvement.

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