

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

REVISITING TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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INTRODUCTION

The entire educational system of our country is in the process of change. We all know that no educational reform can be successful unless the quality of teachers is improved, but in turn the quality of teachers depends to a large extent on the quality of teacher education. Education Commission (1964-66) says, "of all different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant. Nothing is more important than securing a sufficient supply of high quality of recruits to the training profession, providing them with the best possible professional preparation and creating satisfactory conditions of work in which they can be fully effective". In reality, teacher education is the very sine qua non of all educational improvements. The quality of teacher education of our country especially at the secondary level is far from satisfactory. This may be due to lack of focus on providing meaningful experiences to the student teachers especially at the secondary level. It is said that the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively but in critical measures upon the quality of their education. The quality of their education depends, more than any other single factor, upon the quality of their teachers.

Education prepares the future generation to take their due place in the society; a teacher plays a pivotal role in this process. A Teacher happens to be the key person to initiate and support change for educational improvements. With the increasing complexity of problems, expectations from teachers are also increasing. To enable a teacher to create thirst for knowledge amongst his pupils, he must continue to learn and grow professionally. Thus, education of teachers at all levels is highly significant. In order to enable the teachers to act as catalyst in the process of developing the future citizens, the Teachers Education Programme needs to be revised from time to time.

The present state of secondary teacher education in the country presents a mixed picture of far-sighted intentions and innovations coupled with alarming distortions and structural shortcomings. Looking back, from past to

present, it appears that although, nomenclature has undergone a change from 'training' to 'education', the system by and large remained unchanged.

Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) and Education Commission (1964-66) have observed that the existing system of teacher education is rigid and static. Keeping in view the inadequacies of the teacher education programme, NCTE (1978) prepared a framework for teacher education and called for drastic changes starting from its objectives, content and methodology; the Council stressed on, (a) pedagogical theory (20%); (b) working with community (20%); and (c) content cum methodology (60%). This curriculum did not find implementation in totality in Secondary Teacher Education Institutes (STEs). Bhatnagar (1982) observed great variation in foundation courses. NCERT (1983) workshop concluded that there is no uniformity in B.Ed. curriculum of various universities. The National Commission on Teachers (1983-85) recommended reforms in teacher education and called for revamping the current courses and curricula.

'Challenges of Education: A Policy Perspective' (1985) observed that the process of updating teacher education is extremely slow and a major portion of the teacher education curriculum was irrelevant even to contemporary needs. National Policy on Education (1986) stated that the existing system of teacher education would be overhauled. EdCIL (1987) observed much scope for improvement in the system. It stressed on developing national norms for STEs and to evolve a statutory mechanism for enforcing them. NCTE (1988) gave a fresh look to the existing curriculum and stressed on (a) Foundation course (20%) (b) Stage relevant specialization (30%); (c) Additional specialization (10%) (d) Practical/ fieldwork (40%). This curriculum also did not find implementation in totality. NPERC (1990) criticized the present teacher education programme as theory oriented and isolated from school and community. Programme of Action (1992) notes the major drawback of teacher education as alienation of theory from practical component.

Effective management of Teacher Education requires looking into issues involved in the process of teacher education programme. In this paper author has tried to focus on few typical issues related to secondary teacher education. Author strongly feels that the apex body like NCTE only should look into such issues and provide direction. The above observations clearly indicate that teacher education programme at secondary level needs to be examined critically in terms of its various issues. The programme cannot achieve its objectives until it thoroughly examines the various issues and makes sincere efforts to resolve them. Some of the major issues related to secondary teacher education are:

1. The admission policies and procedures differ from State to State and

university to university even within a State. Even minimum percentage of marks also varies from university to university as criteria for admission. Knowledge of content and teaching aptitude has hardly any place in most of the universities as criteria for admission. Percentage of marks at graduate and post-graduate level forms the main criterion for the admission, which will never ensure favourable attitude, and aptitude for teaching. "NCTE (1995) norms and standards" states that admission criteria may be fixed as at least 45% marks on the aggregate at the bachelor's degree examination. It further adds that, it is desirable to fix admission criteria as 50% of aggregate marks at the degree examination with two school subjects or one broad curricular area, but this document clearly states that admission shall be on the basis of merit which should be determined by a selection test to be conducted at national / state level. Of course details about selection tests have not been given. The author feels that weightage must be given to the following aspects during admission: (a) Knowledge of content for two selected school subjects; (b) general knowledge; (c) teaching aptitude; and (d) academic records and (e) communication skills.

