

Present Scenario of Teacher Education in India

Sukhvir Kaur

Abstract: *This article attempts to examine the present scenario of teacher education and quality of teachers. India has one of the largest systems of teacher education in the world. Besides the university departments of education and their affiliated colleges, government and government aided institutions; private and self-financing colleges and open universities are also engaged in teacher education. Though most teacher education programmes are nearly identical yet their standard varies across institutions and universities. Education of teachers not only facilitates improvement of school education by preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demand of the system, but also functions as a bridge between schooling and higher education. In certain areas, the supply of teachers far exceeds the demand while in others there are acute shortages as qualified teachers which results in the appointment of under-qualified and unqualified persons. The role of teacher education as a process of nation building is universally recognized. But teacher education in India, because of its history and also due to various factors beyond its control, has by and large been confined to school education only. Evidently the quality of education is a direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education system.*

Keywords: Teacher Education, NCTE, Vocational Education

1. Introduction

This article attempts to examine the present scenario of teacher education and quality of teachers. India has one of the largest systems of teacher education in the world. Besides the university departments of education and their affiliated colleges, government and government aided institutions; private and self-financing colleges and open universities are also engaged in teacher education. Though most teacher education programmes are nearly identical yet their standard varies across institutions and universities. Education of teachers not only facilitates improvement of school education by preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demand of the system, but also functions as a bridge between schooling and higher education. In certain areas, the supply of teachers far exceeds the demand while in others there are acute shortages as qualified teachers which results in the appointment of under-qualified and unqualified persons. The role of teacher education as a process of nation building is universally recognized. But teacher education in India, because of its history and also due to various factors beyond its control, has by and large been confined to school education only. The educational expansion, universalisation of elementary education, vocationalisation of secondary education, higher and professional education and overall quality of education are major challenges before the country. Evidently, the quality of education is a direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education system. The task of bringing qualitative change in institutional efficacy of the teacher education system in itself is a huge and challenging one. The developments and changes over the last two decades require a fresh look at the teacher education. The need for improved levels of educational participation for overall progress is well recognised.

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”.

"Education has continued to grow, diversify and extend its coverage since the dawn of history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of time". These words of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 subsequently revised in 1992, give direction to Indian Education. The policy further emphasizes that “the Government of India will also review, every five years; the progress made and recommend guidelines for further development”. In the light of the aforesaid statements, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body, established by the Government of India for the maintenance of standards and improvement of the quality of teacher education in the country. During these years, large scale and far reaching developments as well as changes have taken place on the national and international scenes in social, economic, cultural, scientific and technological spheres as well as in information and communication technologies. These developments have affected education, including teacher education call for review and reform of Indian teacher education. The National Council for Teacher Education has to initiate suitable measures to make teacher education at various levels responsive to such developments as well as to quality concerns in future. The manpower planning is practically absent in teacher education. Education of teachers not only facilitates improvement of school education by preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demand of the system, but also functions as a bridge between schooling and higher education. The role of teacher education as a process of nation building is universally recognized. Its objective is man making and producing enlightened citizens. But teacher education in India, because of its history and also due to various factors beyond its control, has by and large been confined to school education only.

Teachers serve education, which is an effective instrument of man making. The teachers learn this art through pre-service teacher education programme. A weak programme of teacher education cannot serve this purpose. It is with the objectives of raising the professional status of teachers, developing among them greater commitment to society, their students and their profession, increasing their professional competencies and performance skills and empowering them

to face new challenges that the National Council for Teacher Education has brought forth this document.

Teacher education in India has a long past but a short history. Gurukul-centered tradition of the Vedic period was somewhat modified and enriched under the influence of Budhistic vihara-based system. This continued till the 11th century A.D. The arrival of the Muslims witnessed the rise of a parallel Maktab-based tradition and the two traditions thrived side by side till the coming of the British. Both the traditions underwent some modification during this period. Historical records of the decisions taken, the finances made available and their implementation and later evaluation became relatively more systematically organized because of the documentation by the British.

The independence of India on the 15th August 1947 marks a defining moment in the history of our nation. The first step in this direction was setting up of the University Education Commission (1948), which made valuable suggestions regarding pre-service and in-service education of teachers and linking the programme of teacher preparation with the university system. Subsequently, the Secondary Education Commission (1953) appointed to examine the conditions of school education made specific suggestions about the preparation of teachers. The Committee on Higher Education for Rural Areas, (1954) and that on Women's Education (1959) also made valuable suggestions for teacher education in their respective areas, but they did not attract national attention because of their limited scope.

The Review Committee on Education (1960) made major recommendations about post-graduate studies in education and research, education of administrators and qualifications of teacher educators. Most of these recommendations were accepted and implemented. The Centre, the States, the universities, and public and private enterprise looked after teacher education. Besides, its problems were not examined in totality. The availability of resources for teacher education was also a problem. Further, teacher education was not accorded adequate importance in the agenda of education.

