

Issues and Challenges of Pre-Service Teacher Education

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Pre-Service Teacher Education at Cross-Road

Out of all the creation made by human being, education system is the vital one. Human civilization has gone through many phases of development, but it is education that has made the men capable to preserve the developmental history of mankind. Education system has generated knowledge in every possible field and now we are talking to multi-disciplinary approach and greater specialisation simultaneously. Now, the human civilisation is in a state where the men are convinced that only knowledge is power and there is no other weapon than education for the empowerment of the humanity. We started education from Informal mode to move towards Formal one. Now knowledge explosion, population explosion & necessity of life long learning have given birth to Non-formal mode of education. We need teachers for every mode of education- Informal, Formal and Non-Formal, but it is formal mode followed by non-formal mode that requires trained manpower for the meaningful quality education. In ancient and old age teachers were trained through monitorial system of education, but the need to excel in the field gradually made the process of teacher preparation more formal and systematic. This happened due to the fact that teacher is the precious element of the teaching-learning process. National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) pronounces, "It is through teachers that our children are imparted with values, knowledge, empathy, creativity, ethics, life skills and social responsibility."

Teacher preparation in India got momentum after independence as our policy maker through different committees, commissions and bodies came to know the relative importance of efficient and qualified teachers. Primary level and secondary level teacher programmes were developed, enriched and strengthen gradually to cope up with the demand of the trained teachers. Separate systems for primary training and secondary training for teachers were developed. For secondary level teacher education one year B.Ed. programme was popular and served the need of the teacher preparation of the nation for a long period of time. Side by side four years integrated B.Ed. programme ran in our Regional Institutes of Education. Establishment of a regulating

body in the name of National Council for Teacher Education and involvement of private parties in teacher preparation changed the status of teacher education to a great extent. Few years back B.Ed. programme has become of two years duration instead of one year. Four yeras B.Ed. programme is also running alongside in few of the institutions. National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) has suggested to start only four years integrated programme in the entire country, but there are teacher educators who think the country is not ready for the same. They are of the opinion that time factor is not the only influencing element of the quality of teacher preparation. They again question has the country research finding to show that the two years B.Ed. programme provides better quality of teacher education? Whether two years B.Ed. programme is superior in comparison to one year B.Ed. programme? Whether it is time or other factors that influence the quality of teacher education? Without answering these questions and few other related questions properly the nation cannot move for four years B.Ed. programme. Mohan, Mantri Madan (2019) relevantly concludes, "We have completely failed to fulfil the objectives of the two-year B.Ed. course and blame the government for introducing the two year B.Ed. course. The success of any program depends upon the commitment of the people for whom it is designed." Change in duration demands many subsequent changes and these changes may prove too costly. We must have enough reasons to experiment in a costly manner otherwise we must try to make the system cost effective, needful and purposeful. Four years B.Ed. demands nationwide discussion before it is being implemented as educators have started to claim that one year B.Ed. programme served the purpose of teacher preparation in a better manner than that of two years B.Ed. programme. Focus on language, discipline, related social issues etc. with more length at B.Ed. level is not so essential. These aspects may be given due weightage during the general education from secondary to undergraduate level. The way internship programme is being implemented it is difficult to think it will solve its purpose. We cannot start four years B.Ed. programme where mathematics is being taught by a single teacher for the whole course. How a postgraduate with simple B.Ed. degree can be appointed as Assistant Professor? We cannot change the qualification norm of University Teachers too frequently. Indian Teacher Education is at cross road as there are many course options before the secondary level teacher education programme, popularly known as B.Ed. Besides course structure and time duration there are other questions, issues & challenges that make the structural aspect of the programme

complicated. Bahera, SP (2018) rightly concludes, "The quality of the Teacher Education, therefore is a product of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences working in perfect harmony to produce good students."

Teacher preparation is essential to fulfill the requirement of school education and so the country has to move forward. This is essential as the status of teacher supply has not improved since National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education Draft Document (2009) by quoting the national knowledge commission said, "The National knowledge Commission (NKC) has observed that teachers are the single most important element of school system, and the country is already facing a severe shortage of qualified and motivated school teachers at different levels."

Challenges of Pre-Service Teacher Education

Teacher education system of the country is really at crossroad due to some challenges and certain state of indecision. New Education Policy Draft Document (2019) has suggested for four years integrated B.Ed. course, but students are not ready for this change. Bihar has conducted State level entrance test for admission in four years integrated B.Ed. course offered by some of the private teacher education colleges, but they are not getting students. There are incidences that clearly suggest that the students are not interested in even two years B.Ed. They were more inclined to get admission in one year B.Ed. course, but are comparatively less interested for two years B.Ed. Dropout rate in two years B.Ed. programme has increased and there is no reason this trend will not continue for four years B.Ed. Besides types of course, time duration and curriculum structure there are other issues that are instrumental in keeping the B.Ed. programme at crossroad. Issues of quality, privatisation, employability, timely appointment, removing implementation constraints of the system, course objectives, proper evaluation, managing unplanned growth & expansion, consolidation, integrated primary & secondary course or separate course, etc. are to be addressed to move forward and remove the state of indecision We cannot suggest too much change or experiment in the system and that too so frequently. Our principle of development be consolidation not too frequent experimentation or change.

