

CHANGING CONTEXT OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN SCENARIO

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The well-established tradition of teaching and learning in India has retained its inherent strength even under adverse circumstances. The post-independence period was a characterized by major effort being made to nurture and transform teacher education. The system of teacher preparation has come under considerable pressure as a result of the expansion and growth of school education, through efforts to universalize elementary education. Having inherited a foreign model of teacher preparation at the time of independence from Britain in 1946, major efforts have been made to adapt and up-date the teacher education curriculum to local needs, to make it more context based, responsive and dynamic with regard to best meeting the particular needs of India. The current system of teacher education is supported by a network of national, provincial and district level resource institutions working together to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs at the pre-service level and also through in-service programs for serving teachers throughout the country.

Impact of National Policies:

India has made considerable progress in school education since independence with reference to overall literacy, infrastructure and universal access and enrolment in schools. Two major developments in the recent years form the background to the present reform in teacher education-

- The political recognition of Universalization of Elementary Education that led to the Right to Education act 2009.
- The National Curriculum Framework for school education, 2005.

Article 21-A of the Constitution of India and its consequent legislation, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 became operative in the country on 1 April 2010. This development implies that every child has a right to elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. The reform processes initiated in 2010-11, pursuant to this important development, were continued during the year 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 & 2014-15. All States/UTs have notified their State RTE Rules.

The Right to Education Act has come into being making it mandatory for the state to provide free and compulsory education to almost 20 crore children in the 6-14 age group till class 8. The Act mandates a schedule for the functioning of schools which includes a teacher-student ratio of 1:30 till a student population of 200 students at the primary stage. This would increase the demand for qualified elementary school teachers many times. The country has to address the need of supplying well qualified and professionally trained teachers in large numbers in the coming years.

Developments in School education:

(a) New Schools:

Progress in achieving the goal of universal access under SSA has been consistent over the years. There were 1,73,757 habitations un-served by primary schools in 2001-02 when SSA was launched. Over the years 2, 04, 686 primary schools were sanctioned, of which 347 were sanctioned in the 2014-15. At the upper primary stage there were 2,30,941 habitations un-served by upper primary schools in 2002. Over the years 1,59,427 upper primary schools have been sanctioned in a radius of 3 km, including 248 sanctioned in 2014-15.

(b) Special Training for mainstreaming out-of-school children:

The RTE Act makes specific provision for Special Training for age- appropriate admission for out-of-school children. A majority of out-of-school children belong to disadvantaged communities – scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims, migrants, children with special needs, urban deprived children, working children, children in other difficult circumstances, for example, those living in difficult terrain, children from displaced families, and areas affected by civil strife, etc.

The SSA Framework of Implementation provides that the duration of Special Training may be flexible, varying from 3 months to 2 years, depending on the child's needs. Special Training may be in the form of residential or non-residential courses organized, preferably in the premises of the school, but if such facilities are not available in school, alternate facilities which are safe, secure and accessible may be identified and used. At the end of the duration of Special Training for a particular child, the suitability of placing the child in a class may be reviewed. In the AWP&B 2014-15, a total of ` 569.22 crore has been provided for Special Training to 14.77 lakh out of school children.

(c) Residential facilities:

In sparsely populated or hilly and densely forested areas with difficult geographical terrains and in densely populated urban areas, where it is difficult to get land for establishing schools residential facilities are provide. In urban areas there are a number of urban deprived children: homeless and street children in difficult circumstances, without adult protection, who require not merely day- schooling facilities, but also lodging and boarding facilities. As of now SSA has provided 797 residential institutions with a capacity of around 88,400 children.

(d) Transportation or Escort facilities:

Is available for children in remote habitations with sparse populations or in urban areas where availability of land is a problem or children belonging to extremely deprived groups or children with special needs. Such children may be provided support for transportation or escort facilities. The requirement of funds for this facility will be kept under the National Component, to be utilized on receipt/appraisal of district specific proposals from the State, justifying the need for providing transportation facility to children in sparsely populated, hilly/densely forested/desert terrains, as well as urban areas where unavailability of land makes it unviable to set up schools as per the 'neighborhood' norms of the State. For the year 2014-15 SSA provided ` 23.92 core for provisioning

Inclusive Education:

A group that forms a very important part of equity issues under SSA is Children with Special Needs (CWSN). RTE-SSA seeks to ensure that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. The main components of SSA interventions for children with special needs include:

Identification, functional and formal assessment, appropriate educational placement, preparation of Individualized Educational Plan, provision of aids and appliances, teacher training, resource support, removal of architectural barriers, monitoring and evaluation and a special focus on girls with special needs.

