

## PRE-SERVICE SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME: SOME CONCERNS OF SUSTAINABILITY

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*With the onset of a new academic session, teacher education programmes across the county will be in a new avatar. The revamping of a teacher education programme has been on the cards for several years but stiff resistance from different quarters of the educational community made it impossible to do so. The revised secondary teacher education programme is new in several counts. Firstly, curricular areas have been made more contextual, class, student and community based. Secondly, teaching pedagogy has been made more child centred, experiential and reflective. Thirdly, internship model has been introduced giving more thrust on acquisition of skills and competencies in actual classroom and real settings rather than artificial settings. But, the reform has brought several challenges in its realm which teacher education programmes and institutes have to face. The present paper deals with the new challenges like demand for teacher education programmes, the role of private teacher education institutes and their increasing focus on commercialization, demand for teacher educators and whether the new system is pro-rich or pro-poor student etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** PreService, Teacher Education, Challenges

### INTRODUCTION

While pursuing my secondary pre-service teacher education programme from one of the premier institutes of teacher education I often heard from my

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teachers and seniors that soon the secondary pre-service programme will become of two years' duration. Now almost after 17 years of wait finally NCTE, the apex body of teacher education vide Gazette notification in November 2014 has made secondary teacher education a two-year programme. Though, in these years lot of debates and discussions have been held among educationist, policymakers as well as administrators regarding the utility of making B.Ed. a two-year programme. Definitely, on one aspect there is a consensus among the educationists that the quality of teacher education which is being offered in the last decade or so in majority of the teacher education institutions (especially private management institutes), one can hardly distinguish between trained or untrained teachers. Moreover, it was felt that one cannot prepare teachers within a span of less than a year (sometimes it is less than even nine months) as it lacks rigor and professionalism as well as amount of time is insufficient to develop right set of attitudes to become teachers. Even the latest Justice Verma Committee (2012) appointed by the Supreme Court to look into the anomalies in the teacher education especially related to granting of no objection certificate given by State government to private teacher education institutes running the Bachelor of Elementary Education (B.El. Ed.) programme found out that quality of teacher education is at its lowest ebb. There is an urgent need to overhaul the teacher education system with new vision and new norms for setting up an institute as well as up-gradation of programmes in terms of curricular areas, duration, faculty and their qualifications etc. Though, present teacher education system has produced almost lakhs of teachers who are working in the system, but it is difficult to assess how many of them have become teachers with right set of attitude and professionalism. It doesn't mean that with two years' duration one would be able to prepare teachers of high professionalism, but definitely with increase in duration one can have time to drill more with set of skills or competencies which are required for making better teachers. The B.El.Ed. teachers are found to be better equipped than the B.Ed. teachers in respect to the pedagogy of teaching.

The demand of making teacher education of longer duration was quite old. If we look back from post-independence times, the earliest commission which talked about two years' duration was Mudaliar commission in 1952. Later on it was Chattopadhyaya committee which suggested that the minimum length of training should be of five years after class XII, so that it enables a trainee to acquire basic skills and competencies of a good teacher, such as the capacity to manage a class with pupils of varying abilities, to communicate ideas logically and with clarity, to use the technology available to make teaching effective, to organize educative experiences outside of class, to learn to work with the community and to help students to do so. Such an integrated programme

spread over five years will give the much-needed time and sustained intensity of experience to produce the kind of new teacher the country needs. The Review Committee of NPE (POA,1992) recommended adoption of the internship model for teacher education involving a brief theoretical orientation followed by a 3 to 5-year period of supervised teaching in a school under mentor teachers. The NCFTE (2009) pointed out that “The one-year second Bachelor's degree (B.Ed.) model seems to have outlived its relevance. With the proliferation of B.Ed. colleges, B.Ed. programmes have become weak both in theory and practice. Even the few institutions, which keep struggling to make this programme meaningful, find it difficult to overcome the structural constraints that the short duration of the programme poses. While the second Bachelor's degree model may still be relevant, it is imperative that this needs strengthening in terms of intensity, rigour and duration”. It further asserted that within a finite time frame that the existing one-year second Bachelor's (B.Ed.) degree programme is structurally transformed to a two-year one, with deeper and more protracted engagement with school-based experience and reflective and critical engagement with theory. Though, various other commissions like Kothari Commission (1964-66), NPE (1986), NCFFSE (1975, 1988, 2000) and NCF (2005) never talked directly about increasing the duration of secondary teacher programme but they mentioned in their recommendation on the qualitative improvement in the professional training of the programme whether by revising the curricula, or by enhancing the number of days or hours in the programme or in the form of having internship mode of training. But, that never really happened except bringing in certain changes. As a result, it has done more harm than good in the preparation of teachers. One of the aspects which have been the concern for many of the educationists in recent years is the privatization of teacher education and in the process making it a commercial entity whose sole objective is to mint money rather than focusing on the quality of teacher education. In majority of these private teacher education colleges one would hardly find any qualified faculty, infrastructural facilities especially library and technological resources, non-transaction of curriculum and the worst part is the practice teaching/internship programme which was hardly conducted. Whereas in government funded institutes there is a huge shortage of qualified staff, chalk and talk method is the preferred method of teaching rather than using innovative techniques like blended learning, online learning, supervised study or group projects. Moreover, one would also point out that the present system of teacher education is unable to attract best of the talents in the teaching profession as it is lowly paid profession, there is a stigmatization from the society, no-incentive and multitasking as a result school teaching has become the least preferred option among students. In view of these anomalies and the ritualistic pattern of