Time duration is a bigger issue and the recommendation of National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) for four years B.Ed. course cannot be accepted without discussing its repercussion on the teacher preparation system. Only one teacher of any pedagogy content cannot be accepted for the entire course. Under the one year B.Ed.

course students read his/her pedagogy subject, say mathematics, by approximately half a dozen mathematics teachers. Students sharpen his/her content knowledge during B.Ed. programme by learning teaching-learning related principles and by acquiring & internalising necessary skills. We cannot take risk to put the content knowledge of our prospective teachers in danger. Content knowledge is the core element of a teacher and every other principles and skills are of no meaning if it is not sound. What a teacher should know is another aspect to discuss as this is the basis of curriculum planning to curriculum management. National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) is of the view that childhood is the better stage of language learning and so we cannot consider this aspect as an integral part of the curriculum. Discipline can be understood during higher secondary stage to undergraduate stage. Why it should be made an integral part of the B.Ed. course? Social issues like inclusion, gender etc. cannot be discussed at length during B.Ed. if we properly place these issues during secondary to undergraduate levels. Teacher preparation does not mean that every aspect will be taught during this programme. If we cannot make B.Ed. internship work meaningful like MBBS course what is the utility of placing it with high hope? Is history of education less important for education student or societal teacher than inclusion, gender and discipline? Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and now Technology, Evaluation are foundation of the B.Ed. course. Prospective teachers must learn them to sharpen their already acquired content knowledge. We do not need four years course if it weakens the subject knowledge which the teachers have to transact in their classrooms. We cannot put comparatively less important aspects to extend B.Ed. programme duration to two years. We cannot implement internship scheme if the systems of school and teacher education college are not ready to get benefit from it. We cannot experiment too frequently without proper data and essential findings through research work. We still cannot claim two years B.Ed. is better than one year and are not convinced to guarantee that four years B.Ed. will be better. Consolidation needs to be our cardinal principle to strengthen the system of teacher preparation, not frequent experiment.

Quality of the teacher preparation is other challenge to manage. Quoting the data of All India Survey of Higher Education (2015-16) and report of justice J.S. Verma Commission (2012) the National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) concludes that 90% teacher training institutes run a single programme and they are not even attempting serious teacher education. Draft document further narrates,

"Regulatory efforts so far have neither been able to curb the corruption rampant in the system, nor enforce basic standards for quality, and in fact have had the negative effect of curbing the growth of excellence and innovation in the sector. "Quality of any course or programme depends on many factors such as teacher, curriculum & its proper transaction, evaluation, etc. Structural change has no meaning if the system does not recruit sufficient number of good quality teachers. Curriculum must prepare the learners in the light of the objectives of the curriculum. Learners must be evaluated properly. Teacher's quality, Learner's quality, suitability of evaluation and purposefulness of curriculum are essential factors of the quality enhancement of any course and these factors must be taken care of while discussing any improvement in the course. What National Curriculum Framework (2005) says, is the real indicator of quality, "The availability of qualified and motivated teachers who perceive teaching as a career option applies to all sectors of schools as a necessary precondition for quality."

Specification of objectives of the B.Ed. course is a vital challenge to address. While discussing the objectives of the programme we usually forget that we cannot prepare an idealist set of teachers for a pragmatic education set up. We have to consider the job requirement of the teachers while framing the course objectives. Teachers have to teach, to evaluate, to motivate, to deal with corrupt practices, to use ICT, to address social concern or to act as a data entry operator or an orderly to collect data for every type of work. Answer of these questions are the basis of the objectives of the programme. Theoretically we discuss three domains of educational objectives as Cognitive (facts, concept, theories, principles etc.), Affective (feeling, sentiments, emotions, interest, attitude, etc. and Psycho-motor (muscles related act and activities) to define objectives of the course, but it is sad state of affair as we do not care other things except some examination related knowledge of the learners. National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) also suggests, "Education must facilitate learner's personal growth and psychologically equip them to cope with the rapid changes taking place in all the spheres of life." In fact, our objectives do not address the preparation of a complete teacher, rather we provide a degree to get them a job which is not essentially of the teaching nature. This state is due to the fact that the country is not sure which type of teacher it needs. If we cannot invest in our teachers we are bound to suffer in every walk of life. Properly prepared teachers will not teach only, rather they will develop a sound pool of human resources.