2. Teacher-student ratio also varies from State to State. In Gujarat this ratio is 1:12, which in my opinion is too high. EdCIL (1987) suggested that it should be 1:10. It further suggested that for 100 students, there must be one principal, three readers and thirteen lecturers for colleges of teacher education, but this has not been materialized so far. NCTE (1995) suggested 1:10 ratio. In my opinion it must be 1:8; such smaller ratio will facilitate the work of teacher educators in lesson guidance and observation; guiding and evaluating practical work. Present ratio of 1:12 (at present for intake of 100 students one principal and seven lecturer are suggested which comes to 1:12.5) is in fact 1:14 for teacher educators as principal / head of the institute will generally not involve himself in practice teaching and related practical work. With such a high ratio quality of the programme in general and practice teaching in particular suffers a lot.
3. NCERT (1988) has suggested 20% weightage for foundation courses which includes: (a) Education in Emerging India and (b) Educational Psychology. This has been a significant step towards reduction in theory. At present many STEIs offer various courses like: Philosophy and sociology of education, current problems and issues of secondary education; school management, principles and techniques of teaching, as combination of these courses differ from university to university. Many STEIs have introduced a course called "Education in emerging India" but still focus is on philosophical and sociological aspects. Major focus of a

foundational course should be on understanding “Indian culture – its concept processes and practices” this component should be organized in such a way that it provides insight into meaning and aims of education, role of education in national development with respect to emerging problems, etc. This component should demonstrate integral relationship between education and society with special references to current social issues. It must sensitise student teachers with issues & problems confronting society along with role of education in resolving those issues. What is more important is transaction of this component, classroom lecture alone will not be sufficient but real life experiences must be provided to student teachers. They should be exposed to various practical situations in school and society. Sincere efforts should be made to include some practical work, which in turn will help in establishing linkages between theory and practice. Along with many other activities suggested by NCTE (2008) there is due emphasis given to community based fieldwork and community based social work. Activities related to practical work may include: surveys about drop out, interview with people in slums, visits to some high and low achieving secondary schools and preparing brief reports, studying contribution of religious institutes in education and problems faced by girl students / SC-ST students. If possible such practical activities should be identified in each unit. The teacher educator should demonstrate use of learner centred methods like discussion, symposia, group work, projects etc. In transaction of this component student teachers should be given challenging assignments for which they have to consult books, journals, community resource etc. In short, participatory and interactive learning approaches should be given importance in transaction of this component. The NCTE (2004) also supports the same by stating that, “The programme of Teacher Education is institution based. The students are not exposed to the realities of school and community, internship, practice of teaching; practical activities are not paid proper attention. Despite the commendable improvement in service conditions and perks, the profession is yet to attract best brain”.

4. NCERT (1978) suggested for content cum methodology and practice teaching including related practical work with 60% weightage. This was a new concept especially to minimize emphasis on theory aspect and raise practicability of methods of teaching. There are STEIs where content of two method courses is taught by teacher educator and examinations are conducted; there are institutes where content is not taught but examination is conducted and in some institutes content is neither taught nor examination is conducted. Courses like principles and techniques of teaching and measurement and evaluation in education are taught in

isolation from content as compulsory courses. Instead of this, to make methods more meaningful, linkages must be established between method and content. Such course will ensure content mastery on the part of student teacher also. Series of workshop sessions will make the programme task oriented. Kothari (1998) observed that school principals have, always doubted mastery of content by the candidate, during selection interviews. Such a course will help in mastery of content. Along with mastery of content, series of workshop sessions and group activities will help in practicing various small group teaching techniques. Various activities like writing of objectives, preparing lesson plans, preparing various types of test items, designing various types of learning experiences for particular piece of content, developing various teaching aids etc. will make such a course more effective.

5. During the last two decades the school curriculum in India has undergone a series of changes. After NPE (1986), school curriculum has undergone a big change in terms of educational concerns and priorities. NPE (1986) stated that 'the implementation of various parameters of the New Policy must be reviewed every five years'. NCERT (1988) developed in response to the NPE (1986), which stressed on ten core elements in the curricula. These ten core elements were (1) The history of India's freedom movement (2) The constitutional obligations (3) The content essential to nurture national identity (4) India's common cultural heritage (5) Egalitarianism, democracy & secularism (6) Equality of sexes (7) Protection of environment (8) Removal of social barriers (9) Observance of small family norms and (10) Inculcation of scientific temper. These were identified to strengthen national identity and promote national integration and social cohesion by activating values as enshrined in the constitution of India through school curriculum.