The Education Commission (1964-66) submitted a comprehensive report, which served as a basis for establishing a uniform national structure of education covering all stages and aspects of education. It emphasized the necessity of professional preparation of teachers for qualitative improvement of education. It recommended that its isolation be removed and laid stress on the importance of practice teaching and in-service education. It recommended allocation of more funds for teacher preparation, better salaries and improved service conditions for teachers and their educators to attract competent people to the profession. Based on the recommendations of the Commission, the National Policy on Education (1968) was formulated. The working of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was also reviewed. The NCERT and its Regional Colleges of education were expected to play a greater role in the education of teachers.

The non-statutory National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was set up in 1974 by a resolution of the Government of India and was located in the NCERT. As a

result of this, many universities and state governments revised the courses of teacher education. During this period, the National Commission on Teachers (1983) studied in depth the problems of teacher education and the status of teachers in society. NPE (1986) was followed by a Programme of Action (1986), which provided details about the needed transformation of policy into action. Its emphasis was on the enrichment of both in-service and the pre-service teacher education programmes, computer education and new as well as alternative models of teacher preparation. It is heartening to discern that directions given in NPE (1986) and recommendations of the Programme of Action were largely implemented with encouraging results. New developments in science and technology at national and international levels with far-reaching educational and cultural consequences, challenges of post modernity, counter-culture, value crisis and post-industrial society became evident.

During the last two decades, the teacher education curricula have received severe criticism and their weaknesses have been well exposed. It has to be emphasized that without increasing the duration of teacher education programmes, these targets cannot be achieved. Academic and professional skills are not independent of each other. There is hardly any difference between the performance of trained and untrained teachers because of outdated teacher education curricula. Teacher Education curricula have to integrate and blend them into a composite whole like the curricula of medical sciences. The reconstruction of teacher education curricula has, thus, become a pressing need of the hour. It has to be transformed from information based to experience based.

Over the last half a century and particularly, in the recent decades, teaching learning has been undergoing drastic changes. There has been a shift towards student centred classrooms with teacher's role more as facilitator of learning rather than an autocratic master. Unlike in the past when the teacher was entrusted with transferring the contents of curriculum to a passive audience of students, today new experiments are being tried out in the classroom that includes project based learning, development of thinking skills, and discovery learning approaches. Many teachers are not properly trained in implementing the concepts behind the new curriculum and many are not equipped to properly implement the curriculum. The important thing is that the teacher education centres and the curriculum followed in the teacher education have very little focus on new trends in education.

Teacher education institutions have been proliferating and mushrooming all over the State with profit motives until the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), came up with and insisted on mandatory norms and standards for these institutions. As a result of their intervention, many institutions have constructed buildings with classrooms and procured infrastructure to meet their standards. These institutions were even been forced to increase the salary of teacher educators to the basic amount in the government scale. But later, the effectiveness of NCTE intervention reduced and the powerful lobby of private education institutions had their way in running their teacher education shops.

Even when the periodical salary revisions increase the salaries of permanent employees sky high, their counterparts in the B.Ed. centres can only dream of a meagre rise. The powerful lobby of the private institutions are also said to influence the Universities' reluctance in providing fair deal to the teacher educators. The NCTE, unlike in the past, seems to be silenced and remaining aloof and so does Hon. Minister for Education. Nobody wants to annoy the private education institution bosses. That itself provides ample scope for profit oriented managements to isolate the teacher education communities. The evaluation of teacher trainees in the teacher education institutions is another big joke. The difference in the marks between high achievers and low achievers is minimal and the faculty members are least bothered in either encouraging the trainees to score high or to punish the lazy with low marks. Thus, most trainees who enter these institutions come out with flying colours.

The need for improved levels of educational participation for overall progress is well recognised. The key role of educational institutions in realising it is reflected in a variety of initiatives taken to transform the nature and function of education -- both formal as well as non-formal. Universal accessibility to quality education is considered essential for development. This has necessitated improvement in the system of teacher education so as to prepare quality teachers. Various Commissions and Committees appointed by the Central and the State Governments in recent decades have invariably emphasised the need for quality teacher education suited to the needs of the educational system. During the last years, new thrusts have been posed due to rapid changes in the educational, political, social and economic contexts at the national and international levels. The system still prepares teachers who do not necessarily become professionally competent and committed at the completion of initial teacher preparation programmes. A large number of teacher training institutions do not practice what they preach. Several of the skills acquired and methodologies learnt are seldom practiced in actual school system. This highlights the need to bring realism and dynamism in the curriculum.

The courses of studies both in theory and practice should be reorganised. A teacher education department should therefore; conduct special innovative programmes i.e. seminars, combining of seminar, discussions with lectures, team teaching and panel discussion. The admission procedures of B.Ed. should be completely systematised. There should be a planning unit in each state education department. The function of this unit should be to regulate the demand and supply of teachers at various levels of schools. The practising schools have to be taken into confidence. For this the members of the staff of teachers colleges should be closely associated with the schools. Correspondence courses in teacher education should be provided, with a strict and high screen for admissions and an accurate manner of assessment.