

Need for Improvement of Teacher Education in the New Millennium (Mrs.)

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Abstract: *Drastic changes are required in the Teacher Education program in view of the ongoing changes in the social, cultural, economical and political environment so that teacher could come in terms with the changing needs of contemporary Indian society. In the absence of the clarity of vision about the contemporary social environment, Teacher Education program fails to secularize the behavior of the society with social enlightenment. This article purports to highlight the need to improve the quality of Teacher Education program. A teacher needs to be a learner for the whole life. Besides, the problems faced in the field and suggestions to rectify them have also been discussed.*

Since the teacher plays a pivotal role in the entire educative process, teacher education is very crucial to the improvement of both quantity and quality of education. Especially, at the secondary stage, teacher education has assumed special significance in between elementary education on the one hand and higher/university education on the other. The quality of teacher depends upon their training and preparation as much as on their natural inclinations, devotion and such other personal qualities as intelligence and attitude (Pretorius, 2012) towards teaching etc. Teacher Education provides professional expertise to prospective teachers. It is truism to say that teacher is the single most important factor in the success of any educational program.

The risk of entrusting education to unsuitable persons may not be as readily apparent as when, say, unskilled engineers are employed for constructing dams or quacks to take care of the ailing, but the risk is in fact more real, perhaps incalculable. The improvement of teacher education programs in and by themselves cannot ensure that better teachers will be produced. The quality of teachers that the training institutions will ultimately produce will depend upon the quality of persons who are accepted for training and the training that they receive. Good teachers cannot be made out of poor material. Teacher education institution should therefore adopt:

- (a) A comprehensive procedures for selecting their students through procedures which may predict teaching competence to a fair extent and discriminate effectively between effective and ineffective teachers.
- (b) An effective teacher education programs.

A research review was conducted by the author to enquire into the selection procedures adopted by teacher education institutions in India. It was found that the selection is usually made on the basis of interviews and achievement tests. Some institutions give weightage to participation in N.C.C. /N.S.S. activities. A few institutions employ objective measures of intelligence, personality etc. for this purpose and even when they do, the validity and reliability of these measures have in most cases not been subjected to scrutiny, let alone scientifically established. Hence, the need for evolving such objective procedures as may help in a suitable selection of persons who are likely to become efficient teachers (Reddy, 1992, Rice, 2003 and Goe et al, 2008). A review of research predicting teaching effectiveness conducted in India (Shukla, 1964 and Khan 2003) and abroad (Lowton, 1939) revealed a variety of predictor measures. Traits, social adjustment, attitudes, interests, intelligence, academic achievement, socio-economic status and speech etc are the measures of personality. Most of these measures have significant positive correlations with the criteria of teaching efficiency, which in most cases are scores obtained by the student teachers at B. Ed theory and/or practice teaching examinations or, in some cases, are ratings of their teaching competence by teacher educators.

The criteria of teaching success can either be product or process criteria (Mitzel, 1960). Product criteria concern the changes brought about in the products, i.e. pupils through teaching. This seems to be a very logical procedure for measuring teaching efficiency, because the actual growth, which a teacher can produce in his pupils, is the ultimate aim of all education. This criterion is, however, beset with a number of difficulties. The gain in knowledge may not solely be due to a particular teacher and may have resulted more from the pupil's inherent ability than from the instructions given by other teachers. Therefore, this criterion can not be put to effective use.

Almost all teacher education programs in India consist of two major components – theory of education and practice teaching. Under theory of education, student-teachers are taught pedagogical aspects of the science of teaching including social and cultural aspects of people of India, psychology of child development & learning and techniques of effective teaching of specific subjects. The practice teaching component provides for a firsthand experience of actual classroom situation by involving the trainees in direct classroom teaching for a reasonable period of time. The author, therefore, decided to conduct a thorough review of research studies conducted in India and abroad in both the major aspects of teacher education program.

Exhaustive studies should, therefore, be undertaken to identify characteristics, which may discriminate *effective* from ineffective teachers, so that this profession does not become the last refuge for the unfit and the aimless.

The teacher education programs have remained static over the years except for some changes here and there. In most of the teacher's training institutions the theory part takes away more than 80% of the time and hardly 20% of the time is devoted to student teaching. Student teaching is perhaps more important than the theory part (DHET, 2010). Teacher's competence in the class room is more important than the knowledge of pedagogy he possesses.

The 20% time devoted to student teaching is also not properly utilized. The objectives of student teaching and skills to be mastered are seldom spelled out and the occasions of appropriate feedback are few and far between. The picture of teacher

education is dull and depressing and its programs are obsolete and irrelevant in the context of real school life. Their products, the student teachers, are as efficient at the end of the training as they were in the beginning. Therefore, there is a need to have fresh look at the theory courses and the student teaching programs (Gupta 1997; Khan 2000).

