

Reconstructing Quality Education in Context of Professional Teaching Standards in Indian Reality

Sonia Gulati

Sr. Assistant Professor, Delhi Teachers' Training College, Najafgarh Delhi, India

E-mail: ss_gulati@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Teacher education in practice has and by large remained unchanged and represents a discipline that has chosen to live in the past instead of moving ahead and changing with times. Reforming teacher education is receiving impetus from every quarter and there is no debate in it. What is, however, still debatable is the direction, the content and willingness of the reform and the objectives to be achieved through our reformed teacher education programme. Unless we get rid of the idea that education is some kind of social service performed by a welfare state and substitute it with the idea that education is the most critical input into the entire process of social, economic, political and cultural transformation of India, the so called reforms in teacher education programme would predictably keep producing explosive social tensions in our country. To maintain the professional teaching standards the colonial Herbatian model of lesson planning and practice teaching components that constitute the pedagogic backbone of teacher education in India needs revival. In contrast many of the British Universities have changed and developed new models in recent decades. The teacher education system throughout the length and breadth of India must actively promote the system and outlook which is consistent with the kind of society we wish to establish. Finally, those who are thinking about teacher education must realize that in the fast changing world of today no education system can be frozen into a mould. It would need a periodic revision and change to enable the educated to grapple with social, economic and technological change. The present paper suggests some changes in the existing set up of pre-service teachers training so as to make effective teachers who can hold the responsibility of maintaining quality in education.

The education societies that came into existence in the three presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras during the third decade of the 19th century were the first to recognize the need for systematic training of teachers. In his minute of March 10, 1826, Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras suggested the appointment of a Committee of Public Instruction. He also felt the need

for 'a body of instructed teachers for the progress of education in the presidency' and recommended the establishment of a central school for the education of teachers. However, these efforts did not seem to have made much headway till the middle of the 19th century when the most important step was taken for establishing a modern educational system in India. Wood Despatch of 1854 recognized '*great deficiency in the facilities for teachers training and desired to see the establishment, with a little delay, as possible, of training*¹'. Stanley's Despatch of 1859 observed that '*the institution of training schools does not seem to have been carried out to the extent contemplated by the court of Directors*²'. From 1882, a regular system of teacher education started. The Indian education commission of 1882 expressed opinion decidedly in favour of training institutions and urged the need for establishing a number of normal schools '*so that they would be widely distributed throughout the country*'. With regard to training of secondary school teachers, the commission recommended '*an examination in the principles and practice of teaching be instituted, success in which should hereafter be a condition of permanent employment as a teacher in any secondary school, government or aided*³'. Following these recommendations, only six training colleges in India for secondary school teachers at Madras, Lahore, Rajahmundry, Kurseong, Jabalpur and Allahabad and fifty training schools for secondary teachers were set up by the end of 19th century.

The Government of India Resolution of 1904 emphasized the problems of teachers training in its various aspects and made the following recommendations:

- The equipment of a training college is as important as that of an arts college
- Training courses for graduates should be one year university course and leading to a university degree
- Theory and practice of teaching should be included in the training course
- A practicing school should be attached to each training college
- Every possible care should be taken to maintain a connection between the training college and the school.

Similarly, Calcutta University Commission 1917-19 focused the need of output of trained teachers. The Sargent Report 1944 recommended that:

- Provision should be made for training different categories of teachers-two years for pre-primary, two years for junior basic, three years for senior basic teachers, and two years for under-graduate in high schools and one year for graduates

- Suitable persons for teaching jobs should be picked up during the last two years of their high school course and they should be given stipends for receiving teacher training
- Refresher courses should be organized for giving in-service education to teachers
- Research facilities should be provided
- Strengthening of teaching practice⁴

After independence, the problem of the training of secondary school teachers was considered by the University Education Commission 1948-49 which suggested that:

