

Teachers' Education and their Role in National Development

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Abstract

The social and economic development of nation is fundamentally an education process in which people learns to create new institutions, utilize new technologies, cope with their environment, and alter their patterns of behavior. Education in a broad sense improves the capabilities of individuals and the capacity of institutions, and becomes a catalyst for the closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes that become defined as national development.

An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The Nation places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education. India has reached the threshold of the development of new technologies and innovative methods to trained teachers which are likely to revolutionize the classroom teaching. Unless capable and committed are teachers in service, the education system cannot become a suitable and potential instrument of national development.

Keywords

Teacher Education, Teaching Practice, Teacher Education Curriculum, Professional Education, National Development

I. Introduction

Teaching is the oldest, most indispensable and inevitable of all the professions in the world. No individual can help being a teacher to his fellow-members, if he is a member of any group. No group has ever come together, but has made some provision to pass on the social heritage and train the young for future leadership. Not satisfied with such informal arrangements, teaching has been the first area of specialization in every tribe and community. Priesthood, which everywhere arrogated to itself the monopoly of teaching, has always been the first social class to separate itself from the "common mold", requiring its members to gain special knowledge, learn special skills and undergo a stricter discipline. In India, teaching has been a recognized and revered profession since the dawn of history. The teacher was expected not only to impart information and skills, but lead and guide his students to "supreme knowledge". Hence the qualities laid down for teachers were very high.

Teacher education is based on the theory that —Teachers are made, not born in contrary to the assumption, —Teachers are born, not made. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills that are called —tricks of the trade.

The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as – A program of education, research and training

of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level and this is also a program related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein.

Teacher education is broad and comprehensive. Besides pre-service and in-service programs for teachers, it is meant to be involved in various community programs and extension activities, viz. adult education and non-formal education programs, literacy and development activities of the society.

Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills.

Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.

Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage.

Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

Education has dynamically motivated teachers to aspire for freedom, viz., social freedom, educational freedom, economic freedom, political freedom and freedom for career and earning. It also enables teachers to acquire basic skills and abilities and fosters a value system which is conducive to raising their status in society.

The education contributes to the higher status of teacher. Increase in education is associated with an increase in decision making power.

II. Need of Teacher Education

It is common knowledge that the academic and professional standards of teachers constitute a critical component of the essential learning conditions for achieving the educational goals of a nation. The focus of teacher preparation had to shift from training to education if it had to make a positive influence on the quality of curriculum transaction in classrooms and thereby pupil learning and the larger social transformation. The aspects that need greater emphasis are;

- The length of academic preparation,
- The level and quality of subject matter knowledge,
- The repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers possess to meet the needs of diverse learning situations,

- The degree of commitment to the profession,
- Sensitivity to contemporary issues and problems and
- The level of motivation.

III. Teacher Education at Different Levels of Education

There are two aspects of teacher preparation. The individual before he joins the school is exposed to a program of experiences and knowledge about the theory and practice of teaching, normally in a teacher training college. Such a program leads to a degree, diploma or a certificate. This is the pre-service education of a teacher. Again a teacher in the class-room or an administrator at his job is also brought into a program and exposed to such experiences as aim at contributing to his professional and personal growth. Such a program is a program of in-service education.

A. Agencies of teacher education at state level:

1. State Institute of Education (SIE)
2. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT)
3. State Board of Teacher Education – (SBTE)
4. University Departments of Education – (UDTE)

B. Agencies of teacher education at national level:

1. University Grant Commission (UGC)
2. National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA)
3. National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE)
4. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

C. Agencies of teacher education at international level:

1. United Nations Educational Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

D. Quality, efficiency and innovation in teacher education:

People come to teacher education with beliefs, values, commitments, personalities and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling which affect who they are as teachers and what they are able to learn in teacher education and in teaching. Helping teacher candidates examine critically their beliefs and values as they relate to teaching, learning and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education (Fieman-Nemser, 2001).

