

Professionalization of Teacher Education in India: A Review of Curriculum Frameworks'

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Abstract

Effective curriculum frameworks for initial teacher education aimed at developing Professionalism in pre- service teachers are expected to have their base in well Defined standards for various categories of school teachers. Two important documents that influenced the process of teacher curriculum reform in the country are: the report of the Education Commission (1964-66), and the National Policy on Education 1986. The teacher education curriculum in India has been revised in 1978, 1988, 1998 and 2009 to reflect and incorporate the cultural, linguistic and geographical diversities of the country and keep pace with the changing knowledge structure of the world as the result of socio-political, economic upheavals ,and technological and communication advancements. This paper will make a systematic analysis of the teacher education curriculum reforms in India, and its effectiveness in developing an identity and professionalizing teacher education system of the country independent of its colonial roots.

Key Words: *Teacher education, teacher education curriculum framework*

Introduction

Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand in the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. They are the backbone of education system. The Education Commission (1964-66) of India accepted this influence of teachers in powerful words, "No system can rise above the status of its teacher..." Similar sentiments have been expressed by the Delors report (1996), and UNESCO report on *Teacher and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015(2006)*. So teachers help in shaping and reshaping the society and determine the quality of life in the community and the nation. In each society, therefore, makes some provision for pre-service education and continuous professional development of teachers in order to help them contribute in the growth of society.

The organization of teacher education in any system can be visualized at two levels. At the systemic level, the positioning of teacher education determines its nature. The second level is the structure of curriculum i.e. what should be taught and how it should be taught. According to Shulman (1987) a teacher should possess subject content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and the knowledge of educational contexts and goals; and should be able to use this knowledge creatively to deal with ever changing classroom situations.

Teacher Education; Curriculum Reform

India has made concentrated efforts to modify and modernize teacher education curricula to suit the requirements of contemporary educational needs of the society and instill greater professionalism and commitment in practicing teachers through pre-service and continuous in-service teacher education programs. The National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) reflects this commitment by considering pre-service and in-service teacher education as a continuous process and two ends of a continuum. An analysis of the recommendations of various commissions, committees and the education policy of India reveals the efforts of policy planners to bring qualitative improvement in teacher education system along with quantitative expansion of the facilities.

The concern for quality improvement and indigenization of teacher education had been the top priority of educational planners which is reflected in the concerns expressed, And recommendations made by various commissions and committees appointed by the government of India from time to time since independence. The University Education

Commission (1948), Secondary Education Commission (1953), Chattopadhyay Committee Report (1983-85), Acharya Ramamurthy Committee (1990) and several seminars and study groups that were set up to discuss improvements in elementary and secondary teacher education, from time to time expressed concern over the poor quality of teacher education, and its isolation from, both, the mainstream of university life, and the ground realities of schools. These commissions stressed on the need for flexibility, and local specificity; and strongly felt, that, the whole teacher education program needs to be remodeled to strike more balance between the theory and practice, and assessment of students' performance.

Accepting that the existing teacher education programs are largely divorced from the realities of schools, it recommended re orientation of subject knowledge; vitalization of professional studies and to root the entire curriculum in Indian conditions; development of special courses and programs; and revision and improvement of curricula. The commission

stressed that the prospective teachers need courses which will help them to build up a proper perspective of life, of our cultural heritage, and, of problems and aspirations of the nation as well as of human culture, and civilization in general”). The committee known as the Yashpal Committee (1993), appointed to analyze the academic burden on students and unsatisfactory quality of learning expressed concern over the poor quality of teacher preparation programs in the country, which leads to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools. This committee also suggested restructuring of the course content of teacher education programs to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of school education, longer duration of training ,emphasis on self-learning and independent thinking and making whole teacher education program more practicum-oriented .All these commissions, committees, and study groups expressed concern over the irrelevance of teacher education program.