- The course should be remodeled and more time given to school practice in assessing the students' performance
- Suitable schools should be used for practice teaching
- Students should be encouraged to fall in these courses, with the current practice of a school and make the best of it
- The bulk of the staff of a training college should be recruited from people who had first hand experience of school teaching
- The courses on the theory of education should be flexible and adaptable to local circumstances
- Students should be encouraged to proceed to master's degree only after some years of experience of teaching
- Original work by professors and lecturers should be planned on an all India basis⁵

The Indian Education Commission of 1964-66, National Council of Teachers Education and several other commissions and committees raised the issue of quality of teachers. These recommendations have a far reaching influence on teacher training in India as Kothari Commission (1964-66) the earliest policy formulation on education emphasized the need for teacher education to be *'brought into mainstream academic life of the Universities on the one hand and of school life and educational developments on the other'*. The Chattopadhyaya Committee Report (1983-85) reiterated the need *'to enable general and professional education to be pursued concurrently'* The National Policy on Education 1986 stated that improvement in status and professional competence of teachers is cornerstone of nation building. The analysis of all these reports shows that the quality of teachers has remained a matter of concern right from the very inception of teachers education programme and the current scenario is that already

existing shortcomings and lacuna has spiraled and has contributed in the degradation of the teacher education and maintaining professional teaching standards.

Looking to the importance of professional development of teachers and educational reconstruction, a decentralization for the professional preparation of teachers was done by the Central Government in the 8th Plan with the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education. Since 1990s, further decentralization has led to the formation of Block Resource Centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs). The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education aimed at providing academic resource support to elementary and secondary teachers through training, action research and experimentation, and developing institutional infrastructure for pre- and in-service training. However, in spite of such efforts the professional teaching has still not achieved remarkable standards.

The reasons can be explored in the teacher education programme which prepares the teacher. A teacher-educator educates and trains several teachers per year which has deep impact upon the future in several ways. If the teacher educators themselves are not abreast with the emerging issues they can not justify in preparing quality teachers. Generally, Teacher Education curricula are broken down into foundational knowledge and skills, content-area and methods and practice at classroom teaching in India whether it is a state university, central university or Open University. However, the curricula are obsolete and do not meet the requirement of the present day demand of the society. Many new areas have emerged but have not been included in the curricula of teachers' education. There are several files that practicing teachers are supposed to prepare. However, these files are not in consonance with the present day classroom pedagogical requirement. These files are copied down by the pupil teacher which does not serve the purposes. The affiliated teacher education institutes sell these files to their students who reproduce the same to submit as a tradition. There are no linkages between the foundational knowledge and skills required for effective transaction in the classroom. Most of the teacher educators either read from the book or notes or dictate to their students from the notes to pass the examination. The whole purpose of foundational knowledge in such a manner gets shattered.

Similar is the fate of content area and methodological knowledge. This area includes ways of teaching and assessing a specific subject. However, the NCF 2005 requires different type of teaching methodology for teaching of the content. These new dimensions have not been incorporated by the teacher education institute. Today, there is an abundance of techno-resources. It offers great scope for teachers and students to work in innovative and interesting ways. However, the applicability of these resources depends upon the teachers and all those teacher educators who prepare teachers for future. The teacher of today rarely utilizes technology for which there may be several reasons for this state of affairs. Teachers teach today the basic skills and facts for securing good marks in the examination by memorizing them. What has not been done by the teachers is making child to be curious, visually literate, dealing with complexities and using technology tools for producing high quality products. The dominance of text books in the classes has reduced the creative thinking of the students who chose to study only to pass the examination.

Practice at classroom teaching is another helm of affairs. Usually for 40 lesson plans which are divided into 20 lesson each in two subjects to be taken for practice teaching. It includes observation and limited participation within a classroom under the supervision of the classroom teacher. It has practical exam too in which the teaching abilities of the student is judged. Many teacher education institutes associate the schools on papers but in actuality they do not send their practicing teachers to transact the lessons in the classroom due to several constraints. The problem also lies in attaching schools for practice teaching. Often schools deny providing schools for the practice teaching in the name of getting their programme disturbed. Another problem is of unequal distribution of school teaching subjects which create a hindrance in getting class for transacting a lesson due to less sections and high number of pupil teachers teaching same subjects. Further, the observation during teaching practice class does not take place due to inexperience of the teacher educators and un-specified observational points. Several teacher educators are unknown to the classroom observation and hence they do not do justice to the classroom observation. The students on the other hand prepare all lesson plans in advance considering themselves to be sure of transacting it within the classroom. Many of those who transact do not provided with suggestive feedback for required improvement in teaching. This is also because many teacher educators themselves do not have expertise in school teaching and they create ideal situation of the classes in the school. These entire lacunas do not provide the