Special training for children with special needs (CWSN) with the main objective of preparing children with special needs for schools, thereby ensuring better quality inclusion for them. Home- based education for children with severe profound disabilities with the objective of either preparing children with special needs for schools and for life, by imparting to them basic life skills. Financial support up to ` 3000/- per child for integration of disabled children, as per specific proposals. Household surveys and special surveys have been conducted by all states to identify children with special needs. 27.79 lakh children with special needs have been identified. 25.03 lakh children with special needs (90.07% of those identified) are enrolled in schools. Further 12946 children with special needs are being covered through School Readiness Programme and 1.85 lakh children with special needs are being provided home-based education in 31 States/ UTs. In all 97.19% of the identified children with special needs have been covered through various strategies. Making schools barrier free for children with special needs for easy access is incorporated in the SSA framework. Till now 82.33% have been provided with barrier free access. Focus is on improving quality, monitoring of services provided to and retaining children with special needs in school. 212197 schools have been provided with disabled friendly toilets. 33.06 lakh teachers have been covered through regular teacher training programmes, which include a 2-3 day capsule on inclusive education so far. 25.41 lakh (42.45%) teachers have been provided 3-5 days additional training for better orientation to Inclusive Education. States/UTs have appointed 19778 resource persons for providing support on inclusive education to regular teachers.

Challenges in Teacher Education:

Unprecedented expansion of teacher education institutions and programmes during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. With increasing school enrolments and the launch of pan-Indian primary education development programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education, there was a natural increase in the demand for teachers. Added to this, the backlog of untrained teachers in the system and the essential requirement of pre-service teacher certification for appointment as a teacher led to mounting pressure on existing institutional capacity. The demand far exceeding supply, market forces have taken over unprecedented rise in the number of teacher education institutions in most parts of the country.

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 that the entire enterprise of teacher education should be raised to a university level and that the duration and rigour of programmes should be appropriately enhanced.

Changing Role of the Teacher:

The current system of schooling poses tremendous burden on children. Educationists are of the view that the burden arises from treating knowledge as a 'given', an external reality existing outside the learner and embedded in textbooks. Knowledge is essentially a human construct, a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. The NCF 2005, requires a teacher to be a facilitator of children's learning in a manner that the child is helped to construct his/her knowledge. Education is not a mechanical activity of information transmission and teachers are not information dispensers. Teachers have to increasingly play the role of crucial mediating agents through whom curriculum is transacted.

Perspectives for equitable and sustainable development:

In order to develop future citizens who promote equitable and sustainable development for all sections of society and respect for all, it is necessary that they be educated through perspectives of gender equity, perspectives that develop values for peace, respect the rights of all, and that respect and value work. In the present ecological crisis promoted by extremely commercialized and competitive lifestyles, children need to be educated to change their consumption patterns and the way they look at natural resources.

There is also an increasing violence and polarization both within children and between them, that is being caused by increasing stress in society. Education has a crucial role to play in promoting Values of peace based on equal respect of self and others. The NCF 2005 and subsequent development of syllabi and materials is attempting to do this as well.

ICT in Schools and e-learning:

With the onset and proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), there is a growing demand that it be included in school education. Teacher education has been structured to orient and sensitize the teacher to distinguish between developmentally appropriate and detrimental uses of ICT. It needs to also equip teachers with competence to use ICT for their own professional development.

In view of the above discussion the newly visualized Teacher education program as put forth by NCERT is as follows.

Role of Community knowledge in education:

It is important for the development of concepts in children as well as the application of school knowledge in real life that the formal knowledge is linked with community knowledge. The NCF 2005 promotes the inclusion of locally relevant content in the curriculum as well as pedagogy.

Newly visualized Teacher Education Programme:

- Emphasizes learning as a self-learning participatory process taking place in social context of learner's as well as wider social context of the community to nation as a whole.
- Puts full faith in self learning capacity of school children and student teacher and evolving proper educative programme for education.
- Views the learner as an active participative person in learning. His/her capabilities or potentials are seen not as fixed but capable of development through experiences.
- Views the teacher as a facilitator, supporting, encouraging learner's learning.

Hence there would be a major shift:

From	To
Teacher centric, stable designs	Learner centric, flexible process
Teacher direction and decisions	Learner autonomy
Teacher guidance and monitoring	Facilitates, support and encourages learning
Passive reception in learning	Active participation in learning
Learning within the four walls of the classroom	Learning in the wider social context the class room
Knowledge as "given" and fixed	Knowledge as it evolves and created

Disciplinary focus	Multidisciplinary, educational focus
Linear exposure	Multiple and divergent exposure
Appraisal, short, few	Multifarious, continuous

CONCLUSION:

No nation develops beyond the quality of its education system, which is highly dependent on the quality of its teachers. Teachers should be given the most appropriate tools during and after their training, including content knowledge and skills as well as teaching methodology to be able to do their work professionally. The globalization concept, if taken into account, would require that teachers and teaching should be recognized like all other professions and should require stringent training and acquisition of knowledge and skills and professional registration under a global council of unified teacher registration body to allow for easy mobility of teachers across national boundaries.

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