completing the programme, it has forced educationists and administrators to think on other lines especially how to prepare a professionally competent teacher. One way of finding the solution is to enhance the duration of the programme as recommended by Chattopadhyaya committee. NCFTE (2009) while discussing upon on the longer duration suggested that:

- Larger amount of time invested in schools would help them to understand and relate learning theories to practical and ground realities.
- Longer duration would help them to examine their own biases, beliefs and reflect on their own classroom discourse and enquiry.
- Programme would at least be able to develop some attitudes, dispositions, habits and interests in a teacher which could be evaluated in longer version of the programmes.
- Provide ample scope for student teachers to reflect on their experiences

In spite of the several positive outcomes, the new two year programme will have to pass the acid test to bring credibility among the students, school education system, educationist and hosts of other stakeholders.

## CONCERNS RELATED TO TWO YEAR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. **Sustainability in Demand among Students Community for Two Year Programme:** With the onset of academic session 2015-16, the two-year pre-service B. Ed programme has started across the country. The bigger question is whether teacher education and its institutions will get students for the two-year programme? Till date students normally enrolled in the B. Ed programme get the degree by the end of twelve month. So, it is less risk taking and more rewarding for students. Now, with the two-years programme there are apprehensions amongst students about the time to get the degrees and to get jobs. Though it is quite early days, yet many of the teacher education institutes even the reputed ones are struggling hard to get students. Many of the private colleges have surrendered their seats from 100 to 50 or others have closed down their colleges due to non-availability of students'. Times of India a leading national newspaper on 2nd July reported that due to two-year duration, in Haryana alone almost 46% seats remain vacant, though it improved in subsequent year but still 34% of seats were lying vacant in Haryana in different teacher education colleges. Similarly, in Punjab 38% seats remained vacant in 2015-16. Unless unlike D. Ed and B. El. Ed where it is almost sure one would get the jobs in government sector at elementary level (mandatory for recruiting agencies to appoint teachers

having qualifications of D. Ed and B. El. Ed), one could not say with the same confidence whether demand among students will sustain as it used to be with the one year programme.

2. **Status of Private Teacher Education Institutes:** Almost 85% of institutes offering B.Ed. programme are running under self-financing mode. It can be arguably said that majority of the teachers are prepared by self-financing colleges. But, most of them suffered from severe shortage of resources whether it is human or physical. Now, with the two-year programme they have not only to appoint qualified staff, which is double the existing number but also double their physical resources (if they go ahead with double intake capacity). This will not be a profitable idea for them. Already they are reluctant to appoint teachers but doubling the resources would mean huge investment. If the demand from the students' side is low, then probably many of the institutes will shut down automatically which will create a kind of mess in the country where there is already huge shortfall of trained teachers. Definitely, there is an urgent need to look into this aspect.
3. **Demand for Qualified Manpower (Teacher-Educators):** The teacher is the focal point of all teaching-learning activities and their quality determines the quality of the students. Realizing the importance of teacher, Government of India launched the Scheme 'Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching'. The mission envisages to address comprehensively all issues related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation, professional development and others. The mission would address, on the one hand, current and urgent issues such as supply of qualified teachers, attracting talent into teaching profession and raising the quality of teaching in schools and colleges. On the other hand, it is also envisaged that the mission would pursue long term goals of building a strong professional cadre of teachers by setting performance standards and creating top class institutional facilities for innovative teaching and professional development of teachers. Though, the intake capacity of teacher educators has been enhanced (from 35 to 50) but there is a huge shortage of teacher educators especially at higher levels. This would be easily gauged that many of the new central universities are not finding high quality teacher-educators. Moreover, there is a shortage of teacher educators in IASEs, CTEs as well as departments of education in state universities. This has further created a problem in preparing quality teachers in these institutes.
4. **Design of Curricula for Two Year B. Ed. Programme:** The NCTE has given only a broad framework in designing the curricula. It has been left to the

universities and departments of education to design new curricula for two-year programme which has relevance in contemporary school education. It has been reiterated even in the latest documents of NCF (2005) and NCFTE (2009) that our teacher education curricula lacks experiential aspect as a result teachers seldom connect between what is learnt in theory and how it is to be applied in practical. The reason is obvious many of the universities haven't changed their curricula as per the needs of school education. They are still working in insular manner without taking into cognizance the demands and requirement of school education. After the model curricula presented by NCTE (2014), all the universities and CTEs (autonomous) are instructed to change their curricula as per the framework. It has been found out that many of the Universities have changed their curricula and aligned their curricula with NCTE (2014) but these are more of cosmetic changes. Therefore, to develop new curricula needs serious inputs from teachers working in the University departments and thus balancing the theory and practical aspects of the curriculum.