Theory Courses

The theory courses taught in most of the training institutions are outdated and obsolete. They consist of subjects whose contents do not relate to pedagogical aspects. These courses need to be pruned to give more time for student teaching. For example, only those aspects of psychological foundations should be included which are functional and are directly related to classroom situations. There are also other courses which have hardly any relevance to the skills and abilities required by secondary school teachers. Such contents may be excluded from the theory courses.

A teacher should be efficient in the use and construction of different evaluation devices. Therefore, a comprehensive course on measurement and evaluation should be compulsory for all student teachers (Khan 2000).

Importance of different Audio Visual media for making the process of instructions effective cannot be ignored (Rajput & Walia, 1997). The government is making efforts to introduce technology-based instructions in educational institutions. These efforts cannot succeed unless the teachers are properly trained to use the hardware and prepare software for the purpose (Khan, 2009). Therefore suitable course on educational technology should also be compulsory for all student teachers.

Student - teaching

Student teaching in vogue in teacher's training institutions is by and large ritualistic and ceremonial. The improvement in this component of the curriculum is essential to improve the effectiveness of our teachers (Raina, 1996; Cohen & Seria 2010). Teaching is a very complex behavior and consists of number of skills. It is very difficult for a beginning teacher to practice all the skills simultaneously. It is equally

difficult for the teacher educators to give appropriate feed back regarding all the skills. This state of affairs can be remedied by adopting micro-teaching approach at the initial stage. Micro-teaching is an analytical approach to practice teaching (Jangira & Singh, 1982) which makes it possible to concentrate on a specific teaching behavior at a time and practice it under controlled conditions. Briefly, it consists in presenting a model of one skill at a time; its practice by student teachers employing a small lesson and a small class, provision of appropriate feed back till the skill is mastered. After all the skills are mastered, they are integrated. The student teacher can then deliver the whole lesson involving a variety of skills. Studies conducted in India and abroad have demonstrated that this approach is better than the conventional approach to practice teaching. The teacher's training colleges should, therefore, adopt this technique for improving their practice teaching programs (Jangira & Dhondiyal, 1991).

After teaching a sufficient number of lessons, the student teachers may be required to join internship program (Reddy, 1992), wherein the student teachers practice teaching skills under the supervision of teacher educators and school teachers. Under this program, the student teachers, not only practice teaching skills, but also experience the problems faced by teachers in realistic situations. Kundi (2009) reported that both less experienced as well as those with average experience teachers possessed significantly better attitude towards utility of in-service training programs in comparison to highly experienced teachers. All these experiences would go a long way in improving their competence.

The National Policy on Education (1985) launched by the Government of India has also recommended the introduction of community work as an important aspect of teacher education program. With first hand experience and in consultation with leading educationist of the country, the NCERT recommended restructuring of Teacher Education program on different lines keeping in view the needs of Indian society. Deviating from the existing structure of Teacher Education for all stages, the document provides 20% of time to pedagogical theory, 20% of time to working with community and 60% of time to the content-cum-methodology and practice teaching etc.

Discussion

The teachers training program is an experience – based opportunity provided for transferring the behavior of the individual and arranged to influence learning that produces a change in knowledge, skills and attitudes, and consequently, in the performance of the job. Teacher educator's way of organizing theoretical framework, practical session and skills development program affect the future teachers. The activities suggested during training are carried to the classroom teaching in the school. Thus quality of teacher's instruction seems to correspondence with the effectiveness of inputs, processes and products of teacher's training courses. Teachers are prepared and developed professionally in teacher's training institutions.

This article argues that the programs for improving the qualities of teachers should constitute the broad guiding principles for teacher education curricula. The indicators as identified above have direct implication for teacher education. In view of these indications the teacher education program should emphasize the following:

1. Proper professional preparation is essential for teacher effectiveness. Train future teachers how to plan a lesson thoroughly and provide for all necessary elements of an effective lesson.
2. Train student teachers in how to be flexible and utilize a variety of strategies and teaching approaches to ensure the best possible mastery of different aspects of the subject content.
3. Develop effective attitude and orientation including academic orientation, high expectation, enthusiasm, being positive and motivated, an eagerness to continue learning and self-confidence.
4. To be able to cope with the challenging demands of today's classrooms, teachers should be trained in the principles of self-management, such as effective time management.
5. Train teachers to use technology and to integrate appropriate technology in the teaching of a particular subject or discipline.

6. Work on student teacher's communication skills and train in how to communicate effectively and in a structured way, especially, where both teachers and learners are learning the language of instruction.
7. The school curriculum, in particular the curriculum of the subject that the student could teach, should be dealt with thoroughly. A curriculum cannot be transacted effectively if a teacher does not have appropriate background in this regard.
8. Train students in the use of effective learning support material and in how to create an effective learning environment, which attracts students' interest and make them eager to learn.
9. Future teachers should be well-trained in effective formative and summative assessment strategies and also the specific assessment requirements of the subject that they would teach.

Hence, the present study will ultimately help the training organizers, researchers and all others concerned with bringing desirable improvements in ongoing training programs and other educational schemes for the betterment of society and nation as a whole.

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