



Quality concerns in professional education: Teacher education and training

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Abstract

Teaching is considered as the noblest of all professions. Teaching as a profession involves not only making individual literate but educating them to cope up with real life situations and effective living. Teacher is the key to Quality Education. The goal of quality education to a great extent depends on the quality of teachers floated in our educational system. Quality of teachers depends on the general and professional education which teachers receive before entering the profession as well as in-service. Quality teacher education is the need of the hour. Competent and committed teacher educators are essential to develop and inspire prospective teachers. Changes and developments need to be made in the field of education especially, Teacher Education, in three major domains of – Structure, Content And Process. No compromises should be made in the training process of teachers. Teacher Educators need to perform their work with utmost care and great concern for developing the nation builders- our future teachers.

Keywords: quality education, professional education, profession, teacher educators, training, structural changes, content reforms and process overhauling's

Introduction

Teaching as a Profession

A profession is an occupation or job that needs special knowledge – e.g. medicine, law, teaching, engineering etc. It implies specialized knowledge and high ethical standards by the practitioners. Every profession, in order to regulate its terms, conditions, norms and quality of services rendered has its own professional ethics. The word 'ethics' adds to the professional obligations that a profession abides by.

Teaching is considered as the noblest of all professions. A teacher plays an important role in enhancing the personality and knowledge base of every individual. It is the teacher through whom the unfulfilled dreams of the society can be realized. Teaching as a profession involves not only making individuals' literate but educating them to cope up with real life situations and effective living. Effective living implies possession of balanced personality with rationale, constructivism for common good, positivity of thought and action leading to qualitative change and development of society as well as the nation as a whole. Such effective living will lead to development of worthy citizens of the society.

Importance of Teacher Education in Terms of Quality

To ensure quality of life of people resulting in effective living, it is essential to provide quality education. Teacher is the key to Quality Education. The goal of quality education to a great extent depends on the quality of teachers floated in our educational system.

The main actor on the educational stage is the teacher. Success or failure of any educational scheme depends upon the quality, commitment and enthusiasm of those engaged in the teaching profession. Only a burning candle could light another candle.

Quality of teachers depends on the general and professional education which teachers receive before entering the profession as well as in-service.

Effective professional preparation and in-service development activities result in professional commitment to excellence in teaching. In teaching and training the greatest task and challenge is to inspire teachers for professional excellence.

Teacher educators or master trainers are an indispensable pivotal link in the process of learning and personal development of teachers which is the core of professionalization and forms the base for professional ethics.

Competent and committed Teacher Educators are essential to develop and inspire prospective Teachers who in turn are competent and committed.

Teacher Education is a comprehensive term which not only equips practitioners for teaching at different level of schooling, but also provides him with theoretical background of the practical aspects of teaching as a profession. The teacher training stage is one from where the right attitude towards teaching and learning can be developed and promoted. The profession of teaching reflects a high degree of academic excellence in teaching skills and practical wisdom on one hand and a well-integrated value system on the other, both oriented towards continuous attempts at developing a scientific temper, spirit of inquiry and excellence in all spheres of activity.

Quality teacher education is the need of the hour. In order to ensure a certain standard and quality in education, we in India, need to make teaching a 'prestige profession' and acquire requisite support and recognition to teachers, unless and until this is sought, it is futile to talk of good education or quality education. Evidently the quality of education is a direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education system.

Quality Teacher Education should aim to prepare futuristic, dynamic and forward-looking teachers with high level of competencies, commitment and willingness to perform.

Need of the Hour

As far as investment in Teacher Education is concerned, Kothari Commission has remarked “A sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in Teacher Education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small measured against the resulting improvements in education of millions”

Teaching is considered to be an art by some, while many others consider it as a complex set of skills, which could be developed by sufficient instruction, practices and exercise.

Effective Teacher Training involves the development of the capability to take independent professional decisions. Effective decisions are in the context of teaching effectiveness. An effective teacher is one who has acquired the necessary capabilities to operationalize instructional skills, identify learning styles of students and select appropriate instructional procedures for presenting the content using appropriate media and take relevant decision affecting a match among these variables.