Curriculum Frameworks for Teacher Education Steps To Move Towards Professionalization

Teacher development is considered as the continuous process of developing and Maintaining professional competence in teachers through pre-service, induction Training, in-service training and on-going professional development programs. Pre service is the first step in the ladder of developing professionalism in teachers that is, in turn, dependent on the professional preparation of teachers through well designed teacher education courses suited to the needs of contemporary educational system. Teacher education has a symbiotic relationship with the school education. India has tried to put this theoretical ideology into practice. Four such major attempts have been made by the policy planners of the country so far to provide conceptual directions in uniformity and quality of teacher education curriculum according to the socio-culture, and socio-economic ethos of the country. The first comprehensive attempt was made in 1978 with the publication “Teacher Education Curriculum: A Framework’ by the National Council for Teacher education (NCTE), a non-statutory body located in the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Major recommendations of this Framework included:

- Interdisciplinary and integrated approach in teacher education curriculum should be so designed that integration among theory courses takes place, and this integrated pedagogical understanding flows into the skill dominated areas of methodology of teaching various subjects as well as into the attitude-building areas of work experience, health, physical and recreational education, along with social service.

- Flexibility within the framework of acceptable national goals and values. Flexibility for relevance, mobility and continuing education was emphasized.
- Teacher education must be treated as an “exercise of training a teacher for handling a variety of tasks inside and outside the classroom.
- Relevance of the Curriculum to the personal and social needs of children and schools; as well as aspirations of people and ideology of nation.
- The framework suggested that student teachers should be put through a series of simulating, microteaching situations before being pushed into actual classrooms.
- Semester system was suggested to replace the year wise course and promotion of research and experimentation in teacher education institutions.
- Evaluation system to be made more reliable and valid.

This Curriculum Framework recommended an explicit task-oriented approach by exposing teacher trainees to the complex socio-economic problems through actual work situations in society .The need to address rural urban contexts, and different stages of child development was highlighted in this framework, and it suggested various core and special courses to address the context specific, and stage specific requirements through teacher education programs.

On the lines of Kothari Commission, the Framework (1978) emphasized pre-practice teaching activities including simulated teaching and model lessons delivered by teacher educators, actual teaching through block teaching approach instead of delivering one lesson per day, and post teaching follow up by taking up related practical work in evaluation etc. A significant feature of this framework was the conceptualization of paper- ‘teacher and education in emerging Indian society’ replacing philosophical and sociological foundations of education, and the space provided for core training and skill developing program. Another significant attempt to bring qualitative improvement and professionalize teacher education curricula was made in 1988.

The curriculum framework of 1988, developed against the backdrop of the National Policy on Education (1986), has significant implications for strengthening and restructuring the curricula of all the stages of teacher education. and emphasized the need to accommodate the developments taken place in knowledge and technology in the teacher education curricula. The

need for having a balance between theory and practice was manifested in the framework as The course content therefore included:

- a) **Foundation Courses**, emphasizing mainly the philosophical and social perspectives, and psychological bases of education at the stage concerned;
- b) **Stage- relevant specializations**, emphasizing understanding of the professional Functions of the teacher in a general way relevant to the stage and competencies and skills of teaching relevant school subjects.
- c) **Field Work or Practicum**, emphasizing application of theory in classroom teaching and in the practical activities involving students, parents and the community.

With the establishment of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament in 1993, another 'Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education' was brought out in 1998. While the 1978 teacher education curriculum framework was developed on the backdrop of 1975 school education curriculum reform, and 1988 framework on the backdrop of NPE1986, the 1998 framework for teacher education preceded school curriculum framework which was developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2000. This framework (1998) tried to address and reflect on the changing international scenario as the result of globalization, privatization, and communication technology etc.

1988 framework emphasized the need to incorporate and accommodate technological advances and know how, and indicated towards the changing role of teacher as an effective communicator, a designer, and user of learning resources, a learning facilitator, and an active participant in community life. The 1998 framework provided a futuristic, dynamic and forward looking perspective in teacher education curriculum while reinforcing the indigenous culture and identity of the nation. The 1978 framework gave 80% weight age to working with the community and organization of content-cum-methodology and practice teaching component including related practical work. The curriculum framework of 1998 reduced the weight age on theory papers up to 40%, and provided more opportunity to student teachers for practice teaching, and related practical work.

The changes suggested by these curriculum frameworks have not been fully implemented at the ground level. The only visible change this framework brought was the introduction of two years secondary teacher education program at the Regional Institutes of Education of NCERT, and the Gujarat Vidyapeeth. Consequently, the whole teacher education curricula is heavily loaded with western psychological, philosophical and sociological theories

and information .Even the Model Curriculum (2001) developed by the University Grants Commission(UGC) on the eve of twenty first century had very little new ideas to offer. The existing curriculum, however fails miserably to bring to the surface this applied aspect of various philosophical, sociological and psychological ideas, and hence the whole teacher education program remains theoretical and divorced from the grass root realities of classrooms.