In his Call for Action for American Education in the 21st Century in 1996, Clinton indicated that: “Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom. We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training”.

One of the questions that are being increasingly considered by countries in the region is: How best may innovation improve quality? It is not possible to answer that question in general terms other than to say that, if the current quality needs to be improved, something new will have to be done. Even if the question were rephrased—such as: What innovations are likely to best improve quality? (Whether it be in the schooling system as a whole or teacher education in particular)—the answer is still elusive because

it depends on what aspect is under consideration (mathematics achievement, moral behavior, cognitive capability, skill development, the performance of the disabled) and what is known to work best in the specific aspect (for example, a great deal is known about improving learning to read, but not much about values education or high-level computer-assisted learning).

IV. Detailed Training in Teachers' Education

To view teaching as a highly skilled practice, one that requires close training, is to respect the professional demands of the work. However, the common resistance to the notion of detailed professional preparation, and even the need for training, stands in the way of improving teachers' preparation for the work of teaching. Other professions comfortably embrace the demands for professional training (Grossman et al., 2009), perhaps because they are less distracted by proving their professional status, whereas teacher education is often preoccupied with its place in the academy or in the public discourse. We argue, however, that making practice the centerpiece of teachers' education would elevate, not diminish, the professionalism of teaching and teacher education. Conversely, a system that implies that teaching is predominantly improvisational, impossible to specify, and developed idiosyncratically through individual experience is no system at all and not at all professional. There is an urgent need to be able to supply teachers ready for the demands of educating our nation's youth; it is time to lay down our resistance to acknowledging that teaching is hard work that many people need to learn to do well, and build a system of reliable professional preparation.

V. Challenges in Teacher Education

Unprecedented expansion of teacher education institutions and programs during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. With increasing school enrolments and the launch of pan-Indian primary education development programs like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Program, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education, there was a natural increase in the demand for teachers. Added to this, the backlog of untrained teachers in the system and the essential requirement of pre-service teacher certification for appointment as a teacher led to mounting pressure on existing institutional capacity. The demand far exceeding supply, market forces have taken over unprecedented rise in the number of teacher education institutions in most parts of the country.

VI. Changing Context of Teacher Education in Indian Scenario

The well-established tradition of teaching and learning in India has retained its inherent strength even under adverse circumstances. The post-independence period was characterized by major efforts being made to nurture and transform teacher education. Having inherited a foreign model of teacher preparation at the time of independence from Britain in 1946, major efforts have been made to adapt and up-date the teacher education curriculum to local needs, to make it more context based, responsive and dynamic with regard to best meeting the particular needs of India. The current system of teacher education is supported by a network of national, provincial and district level resource institutions working together to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs at the pre-service level and also through in-service programs for serving teachers throughout the country.

India has made considerable progress in school education since independence with reference to overall literacy, infrastructure and universal access and enrolment in schools. Two major developments in the recent years form the background to the present reform in teacher education-

- The National Curriculum Framework for school education, 2005.
- The political recognition of Universalization of Elementary Education that led to the Right to Education Bill, 2008
- The Bill has been passed by the Parliament and the Right to Education Act has come into being making it mandatory for the state to provide free and compulsory education to almost 20 crores children in the 6-14 age groups till class 8.

VII. Teachers' Contribution In National Development

Whatever policies may be laid down, in the ultimate analysis these have to be implemented by teachers as much through their personal example as through teaching learning processes. India has reached the threshold of the development of new technologies which are likely to revolutionize the classroom teaching. Unless capable and committed are teachers in service, the education system cannot become a suitable and potential instrument of national development.

Teachers' education has assumed special significance in the country's planned development. They represent a valuable human resource and play an important role in the development of the community and the national economy.

A teacher is encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching learning situations who enables learners (students) 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; and also An active member of the group of persons who make conscious effort to contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum to maintain its relevance to the changing societal needs and personal needs of learners, keeping in view the experiences gained in the past and the concerns and imperatives that have emerged in the light of changing national development goals and educational priorities.

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