Employability is a bigger challenge to undertake. We are talking high in the name of teacher preparation, but unable to provide job to our trained manpower. We compare our course with medical degree or chartered accountant, but in terms of employability we do not stand near to these profession. We provide degree to even a less knowledgeable person, but take so many other tests to employ teachers. Why a genuine candidate will be motivated if his/her employment is not certain. Late employment is another issue to address because too much lapse of time after learning diminishes acquired skill & knowledge in one hand and de-motivate them in another.

Privatisation of teacher education is an important agenda to be taken care of. We are a welfare state, we believe in inclusive nature of education, we are to prepare teachers through public funded institutions to minimise commercialisation of teacher preparation programme and so we cannot allow private party to make money in the name of teacher education. Justice Verma and national education policy draft document (2019) besides other bodies have amply said in this regard. If privatisation in teacher education is inevitable we must ensure quality education and no need to say NCTE as a regulating body has not done this job properly. We cannot leave our schools and teacher education colleges for private party alone, rather we have to increase & strengthen public funded schools and teacher education institutions. In a democratic set up where our constitution talks in terms of selective discrimination we cannot allow the privatisation after a definite extent. We need to prepare a education policy to limit the ratio of privatisation as the country still has a large number of first generation learners. It must not be more than 60:40 in favour of public funded institution.

We are good planner, but bad implementor. What we plan to improve our education system we fail to implement. This is also true for our teacher preparation plan. We could not implement two years programme as we had thought and certainly we shall not be able to improve our teacher education system through four years course. We have not been able to implement the recommendations of Kothari Commission, we have failed to implement Right to Education Act, we have not been able to adopt the suggestion for Comprehensive Colleges of Education and so we need to address the implementation weakness of our school & teacher education system. Unplanned growth and expansion of teacher education has affected its utility badly. In most of the cases we find that the difference between the terminal and entering behaviour of B.Ed. degree holder is approximately zero or very close to this

figure. Unscientific and superficial evaluation has made this unabated growth worse. Unplanned expansion and superficial evaluation are bigger challenge to undertake. Evaluation be continuous and comprehensive, but it must adopt objectives (of the course) based evaluation approach besides the employment of criterion-referenced evaluation. Bihar Curriculum Framework (2006) rightly concluded, "The present situation is that not many teachers are conscious of the purpose of evaluation nor do they try to learn the tools and techniques of evaluation."

The recommendation of National Education Policy Draft Document (2019) to adopt 5+3+3+4 structure of school education and extension of Right to Education Act from Pre-School to Higher Secondary (3-18 years of age) has presented a challenge before the teacher education system. We have to decide to develop a curriculum for primary and secondary separately or in an integrated manner. For any one module of teacher preparation we have to decide the modalities. Besides selection of one form of plan or other we need to address many other challenges and issues related to teacher education. We cannot manage some of the related variables, but we must be cautious to make major structural change and no need to say it must be based on sound research findings & solid data base.

Consolidation is the other area where the teacher education has to work promptly and honestly. What we plan we must implement. Without proper implementation planning has no meaning. We cannot plan continuously for major changes, but we need to work continuously to implement our plans for desired result. Quality teacher education is a bigger investment. Rao, Usha (2010) rightly suggests, "The Wealth of a nation depends on how effectively its young minds are trained and educated to take up the challenges of the future. With such a great responsibility, it is very important to strengthen the teaching profession." No need to say quality of teaching profession largely depends on the quality of teacher preparation.

Way Forward

No doubt teacher education system of the country is at cross-road and it must take some steps to move forward in the right direction. Following are few steps that may be crucial for the transformation of the system.

- To strengthen general education and start one year B.Ed. with relevant modifications in the curriculum or start four years integrated course with

optimum number of faculty members to take care of the content knowledge of the prospective teachers.

- To check unplanned growth and expansion of teacher education.
- To address quality concern of the teacher education properly and seriously.
- To minimise the ratio of private teacher education colleges in comparison to public funded institutions.
- To strengthen mechanism of evaluation in teacher education system. Criterion-Referenced Evaluation technique must be employed.
- To adopt consolidation as the cardinal principle of teacher education system not experimentation and structural modifications.
- To implement the idea of comprehensive colleges of education in its true sense to make the teacher education colleges multi-faculty & multi-dimensional.
- To develop a sound system of teachers employment to address their employability concern. It must be made timely to utilise fresh talent with recently acquired knowledge & skills.
- To consider manpower planning in teacher education.
- To attract brighter candidate in the profession.
- To develop a strong pool of teacher educators.
- To relate teacher education properly with school education.
- To restrict commercialisation of education in general and teacher education in particular.

To strengthen teacher education to cater the need of the school education is the real purpose of teacher preparation and that must not be overlooked in any situation. Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (1996) narrates that changes in schools demand concomitant changes in teacher education. It further concludes, "It is, therefore, essential that the curriculum of the teacher education be suitably reoriented so as to respond to the emerging realities at the school level."

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