

Quality Enhancement of Teacher Education in India

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Recently I happened to watch a short video on a social network site. It was showing a teacher teaching English to primary class students with all wrong spellings and pronunciation and the students repeating the same aloud in unison. It may have amused many people but it made me feel sad. It triggered my thought process and many questions surged in my mind. Where will such learning lead to these innocent and tender minds? What will be the level of their educations when they grow up? A teacher's influence in shaping the personality of individuals is indisputable the world over especially in India where teachers since ages have been highly respected. In the words of Henry Adams, "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops". Only the good teachers have a good influence on the students. Owing to advancement in technology, the classrooms may be well equipped but unless we have well trained and effective teachers equipped with skills of addressing the changing needs of the students of modern times, the quality of education will remain in question. John Stanford's, as quoted by needs of the students of modern times, the quality of education will remain in question. Johan Stanford, as quoted by Dozier (2000) observed that the highest academic standards, the best facilities the strongest accountability measures, and the latest technology will do little good without talented, dedicated, and well-prepared teachers. U.S. Department of Education (1999) in its document "Teacher quality: A report on the preparation and Qualification of Public school Teachers in USA confirms what parents always emphasize the quality of a teacher is one of the most critical components of how well students achieve. Studies revealed that students who had effective teachers greatly outperformed those who had ineffective teachers. The educational objectives can only be realized if we have competent and well trained teachers in our classrooms. Over the last decade, unprecedented increase in the numbers of teacher education institutions country wide has resulted in enormous increase in the number of people option for pre service teacher education. Unfortunately the quality of graduating teachers from many of these teacher education institutions is poor. This dilution in quality has a direct impact on the students of those schools where they are appointed. Moreover the emerging new challenges of modern times demand for a new role of teacher. To impart quality education to the students which is relevant to the modern times and also to upgrade the declining standards of education, equality enhancement in teacher education is called for urgently.

2. WHAT IS QUALITY IN EDUCATION:

The term "Quality" has been defined variously in different contexts but its relevance in education is catching momentum worldwide. In his book *The World Crisis in Education: the view from the Eighties*, Coombs (1985) has given a classical definition-Qualitative dimension means much more than the quality of education as customarily defined and judged by student learning achievements, in terms of traditional curriculum and standards. Quality also pertains to the relevance of what is taught and learned-to how well it fits three percent and future needs of the particular learners in question, given their particular circumstances and prospects. It also refers to significant changes in the educational system itself, in the nature of its inputs (Students, Teachers, Facilities, Equipment and supplies); its objectives, curriculum and educational technologies; and its socioeconomic, cultural and political environment (Coombs, 1995, p. 105)

The World Bank has also tried to define quality in education. In the report *Priorities and strategies for Education* (1995) it dealt with education policy issues and made the following observation concerning quality in education is difficult to define and measure. An adequate definition must include student outcomes. Most educators would also include in the definition the nature of the educational experience that helps to produce thus outcomes-the learning environment (World Bank, 1995, p 46)

The degree of quality in education can be measured in terms of educational goals that are met. Depending upon the goals set to be achieved, quality in education has been variously defined as: excellence in education (Peter & Waterman, 1982), value addition in education (Feigenbaum, 1951) and fitness of educational outcome and experience for use (Juran & Gryna, 1988)

Quality in education is the deciding factor of the quality of the individuals who in turn reflect the quality of a society as a whole. Quality in Education is not an assessment of effectiveness in terms of only academic achievement but of the values that it infuses and life skills that it develops in individuals to empower them to lead a quality life and also to contribute in the national development process as responsible citizen.

3. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION:

As stated by NCTE (1998) in 'Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education'. 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.

Education has increasingly become important to the success of both individuals and nations. Growing evidence demonstrates that, among all educational resources, teachers' abilities are especially critical contributors to students' learning and consequently the success of a national to advance in its economic, social and political spheres (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Imparting quality education certainly demands the teaches to be well educated and equipped with all qualities of a good teacher.