A major problem facing teacher education program in India is the un-relatedness of the theoretical discourses at the training college and classroom realities of schools. This divorce between the classroom realities a teacher has to face and the teacher-education programs he/she receives also finds an expression in the World Bank Report (1997) as “in India teachers need but do not receive-preparation for teaching in the situation that two thirds of them have to face ’It fails to develop a deeper understanding in student teachers about the learners, their socio-cultural environment, their developmental stages, physical and psychological changes they are undergoing, and influence of these factors on their learning styles. Teachers in the existing socio-cultural context of the country need to be logical and reflective because of increasing racial, ethical, and cultural and linguistic diversities in the schools and in society which demands broad minded citizens. Teacher education curriculum, therefore need to be planned and organized to develop the spirit of inquiry, initiative, scientific temper, conceptual clarity and linguistic skills through rigorous practice teaching and/or internship which has so far remained a neglected area of teacher preparation.

A major effort to rejuvenate school education as well as teacher education towards modernization, contextualization and professionalization has been made in 2005 and 2009 through the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2005), and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) respectively. Emphasis has, now, shifted towards constructivist approach of learning. Learning is also perceived as an integral part of learner’s physical, social ,and cultural contexts. It has tried to incorporate the changing school contexts and demands in the light of recently implemented Right to Education Act (RTE 2009), issue of academic burden of students, and universalization of secondary education that have implication for teacher education. The major concerns addressed by this framework include inclusive education, ensuring equitable and sustainable development, utilizing community knowledge in education, and integration of ICT and e-learning in the curriculum of teacher education which is in tune with the thrust of NCF 2005 and the needs of contemporary Indian society.

Professionalization In Teaching

The recently developed curriculum for teacher preparation at the B.Ed and M.Ed level by the NCERT for its Regional Institutes of Education, and NCTE for the country reflects major change in the content and themes included in various courses of studies that have considerable possibility of developing reflective teachers with the ability to comprehend the applied nature of education, and utilise the knowledge gained through teacher preparation courses in actual classrooms, thereby bridging the gap between the unrelatedness of actual classroom realities and theoretical discourses of a training institution. None of the policy documents and teacher education curriculum frameworks contested over the need of longer duration of teacher education programme for ensuring professionalism in prospective teachers and the general consensus for the duration of B.Ed course has been at least of two years, yet the ground realities never changed.

Therefore, though the framework of teacher education (2009) recommends two years of teacher preparation programme. Which creates apprehension about the intent of those at the helm of affair to withstand pressures from different quarters and break away from the traditional path to bring any real change in the teacher education system. Another contradiction that can be observed is, that, in spite of constructivism being regarded the acceptable approach for both school education and teacher education institutions, efforts and achievements of learners are still being evaluated using behaviorists approaches and quantitative grading systems. In addition to this the pressure for 'teaching for understanding' as opposed to rote memorisation, and 'innovative' as opposed to time tested traditional methods add to the challenges of teacher preparation which the system has to respond. The NCF 2005 focuses on pedagogical and curricular approach which behests a lot of responsibility and ownership on the part of teachers such as use of culture specific context, examples, folk lores, folk stories, and experiences of individual learners in the classroom. This requires a more realistic and empirically established model of teacher preparation to enable them to develop the required skills, abilities and attitudes among teachers.

Conclusion

So we can say that any effective teacher education curriculum calls for systematic task analysis of teachers at various levels and inclusion of relevant contents, which alone can infuse confidence among the prospective teachers to negotiate the school curriculum in

classroom. The present teacher education programme is inadequate to meet the challenges of diverse Indian socio-cultural contexts and the paradigm shift envisaged in the NCF 2005.

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) promises to translate the vision into reality and prepare humanistic and reflective teachers that has the potential to develop more professional teachers and improve the quality of education. Professionalism needs to be instilled in each and every phase of teacher preparation starting from conceptualization to evaluation and appraisal to prepare professionals and improve the quality of education.

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