



## Quality concern in teacher education: Some issues

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### Abstract

Quality refers to the distinguishing element of a product, service or entity. Quality assurance in teacher education is the totality of features and characteristics acquired by the teachers - as the result of teacher education programmes - that may fulfill the expectations of the learners, parents and the society. The quality of education of the citizens of any nation is a direct outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education system. Teacher education India has been trying hard to strengthen its quality. Bodies like NCERT, SCERT, and NCTE are there to ensure quality in teacher education, still there is scope for development. Teacher education programmes now rarely contribute to enhancing teachers' capacities for self-directed lifelong learning and familiarity with latest developments in the fields of teaching-learning. This article attempts to explore quality concern of teacher education by focusing on some emerging issues.

**Keywords:** quality teacher education, professional competencies, emerging issues

### Introduction

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan dreamt that "teachers should be the best minds in the country." Indeed, teachers are the main pillar of a sound and progressive society. The ultimate test of a nation's greatness is the quality of its citizens. If a nation possesses innovative people of sterling character, it is bound to make rapid progress on all fronts. Such people are moulded in the factory of teachers. In any country, the quality of education system rests on the quality of its teachers. Enlightened and empowered teachers can lead a nation towards progress and prosperity. Therefore, no nation can be negligent in giving necessary professional inputs to its teachers. As teachers play pivotal role in creating social cohesion, national integration and knowledge society, their own education and training becomes a matter of vital concern. Therefore, quality assurance in teacher education programmes is the key to meet the challenges of a dynamic society - both at national and global level.

India has one of the largest systems of teacher education in the world. Apart from the university departments of education and their affiliated colleges, government and government-aided institutions, private and self-financing colleges and open universities are also engaged in this field. The present structure of teacher education is supported by a network of national, state and district level resource institutions, working together to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes at the pre-service as well as at the in-service level. The maintenance of quality of education at school level without the support of quality teachers is a misnomer. In the process of making education more meaningful, one thing that always prominently matters is the teacher, as he is the central figure in the formal teaching-learning set up. He is the ultimate agent who generates and disseminates knowledge, evaluates learning outcomes and helps pupils develop their potentials to the fullest. Naturally

arises the question of quality teacher education. The role of teachers in the present globalized India is changing so fast that perhaps no amount of pre-service or in-service teacher education can probably cope with the expectations of the growing knowledge society.

### Quality teacher education defined

Teacher education means professional preparation of teachers. It is acquisition of that type of knowledge, skills, aptitude and ability which helps a teacher to discharge his professional duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. In his *Dictionary of Education*, Good (1973) <sup>[4]</sup> defines teacher education as "all formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume the responsibilities as a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively." Collins and Brien (2003) <sup>[3]</sup> in their *Greenwood Dictionary of Education* refer to teacher education as the "intentional and unintentional curricula, infrastructural settings and experiences that enable teachers to promote learning and changes in others." On the other hand, 'quality' refers to the basic and essential character, the distinguishing element of a product, service or entity. According to Bennis (1993) <sup>[2]</sup>, 'quality' often is not measured at all, but is appreciated intuitively. One's response to 'quality' is feeling or perception that is connected intimately with our experience of meaning, beauty and values in life. It is an eternal quest to attain perfection; there is always scope for improvement. Quality is attained and maintained by ceaseless effort. It is a construct of vision turned mission which demands inner driving force. In the context of education, 'quality' can be defined in terms of satisfaction level of stakeholders viz. students, parents, government and the society at large by developing appropriate knowledge and skills. When applied to the field of teacher education, 'quality' refers to the totality of features and characteristics acquired by

teachers - as the result of teacher education programmes - that may fulfill the expectations of the stakeholders of education.

### Need of quality teacher education

Studies suggest (Sanders and Horn, 1998; Bailleul *et al.*, 2008)<sup>[9, 1]</sup> that quality of teachers contributes more to learners' achievement than any other factor. UNESCO-ILO (2010)<sup>[11]</sup> rightly stated: "Quality teachers are products of quality teacher education programmes, policies and practices." According to Seymour (1992)<sup>[10]</sup>, the American Commission on Teacher Education observed that "the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure, upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teachers." The quality of pupils' achievement is determined primarily by teachers' competence, sensitivity towards learners and motivating power. The quality of professional preparation of teachers goes a long way to meet the needs of diverse learning needs of the students. Teacher education promotes commitment to the profession and sensitivity to contemporary issues that directly influence the quality of life. In order to upgrade the professional status of teachers, developing among them greater commitment to society, increasing their professional competencies and performance skills and empowering them to face new challenges, continuous quest for quality teacher education is a primary requisite.

### Quality concern in teacher education as reflected in commissions' reports in India

India is the second richest nation in human power which needs to be flourished into fertile human resources. Quality teachers will take the leading role towards this end. From time to time, various commissions and committees appointed by the Government at Central and State levels consistently emphasized the need for quality teacher education. The Secondary Education Commission (1953)<sup>[8]</sup> observed that "a major factor responsible for the educational reconstruction at the secondary stage is teachers' professional training." Later on, the Education Commission (1964-66)<sup>[7]</sup> stressed that: "Of all the 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". In 1986, National Policy on Education also echoed the same tune. The Yashpal Committee Report (1993)<sup>[12]</sup> voiced that "... inadequate programmes of teacher preparation lead to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools..." National Curriculum Framework (2005)<sup>[6]</sup> opined that we now need to define the path that can be taken to empower individual teachers who can then empower learners. Besides, the constitutional commitment towards universal elementary education (UEE) – further strengthened by 86<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment in 2002 that makes education a fundamental right – provides the context for the need to focus on preparing teachers adequately to address the growing demands of quality education. Further, the development of national curriculum framework for teacher education (NCFTE) in 2009 took cognizance of quality teacher education in the light of right to education (RTE) Act, 2009

and universalization of secondary education.