students to reflect upon the nuances of classroom teaching or the shortcomings that they must focus upon.

The mushrooming of teachers training institute as a teaching shop solely for the purpose of money making has deteriorated the teachers training programme. These colleges run the programme but not the classes. Students take admission and are charged for not attending the class and not appearing in the mid term evaluation. These practices have attracted many such students who want to procure the degree so as to utilize in the time of need. Such practices unless stopped can not produce better teachers and will keep deteriorating the teacher education programme. Teaching involves the use of a wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught, and another set of knowledge about the most effective ways to teach that subject to different kinds of learner; it therefore requires teachers to undertake a complex set of tasks every minute. No teacher can be successful today in a professional sense without being aware of this wide gamut of demands and expectations that children bring with them. On the other hand, the teacher's professional success and capacity to serve the system and its policy goals also depend on his/her awareness of challenges that India and its society are facing in the context of inequity, inequality, gender disparity and diversity. After the approval of the Right to Education, teacher education cannot escape the responsibility to equip future teachers, as well as the ones who are already in service, to accept the arduous task of running an inclusive classroom; no matter how limited the available facilities may be at present. The question of what knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills teachers should possess is the subject of much debate in many cultures. This is understandable, as teachers are entrusted with the transmission to learners of society's beliefs, attitudes and deontology, as well as of information, advice and wisdom, and with facilitating learners' acquisition of the key knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that they will need to be active in society and the economy. Such qualities need to be developed in every teacher during pre-service training. These qualities can be nurtured during training programmes and courses only if they are run by teacher educators who themselves have these qualities and capacities. Over the recent years, the sector of teacher education has suffered from commercialization and other setbacks which have led to significant deterioration in the quality of teacher educators serving in institutes and colleges of teacher training.

Recommendations for Improvement:

The insights from the appraisal of the teacher education point to the need for re-conceptualizing the existing scheme of teacher education to make it more feasible and responsive. Accordingly, some streamlining of the existing practices would be needed to enhance the functional efficacy of the system. A few suggestive actions are listed below for consideration and adoption in appropriate forms.

- By restructuring the institutions engaged in teacher education at different levels, it would be possible not only to reduce the complexity in the overall structure of teacher education in the country but also to ensure that teacher education becomes an academically more rigorous professional endeavour and be seen as an important comprehensive area within the context of education. There must be a unified direction held by the various teacher education institutions under a single authority with the functional autonomy. This would require restating the structure and roles of some of the existing institutions, adding new ones in needed forms, and giving up a few which have not served their purpose. It is recommended that teacher education should continue to operate at the state level appropriately linked with the efforts at the national level.
- Responsibility of planning and decision making about functional curriculum and other academic details be placed at the district level under one common authority. For this, it is necessary to take firm steps to identify institutions and practices which have been functionally ineffective, after scrutiny and accordingly restructure and redefine the existing institutions. Therefore it is recommended that:
 - The revised Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education should be funded on the basis of matching share by central and state governments.
 - Strengthening of DIETs in all respects in terms of organizational structure, physical infrastructure, academic programmes, human resources, financial support etc. and all the District Resource Centres should be upgraded into full fledged DIETs.
 - All the DIETs should have linkages with university departments, university colleges, government colleges and well established private colleges organizing the in-service education programmes.