An effective teacher is also capable of taking classroom management decisions. In other words, he/she possesses professional as well as pedagogical intelligence. Pedagogical intelligence involves the ability to match teaching with learning styles of students and instructional objectives and to adapt to the teaching situation in different learning environments and individual students' needs. Thereby, catering to individual differences and bringing out the best.

The Teacher Education Policy in India which has evolved over a period of time is based on recommendations made by different committees from time to time and which are contained in various Reports of these Committees and Commissions on Education. The Kothari Commission (1966), the Chattopadhyay Committee (1985), the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986, and 1992), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990), Yashpal Committee (1993), and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) are some of the important ones to highlight and emphasize the importance of Teacher Education. The RTE Act, 2009, which became operational from 1st April, 2010, which is concerned with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, has important implications for Teacher Education in the country. Thereby, emphasizing the responsibility on the shoulders of Teacher Education Institutions and Teacher Educators /Master Trainers' especially. The sad part is that the Teacher Educators do not realize the gravity and responsibility of their role in the development of effective teachers being floated in the society.

The Education Commission (1964-66) had stressed that “a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education” This view of the members of the Commission given way back is still valid, applicable and desired.

The National Policy of Education-1986 summarized the situation succinctly and called for “overhauling teacher education”. The Ram Murthy committee also suggested drastic reforms in Teacher Education.

Making of effective, efficient, professionally, intelligent teachers with professional ethics and an integrated value system lies in the hands of Professional Teacher Training Colleges.

What is of utmost importance and urgently required is that these professional training institutes need to overhaul their attitude, understand and realize their moral responsibilities

and obligations towards this sacred profession. It is high time now. They must understand that they are Nation Builders and builders of future pillars of the society who in turn would build future citizens. They cannot and should not shirk away from this responsibility in any way. Serious thought, concerted effort and conscious and purposive immediate action is required.

Changes and developments need to be made in the field of education especially, Teacher Education, in three major domains of – Structure, Content And Process.

Structural changes- or reforms would be related to the programme of teacher training, its duration, its certification and its location in the educational setup. For this, clarity of goal, adequate authority and resources are needed. They need to be judiciously done by the statutory bodies in the larger interests and the same must be incorporated by the Training Institutions in the right context. In the recent past and at present also lot may changes are being made by the NCTE but clarity and more organized and far-sighted reforms and transformations are required in order to eliminate the prevailing dilemma.

Content reform -or changes would be dealing with overhauling of the subject matter, discipline, approach to curriculum and weightage to various aspects of content and its evaluation etc. Contents reforms can be brought about with help of curriculum committees who can review, revise and restructure the curricula for Teacher Education Programs. Experts and consultants can contribute to reforms in the textual material. This again is much desired in a very diligent manner keeping in mind the need of the society, for e.g. keeping in mind the deteriorating values, ethics and general wellbeing of the society introducing courses on ‘Spiritual and Cultural Development of Learners’ or ‘Professional Ethics for Teachers’.

Irrelevant and overlapping content from the syllabus and the courses needs to be removed and the important and relevant content needs to be added and included. This will add to the quality of the professional training when implemented with the correct manner, context and spirit by the Teacher education Institutions.

Process overhauling and reforms would include the changes in the ways of transacting the curriculum including the evaluation process. This most important and difficult reform in the educational set-up related to curriculum transaction or process reform deals with establishment of meaningful human relations in organizations and institutions besides transacting curriculum. It requires human effort which depends upon competencies and commitment of the Teacher Educators and Trainers. To bring about a change in the process of education in general and teacher education in particular the required human effort is lacking and is extremely difficult to mobilize. It should be essential that Master Educators should have School Teaching experience which will give them an insight into training future teachers with an awareness of the psychology of children, especially adolescents and pedagogy to be used in schools with which the teachers need to be very careful when transacting curriculum. This is very important for evaluation process also. The Teacher Educators and in turn teachers should know the importance and ways and means for appropriate Evaluation of the curriculum transacted.