5. **Face-off between Teacher Education Institutions and School Education Department on Conducting the School Activities:** The new notification has reiterated the NCFTE (2009) document that teacher education institutions have to provide ample opportunities to teachers to carry out the school related activities for papers included in perspectives of education or curriculum and pedagogical studies so that they can learn from their experiences (reflective practices) which would help them in better understanding. But unfortunately, it has been found out that there is no link between university departments and school education departments. It is a fact when teacher education institutes approach education departments for internship, they handover the school or classes with number of riders. Moreover, when the students try to do the school related activities as per the instructions of the parent organizations school headmasters/teachers tell the students to de-learn and re-learn as per the needs of the school requirements. Since there is no symbiotic relationship between teacher education institutions and school education departments, therefore there is always a tussle between the two organizations and the students are the worst victims. For example, in many of the schools where my students do internship, their teachers, headmaster ask them to write question and answers on the blackboard so that it could be noted on their copy as it is important from the point of view of exams. Teachers hardly worry whether students are able to understand the concept or not.
6. **Higher Investment-Pro-Rich or Pro-Poor:** Teacher Education programmes though professional in nature have a low level of feed

associated with it as compared to other professional courses. Moreover, it has been seen that teacher education programmes actually attract students from low or middle-class families rather than upper class or rich families apart from attracting more mediocre students than talented ones. Therefore, majority of the students who are from low socio-economic strata generally pursue the courses of teacher education programmes. As far as state and central universities are concerned the number of seats is few and there is a cut throat competition. Therefore, relatively small numbers of students are accommodated in these universities. Majority of the students complete their teacher education programmes through self-financing institutes which normally charges hefty fees from the students. Though, in many states there is fee regulatory committee which looks into the fees aspect of teacher education programme so that these private institutes do not charge higher fees from students. In spite of that there is irregularity. Therefore, a large section of students does not manage the fees or take a loan from the banks or other financial institutions so that they can pursue the course and once completed it fetches them good returns. With two-year programme, with double the fees, it will be difficult for the poor students to pursue the teacher education programmes. Moreover, there is hardly any provision for scholarships except for the students belonging to disadvantaged sections. Further, a free hand will be given to the private institutes that they will charge hefty money in two years in the name of development fees or other. A course meant for poor students will become pro-rich.

7. **Longer Duration to become Teacher Educator:** Teaching at a tertiary level means minimum investment of three-year bachelor and two years PG along with NET (almost 5 years). In case of teacher education, to be a teacher educator one needs to invest at least three years in bachelor, two years in master programme (discipline) along with B. Ed and M. Ed of one-year duration each (seven years). Now with new norms, a student has to invest two additional years to become teacher educator i.e. 9 years. Already there is a huge shortage of teacher educators in the country; this kind of model of preparing teacher educator will further aggravate the problem.
8. **Internship Model of Training:** The new B. Ed programme introduces internship model of training just like any other professional programme has. Though, this was a long-standing demand to have internship model as it would help the teacher to get accustomed to knowing the various roles a teacher has to play within the school apart from teaching and evaluating the students. This helps the B.Ed. interns to have in-depth knowledge and intricacies about the functioning of school along with developing



proficiency in teaching skills, language, soft skills etc. They would get time to innovate during teaching as there will be no rush of completing the isolated lessons. Moreover, interns will be able to connect between the theory and practice. The internship model demands cooperation between school and teacher education institutions wherein school will play the role of a mentor. As the school and its personnel are overburdened with their own tasks so how will they act as mentor for these interns where there is no scheme of incentives for them. Moreover, it is impossible for teacher educators to remain with interns for all day long sacrificing other works.

9. **Changing the Evaluation Pattern of Students:** Universities have introduced the concept of internal assessment or informally continuous comprehensive evaluation almost one and half decades back and students are evaluated based on assignments, presentations or through class tests. Even today universities are languishing with these old tools of evaluation. On the contrary school education has started to evaluate the students through continuous comprehensive evaluation wherein they assessed the students through multiple tools and techniques like portfolio, rubrics etc. It is indeed high time that universities also change their evaluation pattern and evaluate the students through the current tools of assessments. It not only helps the teacher educators to acquaint with these techniques but also train the pupil teachers on the new tools of assessment.

## DISCUSSION

Professionalism is the crux of any professional course. Teacher education programmes are no exception to it. But in the recent years it has lost its professionalism because of severe commercial developments. Questions are raised from various quarters about the sanctity of being trained teachers. Now, in its new avatar there is hope that everything which was tarnished will be regained and it will be counted among the professional courses. The new system will provide teachers which are better trained, more competent, more skilful and having positive sets of attitude, habits, beliefs and proposition and have the guts to alter the existing teaching-learning situations in the classroom thus bringing quality learning outcomes among students.

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