### Issues regarding quality assurance in teacher education

Teacher education in India has been trying hard to strengthen its quality. After Independence, Government of India had taken up a number of steps to promote quality teacher education. Bodies like NCERT, SCERT and NCTE are there to ensure quality in teacher education. However, there is still scope for improvement. During the last three decade, new challenges cropped up due to rapid changes in educational, political, social and economic contexts at the national and international levels. Some of the issues relating to quality teacher education may be pointed out thus:

- **Lack of integration between theory and practice:** The integration of theory and practice and consequent curricular response to the requirements of the school system is poor. The skills acquired and methodologies learnt during teacher education are seldom practised in the actual classroom situation.
- **Problems related to practice teaching:** Most of the student-teachers are non-serious to and lacking innovative measures during practice teaching. So their pedagogical skills do not develop up to the desired level. Besides, lack of supervision during practice teaching cripples the objective of honing practical skills in teaching.
- **Issue of inclusive education:** There is the urgent need to equip teachers to handle the challenges of exclusion prevailing in schools; firstly the exclusion of children with disabilities and secondly the social exclusion of children who come from socially and economically deprived section of society. Kalpan and Lewis (2013)<sup>[5]</sup> stressed that inclusive education needs to be recognized as an essential learning objective for all student-teachers. Teacher for inclusive classroom has to be highly resourceful because it may consist of audio and/or visually challenged, dumb and children with learning disabilities. Less importance has been given on this issue in the present teacher education programmes.
- **Poor integration of professional and humane skills:** In teacher education programmes, besides content and methodology, there should be scope for understanding individual difference with regard to learners' needs, learning styles, multiple intelligences and rates of learning. Teachers' professional competencies should also integrate self-awareness, social sensitivity, self management, empathy, effective communication, decision making, leadership etc. However, the present teacher education system fails to cultivate most of these skills within the teachers.
- **Lacking in techno-pedagogic skills:** In spite of unprecedented development in the field of information and technology, digital lesson designing, web based instruction, electronic data processing in education, production of computer assisted learning material, digital technology based courses and programmes have not yet been integrated in teacher education curricula. As a result, most of the teachers do not have knowledge of the availability, benefits and know-how of technology in teaching-learning situations.

- **Challenge of realizing the constitutional goals:** Our Constitution resolves to constitute India into sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic and secure to all her citizens social-political-economic justice, liberty of thought, expression, faith, belief and worship; equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the nation. Our nation expects these goals to be fulfilled through education. Can the present teacher education programmes empower teachers to instill the same – in letter and spirit – among the students?
- **Challenges of globalization:** With the advent of globalization, new developments in science and technology with far-reaching educational and cultural consequences, challenges of post modernity, culture-clash, value crisis and post-industrial society have become evident. Are teacher education programmes preparing teachers to grapple with these crises?
- **Lack of motivation for life-long learning:** Teacher education on the whole, is conventional in its nature and purpose. The system fails to motivate teachers for self-directed lifelong learning.
- **Profit-making motive of private teacher education institutions:** Private funded teacher education institutions have been mushrooming all over the country with profit-making motive. Some institutions have become simply money spinning centres and produce certified but incompetent teachers.
- **Lack of human and material resources of institutions:** Many teacher education institutions are running without well-qualified faculty, sufficient infrastructure and learning resources as per NCTE norms for quality teacher education. The various laboratories of such institutions, namely, science lab, psychology lab, guidance and counseling lab, language lab etc. are either non-existent or mostly in bad states.
- **Lack of data regarding demand and supply:** The authorities lack data on the basis of which they may work out the desired intake for their teacher education institutions. Surveys need to be conducted to estimate teacher education institutions required – countrywide, state-wise and programme-wise. These projections ought to be in tune with the growth of school education at present and in future.
- **No uniform standard in training:** There is no uniform standard in teacher training in different States regarding method, curriculum, evaluation system etc. Besides, though most teacher education programmes are nearly identical, their standard varies across institutions and universities.
- **Lacking in innovation:** Due to adverse external conditions, novel ideas in the field of teacher education incubate rarely. Very often, innovations are short-lived. Sometimes, the most innovative programmes fail in the formal system, because, these are beyond the purview of the apex bodies. Personalized teacher education,

specialized teacher education, and even integrated teacher education programmes are rarely found now.

- **Narrow scope of evaluation:** There is no scope for self evaluation, peer evaluation, group evaluation, evaluation by school and community in teacher education programmes.

### Conclusion

As teacher is the pivot of the entire education system and is the main catalytic agent for causing desirable changes in the persona of the future citizens of the land, all attempts need to be made to ensure quality in teacher education programmes so that these can gift us competent teachers capable of meeting the diverse needs of the learners and the society. These programmes should be structured based on the findings of the researches in the field of education. At the time of planning for such programmes, policies, legislations, needs of the society and of learners, futuristic perspectives, employability, technological innovations and infrastructural issues should be given due consideration. Improvement in working of teacher education institutions, knowledge of science and technology, emphasis on value education, healthy discussion on social issues and development of life skills etc. may help ensure quality in the field of teacher education.

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