A Master Trainer who does not possess experience in school teaching is most of the time unable to train teachers with the right spirit required to train them and enable them to

understand the children in the schools coming down to their level of understanding and in a humane manner. This defeats the purpose of effective training which is actually required. Therefore, it is very essential that the process is overhauled and appropriate reforms incorporated so that they can be implemented at the grass-root level. For such process reforms, reforms at the structural level cannot be ruled out and hence appropriate decisions and corrections required at all stages and aspects of changes in the Teacher Education system.

Quality in Teaching

In teaching and training the greatest challenges is to inspire teachers and teacher educators to professional excellence. As far as teacher educators are concerned, it is desirable that their selection and training should involve development of responsible attitude towards their students i.e. pupil-teachers. Their curriculum transaction process needs to be monitored and evaluated.

Incompetent teacher educators or master trainers would damage not only the pupil-teachers they teach but they would damage the entire generations passing through the hands of these reckless pupil teachers once they try to acquire their degrees and join the profession of teaching. The fate and future of the students taught (who are none other than children from our very own families) would be at stake.

Master Trainers and Quality

A profession such as that of master trainers and teacher training institutes should be prevented from commercialization and reckless attitude. No compromise should be made in the training process of teachers.

Competent, skilled, experienced, professionally and pedagogically intelligent and well-motivated master trainers can definitely save generations and build nations by their effective curriculum transaction to pupil teachers.

It is highly significant to make constant efforts for professional growth and adhere to the code of conduct and professional ethics. A well-integrated value system would definitely keep the master trainers on track, making them professionally committed and accountable to themselves, their profession as well as their students i.e. the pupil teachers. High degree of accountability is essential for Master Trainers without which the task would be half done and goal achievement would be incomplete.

Pupil Teachers and Quality

The pupil teachers need to be motivated adequately to understand their own importance and role as teachers in classrooms. Development of professional ethics and pedagogical intelligence is desirable besides developing high value system, effective communication skills for transmitting knowledge and encouraging mastery over content they teach. The teaching profession requires academic excellence, repertoire of teaching and communication skills along with practical wisdom and value system.

Rigorous training involving practical experience and hands at teaching should definitely be a part of their curriculum but the need here is that this practical training should be closely and effectively monitored by highly dedicated and competent pupil-teacher supervisors constantly guiding and improving upon the teaching skills of future teachers. It should not confine itself to the mere completion of the required number

of teaching lesson plans but it needs to be quality based instead of quantity based.

Developing right attitude, sincerity and seriousness towards practicing class training and entire duration of practice in teaching is the duty and responsibility of the Master Trainers or Teacher Educators..

Future teachers must be made to realize the fact during their training period only that the school children are sent by parents who themselves are either illiterate, less-qualified, ignorant and involved in acquiring and fulfilling the basic needs of their families. The parents send their children to school with the expectation that their child would become worthwhile and would be able to fulfill his basic needs and desires after getting educated. They cut their own needs and pay for the education of their wards. In school the teachers, of course with exceptions, adopt, reckless, irresponsible attitude and at times do not provide the required kind of education to the innocent students who have been sent on the teachers' responsibility ultimately shattering the dreams of the students and their parents as well as adversely affecting the growth development and progress of the whole society and nation at large.

All that is required is the need to shake the human element and the conscience of the Master Trainers/Teacher Educators and future teachers. Adequate, appropriate and timely motivation for the master Trainers. Desired and required reforms and changes in the Structure, Content and Process of the Educational setup. Last, but not the least, the professional recognition and dignity to teachers, both Master Trainers and Pupil Teachers. The consolidated effort would definitely ensure building of professionally healthy and responsible educational setup which would ensure the development of active, thinking creative, constructive, healthy, contributive citizens of the society, nation and the world.

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