- The existing CTEs and IASEs should be strengthened in terms of organizational structure, academic programmes, human resources and financial support etc. in the light of MHRD guidelines.
- More CTEs and IASEs to be set up wherever required. There should be a clear rationale for setting up new CTEs and IASEs.
- Qualified faculty should be appointed in the BITEs, DIETs and SCERTs for catering the needs of the children. The qualification and selection of the teacher educators should in accordance with the UGC norms.
- The curriculum and syllabus of teacher education programmes at all stages should be reviewed and revised in the light of NCF -2005.
- Facilities for in-service training up to secondary stage should be provided in the Govt. Colleges of Education/ private B. Ed. Colleges.
- An attempt should be made to attract good professionals a scale of pay should be upwardly revised for the faculty of Teacher Education Institutions. (TEIs). The qualifications and salary structures laid down by UGC may be followed for all academic positions in the proposed teacher education institutions have pure knowledge of subject matter in different areas of knowledge.
- It is also recommended that the selection process of pre-service training should be revised. Presently selection is made on the basis of written test which is the test of teaching aptitude and general awareness. But the teaching capabilities cannot be assessed only by written test; it should be followed by a demo class or an interview as done in most of the professional courses.
- NCERT has recently introduced a new syllabus for its two-year B. Ed. programme which sets an innovative precedence for revamping the syllabus for teacher education at all stages. It is expected that in this exercise NCERT's efforts will be supported by NCTE. The curriculum framework currently being drafted by NCTE will undoubtedly play a crucial role in determining the quality of the syllabus renewal exercise that institutions at different levels will go through. Given the importance of flexibility and encouragement for diversity underlined by NCF, 2005 as essential values for importance of quality, it is necessary that NCTE's curriculum framework for teacher education also reflects these qualities.

- Excessive emphasis on theory should shift and make room for greater focus on professional competencies that can prove workable in classrooms of today and of tomorrow.
- The theory papers in teacher education must synthesize human knowledge with technologies to give it a meaning and functionality with regard to the understanding by the students.
- Classroom components should be strengthened so as to provide strong base to the pupil teachers. Many teacher educators are unaware of the classroom observational techniques and components. Therefore, NCTE can assume the role of bringing out a handbook on classroom observation techniques and components.

The above discussions are few suggestions regarding the Teacher-Training programme which can cater to make some quality improvement in the field of education and thus provide us with better and competent teachers and make our country progress and be at par with other developed countries.

Conclusion:

It is clear from the above analysis that the system of teachers' training in practice has and by large remained unchanged. It suffers from traditional development and failed to keep pace with the change- social, political, economic and industrial- which have contributed to the making of modern India. It has also failed to keep abreast of the latest developments in educational theory and practice. Looking to the fact, teacher education in India represents a discipline that has chosen to live in the past instead of moving ahead and changing with times. Despite the recommendations of various committees, commissions, conferences, seminars and working groups, little has been done to ensure conditions of modern life. The work of teachers' education is not progressing properly and its utility is also doubtful under such conditions and that is why the Union Education Minister K.C. Pant also remarked under new policy of education, 'Challenges of Education- A Policy Perspective' that the problem of teachers' training is not of equity or access but of relatively low standard of candidates. There is general acceptance regarding the need for reform of pre service teacher training arrangements and also an increasing realization regarding in-service training or continuity education of training community. We are on the threshold of the development of new technologies likely to revolutionised teaching in classrooms. But, unfortunately, the process of updating the curricula of teacher education has been very slow. Much of teacher education is irrelevant even to contemporary requirements, leave alone those of the future. The selection procedures and recruitment system for teachers

have also not kept pace with the needs in terms of either number or of quality. We need to think a fresh and for better future of teacher education.

References:

- ¹ Report of Wood's Despatch, para 67: In Selections from Educational Records, Part II, 1840-1859, p.364
- ² Stanley's Despatch, para 44: In Selections from Educational Records, Vol. I, 1859-1871, p.80
- ³ Report of the Indian Commission, 1882-1883, para 2, p.130-31
- ⁴ Report of the post war Educational Development in India, 1944, CAGE, p.13-84
- ⁵ Report of the University Education Commission, 1948-49, Vol. I, CAGE, p.144