The OECD report quality in teaching (1994) defines teacher quality in five dimensions:

- 1) Knowledge of substantive areas and content;
- 2) Pedagogic skill, including the acquisition and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies';
- 3) Reflection and ability to be self-critical, the hallmark of teacher professionalism,
- 4) Empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of other; and
- 5) Managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom (OECD, 1994, p. 13-14).

The report adds:- These dimensions of teacher quality should not be seen in terms of narrow behavioral competencies, but more in terms of dispositions. Teacher quality should be regarded as a holistic concept, i.e. as a gestalt of qualities rather than as a discrete set of measurable behaviors, to be developed independently from each other. The integration of competencies across these dimensions of teacher quality is thought too marks the outstanding teacher (OECD, 1994, p.14). Teacher education should focus on instilling these qualities in order to transforms pupil teachers into knowledgeable, skilled, competent and value oriented teachers with wholesome personalities capable of transfusing the same into their students.

4. CHALLENGES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Deteriorating standers of education in India is a serious concern bothering all those who believe that national development cannot go beyond the quality of its education system. The major factor hindering the way in providing quality teacher education is the exponential growth of teacher education institutions and programme during the past few years. This unprecedented expansion resulted due to the increase in demand of teachers as the enrolment n schools augmented in wake of the launching of several education development programme like operation Blackboard, District Primary Education programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education and Right to Education Bill. In an endeavor to meet supply with demand, the quantity seems to be overlapping quality. The mandatory requirement of pre-service teacher certification for appointment as a teacher has led to escalating pressure on previously existing institutional capacity resulting into mushroom growth of teacher education institutions in the country. For their monetary gains, these institutions are selling degrees and diplomas thus characterizing the pathetic teacher education scenario of today.

Despite tall claims, neither centre nor the state governments thought the regulatory and statutory bodies have been able to regulate the quality of new institutions, many of which lack proper infrastructure and qualified faculty. This was revealed by a committee constituted in 2007-08 to review the functioning of NCTE which recommended its overhaul. A report on higher education recently relapsed by Yashpal committee (2009) has made similar observation on other regulatory bodies such as AICTE and UGC.

Meeting the Challenge.

In order to address these challenges, there is an urgent need to bring comprehensive reform in teacher education of India. There are two broad elements that most observers agree characterize teacher quality: (1) teacher preparation and qualifications, and (2) teaching professional development, mentoring). The second refers to the actual behaviors and practices that teacher preparation programme to ensure professionalism in the processes and practices. This professionalism can be achieved only by total commitment, devotion and continuous efforts on enhancing quality in transaction.

Following suggestions may be considered to achieve some reforms in the existing teacher education programs:

- There should be strict monitoring of the functioning of teacher education institutions by regulatory bodies. This will help in checking the commercialization of education by ensuring that these institutions adhere to set standards and are well-equipped with necessary infra-structure and adequately qualified faculty.
- Periodic research based reports on the quality of education in terms of learning outcomes should be made public.
- Benchmarks meeting the international standards of teacher education should be developed.
- Academic leadership should be provided to the institutions by experienced academicians with excellent track record of working with teacher or school education.
- A curriculum that encompasses recent development and trends in the field of education needs to be developed for preparing teachers who can effectively meet the new emerging educational needs of the globalized society.
- The examination system should be reformed according to the changing curriculum.
- The learning material should incorporate technology to make it more interactive and exploratory.
- The period of Pre-service teacher training program should be increased so that the pupil teachers gain more experience of interacting with students before taking the role of actual teachers.

According to National curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009-10) Teacher education as a whole needs urgent and comprehensive reform. There is a need to bring greater convergence between professional preparation and continuing professional development of teachers at all stages of schooling in terms of level, duration and structure. Considering the complexity and significance of teaching as a professional practice, it is imperative the entire enterprise of teacher education should be raised to a university level and that the duration and rigor of programmes should be appropriately enhanced.

5. CONCLUSION:

As the development of a nation is determined by quality of its education system, the onus of nation building lies surely on the shoulders of teachers. Quality in Education can only be ensured if the teacher education institutions ensure total commitment in producing quality teachers. India, a developing country is striving to increase its pace of development by empowering its education system. To meet this end, concerted efforts from all fronts viz., teacher education institutions, government, society and non government organizations have to be put together.

6. REFERENCES

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