

INDIAN TEACHER EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS

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ABSTRACT

Indian teacher education is going through transition phase in current times. The entire teacher education seems to be rejuvenated in the light of Government's decision to make integrated teacher education programmes replacing the conventional ones from 2019. This decision is for ensuring quality as well as employability in the system. It is indeed a welcome decision but simultaneously it has led to the emergence of many issues and challenges as well. Teacher education fraternity is completely unaware of the said transformation and new framework. If the transformation is to be implemented rigorously then it is quite inevitable to involve teacher educators and the administration in the process. Issues of affiliation, take-over of the colleges/ institutes are still kept secret. Challenges lie ahead regarding infrastructure, student enrolment, infrastructure as well as regrading human and physical resources. These issues and challenges need to be addressed sensitively with priority. If the said transformation is implemented with apposite planning then Indian teacher education is sure to excel.

Keywords: Teacher education, Challenges

Teacher education is at the core of the educational system as a whole. Any change or innovation in education is desired to be addressed or introduced through teacher education. Teacher education shall pave way for the paradigm shift in education. It is expected to nurture the teachers as the torch bearers of educational reforms and quality achievement endeavors. Unfortunately Indian teacher education system has failed to do so in post-independence era. Various Commissions as well as educationists had advocated for systemic reforms in teacher education right from Radhakrishnan Commission. Almost all the educational commissions had put serious question marks on the quality of the output of our teacher education system. We had failed to provide quality teachers who would be developing future generations in aspired directions of Nation building. We have failed to develop committed and competent teachers. Various causes have led to this letdown. The distinct reason for this fiasco has been the duration of the teacher education programmes. Every educational commission as well as renowned educationists had been recommending the change in teacher

education programmes. This was implemented in 2015 by the order of Justice Verma Commission appointed by Supreme Court of India.

Present Scenario of Indian Teacher Education:

Justice Verma Commission emphasized predominantly on change in programme duration. Earlier B.Ed. programme as well as M.Ed. programmes were of 1 year duration. But since 2015, the duration of these programmes has been revised to be of 2 year duration each. The motive behind this change was to provide adequate school based internship experience to student teachers. This experience considered to be pivotal in nurturing essential knowledge, skills, competencies as well as appropriate attitude among student teachers to be neo-millennium teachers. All the universities had to adopt to this revision and the curricula were developed accordingly. But there is a question mark on the success of this decision. This has become an issue of serious debate whether 2 year B.Ed. programme is more effective than 1 year B.Ed. programme or not. Are we really able to move ahead with elongating the course duration? Has it facilitated teacher development in true sense or it is

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mere elongation of duration only? My answer to these question is somewhat mixed one. Curricula were in line with National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE). Adequate scope was provided for enhancing competence. But the real problem has been regarding effective implementation. Majority of teacher education institutes are seen to overlook the quality emphasis in theory and more particularly the practicum components. Sincere execution of school based teaching experience is missing by large. This is due to the lack of commitment on the side of teacher education administrators and most crucially the teacher educators. Teacher educators were not adequately oriented and trained for this transformation. Therefore they have been lagging behind in fulfilling expectations. One major reason for the miserable scenario of 2 year B.Ed. is that of enrollment issue. Enrollment to 2 year B.Ed. is far below expectations with more than 50% seats have remained vacant every year. Noone is interested to spend 2 years to do B.Ed. and remain jobless thereafter. Teacher unemployment is the prime concern in this perspective. Across the country there are not many vacancies available. So teacher education has been a point of grave concern at the moment.

Future of Indian Teacher Education:

The revised teacher education programmes (TEPs) have got implemented in 2015-16 and it is not even 4 years gone that TEPs about to get revised again. HRD ministry has decided to change the entire teacher education scenario by thrashing the existing TEPs and introducing integrated teacher education programmes. Integrated B.Ed. programmes of 4 years and 3 year integrated M.Ed.will come into existence from 2019-20. It is expected that students will have choice of selecting teaching profession as their career option after 12th just like medical, law and engineering professions. Graduates will have to select teaching as a career by integrated M.Ed. course of 3 years. This is truly a path breaking decision, but it has come up with many unanswered questions. Are we categorically prepared for it? There are many unanswered questions.

Challenges Ahead (Unanswered Questions):

The entire teacher educator community is unclear about what will happen with the integrated B.Ed. and M.Ed. programmes coming into existence from the next academic year. If such drastic transformation in teacher education needed to implemented, the teacher educator fraternity should have been taken into consideration. There should have been orientation programmes for teacher educators across the country to make them ready for the change. But unfortunately this has not happened. Teacher educators throughout the country have been kept guessing about the new scenario of teacher education. No one is sure whether the existing 2 year B.Ed. course will exist or not.

There are serious question marks in everyone's mind regarding the infrastructure, staffing pattern, affiliation, staff recruitment required to implement these integrated programmes. Adequate provision is required to implement 4 year B.Ed. as well as 3 year M.Ed. programmes. The issue of affiliation of these programmes is also important. These programmes require additional staff and that too on the permanent (aided) basis. Staff has to be recruited from the various subjects of graduation as well as from teacher education faculty. But there is no indication as such regarding the recruitment at present. The issue of surplus staff has to be dealt before the commencement of these programmes. This requires a deep thought and a general orientation before the initiation of integrated teacher education programmes. Unfortunately there is no initiation from MHRD and UGC in this direction.

Epilogue:

Teacher education is at the crossroads where the 2 year programmes have not lived up to the expectations and integrated programmes are going to be launched. Teacher educator community is still in the dark regarding the said transformation. There are many questions which are unanswered. UGC must take initiative to clarify and orient the stakeholders. The initiative of integrated teacher education programmes will be fruitful only when every stakeholder will be taken into consideration.

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