Syllabus at school level was revised and new textbooks have been designed accordingly but the programme of teacher education did not respond to this. A meaningful teacher education curriculum has to be responsive to the school curriculum, but at various universities, teacher education curricula had hardly responded to these ten core components. A number of universities have a unit on curriculum in their foundational course "Education in emerging Indian society". Some universities have tried to incorporate these core components with their co-curricular activities but the zeal and enthusiasm are completely missing. The focus of secondary teacher education should be to assist student teacher to take decisions regarding application of basic educational principles to the existing school situation without overlooking the characteristics of the learners.

A meaningful school curriculum has to be responsive to the society, reflecting the needs and aspirations of its learners. In the new millennium, some of the country's important societal concerns have remained unchanged because these could not be addressed adequately in the past. At the same time, many new concerns have emerged in response to the fast changes in the social scenario of the country as well as the world. The curriculum has to lead to a kind of education that would fight against inequity and respond to the social, cultural, emotional, and economic needs of the learners. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) has pointed out eighteen curriculum concerns as: (1) Education for a cohesive society (2) Strengthening National Identity and Preserving cultural heritage (3) Integrating Indigenous knowledge and India's contribution to mankind (4) Responding the Impact of Globalisation (5) Meeting the Challenges of Information and Communication Technology (6) Linking Education with life-skills (7) Education for value development (8) Universalisation of Elementary Education (9) Alternative and open schooling (10) Integrating diverse curricular concerns (11) Relating education to world of work (12) Reducing the curriculum load (13) The child as a constructor of knowledge (14) Interface between cognition, emotion and action (15) Culture specific pedagogies (16) Development of Aesthetic sensibilities (17) Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (18) Empowering Teachers for curriculum development. Stereotyped instructional approaches are not conducive to realize the goals stated above. The goals of secularism, socialism, and professional ethics are coming under increasing strain. To make teachers aware of this menace, teacher education has to come forward with thorough preparation. Teachers prepare men and education is an effective instrument of man making process.

A weak programme of teacher education is a national calamity. NCTE (2002) has come out with the calendar of activities for B.Ed. programme, which also does not speak, exclusively on incorporating such curriculum concern directly. It is left to particular teacher education institutions to implement the same in their curriculum. The UGC model curriculum is not that reflective regarding the matter, but it can be done in many ways. Now the question ahead of us is how to incorporate these in teacher education curricula. Dave (1999) emphasized five performance areas for effective teacher education. They are as follows: (i) performance in classroom (ii) school level performance (iii) performance in out of school activities (iv) performance related to parental contact and co-operation (v) performance related to community contact and co-

operation. NCTE (2008) also emphasized on these performance areas for practical training. In terms of forgoing stipulation of required performance areas NCTE (2008) suggested to give due emphasis to community based fieldwork and community based social work. Thus the professional education of secondary teachers must relate to pedagogy and the way the instructional materials can be put to a judicious use. This envisages a teacher training which may suggest a way of working with young learners, to help them seek and find answers to problems to their immediate concern.

6. Curriculum development essentially is a dynamic phenomenon, a ceaseless process of searching for qualitative improvement in education in response to the changes taking place in the society. UGC (2001) has come out with model curricula for teacher education. The UGC chairman states in his forward "The UGC model curriculum has been produced to take care of lacuna, defects / short comings in the existing curricula in certain universities to develop a new model curriculum aiming to produce the one which is compatible in tune with recent development in subject to introduce innovative concepts, to provide a multi disciplinary profile and to allow a flexible cafeteria like approach including new paper to cater for frontier development in the concerned subject". There are many agencies involved in designing the curriculum for teacher education at secondary level. NCERT, NCTE, UGC and various universities are involved in this process. As a result there is confusion, & STEIs are always in dilemma whom to follow. So it is suggested by the author that NCTE should exclusively be empowered in designing the teacher education curriculum.
7. Inevitable thrust from the changing society is hoping for suitable changes in teacher education. Thus one needs to critically evaluate the emerging trends in teacher education. Out-dated, conventional and conservative approaches run the risk of de-motivating the future teachers in their professional learning and working. On the contrary, updated and upgraded approach, taking the best benefits of ICT is likely to enhance their motivation. It is for the designers and practitioners of teacher education curricula to suitably amalgamate the proven age-old basics of teacher education with the current technological facilities into the emerging teacher education content, methods and practices. Govt. of India has launched a national campaign called 'operation knowledge' to universalize computer literacy and information literacy in education. The major feature is that "Computer and Internet shall be made available to every school and other institutions by 2003". Thus in light of this impact on scenario of teaching in 21st century, it is inevitable to plan, prepare and organize information based teacher education courses to fulfil the

emerging needs of our society. A beginning has already been made by introduction of a course 'ICT in Education' in some of the institutions but it has not gathered the momentum yet.

8. The most important part of teacher education programme is practice teaching and related practical work. This helps student teachers to develop awareness, understanding and knowledge about home, school and community for enriching the life of school pupils. It further enables student teachers to apply and verify the practicability of theoretical knowledge of foundation component, curriculum transaction and evaluation techniques. But in reality practice teaching programme is far from satisfactory. Because of time constraint and high student teacher ratio, lessons are not observed fully. An analysis of feedback clearly indicates that teacher educators give global and subjective remarks. Majority of remarks pertain to methods of teaching and very few for content of teaching. Instead of fixing the number of lessons, mastery of particular competencies related to classroom situations mainly devoted to actual interaction in the class with pupils should be stressed. To make this programme more relevant and meaningful internship programme of three/four months should be introduced. In such a programme, student teachers would be expected to participate in total school programme. They would be expected to carry out number of practical work like preparation of tests, administration of psychological tests, identifying low achieving students and providing remedial measures, participating in various co-curricular activities, preparing various types of progress reports etc. Such a programme will help them in perceiving their role as a full-fledged teacher. NCTE (1995) suggested that the student teacher might be placed in a school for a block period of four weeks to work as internee teachers so that in addition to practice teaching, they can take part in other activities of the school. In our opinion this period of four weeks needs rethinking for such an important programme. NCTE (2008) suggested fourth semester out of two-year duration to be exclusively devoted to provide comprehensive on the job training. There is a need to allot this period to provide student teachers to integrate their experience gained in first three semesters and apply the same in this phase.
9. There are certain practical activities, which are essential for preparation of teachers, but they are not related with any theory course directly. Such activities can be linked directly with working with community. It is strongly felt that student teacher should be exposed to complex socio-economic problems through actual work situations in society. One of the objectives of teacher education according to NCTE (2008) is to develop

critical awareness about the social realities, which can be achieved through these types of activities, which may help the future teachers to grow and develop the insights into 'sensitivity to and attitude towards social problems'. Such activities could be of the following nature: studying the problems of drop out, participating in adult literacy and non-formal education programme, educational surveys in slums, activities related to preservation of environment and developing scientific temper, etc. Such programmes will help student teachers to deal with people belonging to different socio-economic groups, which will ultimately help in knowing their problems and element of culture.

10. The second working group appointed by NCERT (1987) has pointed out a series of shortcomings of in-service teacher education programme. Earlier in-service education programme was managed by Extension Service Centres, but they do not exist now. EdCIL (1987) proposed CTEs and IASEs should be expected to organize a substantial number of in-service programmes, but it has still not materialized. In fact after PMOST very few in-service education programmes have been organized at secondary level. This issue needs urgent attention. With advancement in the field of educational technology and other new ideas like: value education, environment education, special education, computer education, etc. it is now high time to organize some concrete programmes of in-service education for teachers.

In-service education of teacher educators is another issue, which needs to be discussed. This task was assigned to IASEs, but has not received adequate attention so far. Except going to Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs) for orientation or refresher course, there is hardly any other avenue open for teacher educators for in-service education. Department of education should introduce a compulsory course on "Teacher Education" at M.Ed. level. NCERT should think of summer courses for teacher educators. This can be equally managed with the help of ASCs. For effective organization of in-service programme for teacher, teacher educators also need to be equipped to deliver at the job. This requires continuous refreshing and re-orientation programmes for teacher educators.

11. Qualification for teacher education at secondary level varies from university to university. 55% of marks or B grade in seven-point scale is minimum requirement. This does not convey anything about second master's degree and experience of school teaching at secondary level. In spite of higher secondary stage being identified as a distinct one, it is found that secondary and higher secondary teachers are put under the same garb for pre-service education. Even 20% weightage is given to

master's degree for admission purpose. Because of this many students having postgraduate degrees have more chance of entering into pre-service education. This clearly demands that teacher educators should also have master's degree other than M.Ed. It is good that NCTE (1995) stressed on master degree in school subject along with three years experience in teaching at a school/college but recently NCTE (2007) has lowered down this requirement to Masters degree in school subject with B.Ed. or Masters degree in school subject with M.Ed, while the UGC prescribed qualifications remain as they had been notified on 14th June 2006. The author strongly feels that master's degree in school subject with 50% marks along with three years of experience in secondary school should be stressed for appointing a teacher educator. This will help for content mastery in school subject along with practical experience about classroom situations. The issue is whom should any teacher education institution follow when both the bodies are framed by the acts of parliament? The author also feels disheartened when reflects back that large majority of the student teachers will be possessing masters degree in the concerned subject and the teacher educator may be with master's degree with school subject and only bachelors in education.

12. Each type of training institute is isolated from the other. There is no integration among pre-primary, primary, secondary teacher education institutes. As a result great variation is observed in the area of curriculum, methods of teaching, levels of standards and administration. To learn from others experiences, to enrich ourselves with researches and innovation carried out at other institutes meant for the same purpose, there is an urgent need to break this existing isolation. This can be done in many ways. It can be done by establishing an association of teacher education institutes and teacher educators at State / National level. Networks could be thought of along both vertical and horizontal line. This will certainly help in breaking existing isolation.
13. NCTE (1995) suggested 210 days per year for B.Ed. course; but in reality hardly these number of days are available. As a result the programme just becomes a ritual. For meaningful transaction of foundation component, content cum methodology, practice teaching with related practical work and working with community, it is high time to rethink about duration. The author feels that the duration should be of at least three semesters. This will help in establishing linkages between theory and practice and breaking isolation with schools and society. NCTE (2008) has designed two years regular B.Ed. programme where three semesters are for theory and practical and last and the fourth semester is meant for internship in secondary or senior secondary school. For professional development this

seems to be a highly constructive recommendation.

14. There is a mismatch between the demand and supply of teachers. There are no good teachers available in certain subject while in the other there is a mushroom growth. Thus in certain subject areas, the supply of teachers far exceeds the demands while in others there is acute shortage and unqualified teachers are working under different names. The manpower planning is practically missing in teacher educators. The author feels the dire need to focus on this issue. There is a phenomenal growth in the institutes of teacher education throughout the country. In Gujarat there are as many as 418 STEIs, with an intake capacity of 41800 students against 7980 secondary schools. This results into high degree of unemployed teachers every year.
15. Another serious issue is to visualize the equivalence between M. A. (Education) and M.Ed. This should be seriously looked into and thought appropriately because the former is more of academic and the latter more of professional in nature. Many universities now offering both these courses M. A. (Education), M.Ed. through distance mode also. For professional preparation of teachers and teacher educators this issue needs to be critically examined.
16. There is no provision for training the teachers for the subjects like art, craft, and music while these subjects are very well taught in schools. This has been supported by study conducted by Mangala (2001). The author feels that there needs to be urgent need of special colleges to be started to train these teachers. This can be done in collaboration with the faculty of fine arts or faculty of performing arts etc.
17. One more issue, which is of concern, is the mushroom growth of the teacher education institutions. The major focus is on the admission process adopted by the newly incepted teacher education institutions wherein the admission process continues till the month of August or September and then in the month of April or May the teacher trainee is awarded the degree of B.Ed. The question thus arises that how far are the teacher education institutions able to maintain the quality of teaching and the quality of practice teaching?

To conclude teacher education institutions need to come out with better pedagogy to train teachers not only in teaching and intellectual skills but also to awaken moral sense, humanistic, ethical, spiritual values to encourage peace, justice, freedom and equality among students. A central component on value education to include inculcation of basic values and awareness of all the major religions of the country could suffice. The foundational course i.e. Education in Emerging Indian Society' does throw light in this area at B.Ed. level. The student teacher could be made aware of how to judiciously integrate

these with all the subjects of study in scholastic area & all the activities and programmes in co-scholastic areas that the objectives would be directly and indirectly achieved in the classrooms, at the school assembly place, playgrounds cultural centres and such other places.

There is still a million dollar question which needs to be answered immediately and will help to solve many problems related to teacher education. The question is who should be responsible for managing teacher education. Is it NCERT or NCTE or UGC or should it be left to the state government or still decentralizing it and leaving it in the hands of universities?

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