

Teacher Education Reforms (2014) In India- The Vision And The Practice In The Context Of Pre-Service Bachelor Of Education Programme

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Abstract: A number of curricular reforms in India have been introduced by NCTE in recent past. Regulation 2014 is the latest in the series. These reforms have targeted various structural, academic and practicum level issues plaguing the existing teacher education programmes and institutions. Ideologically, the reforms have broken new grounds in several ways. But how far the provisions are going to translate the vision into practice appears to depend on the real partnership offered by the various stake holders. Present article seeks to address some of the issues related with the Regulation-2014.

Keywords: Teacher education, teacher quality, NCTE reforms-2014

The field of teacher education and teacher preparation in India has been witnessing a period of vigorous change. A number of efforts have been made in the area of curricular reforms in recent times to address various problems in the way of teacher education in India. The most prominent of the issues that these reforms have targeted refer to subjects like what the goals and purposes of teacher education should be, who should teach and what should teachers know and be able to do, where and how should teachers be prepared, and how quality can be secured, evaluated, and reported.

The latest in the series of these curricular reforms brought forward by NCTE is the Regulation 2014. Present article seeks to explore the implications of the provisions of the Regulation 2014 in the context of pre-service Bachelor of Education programme. The regulation brought the following changes in the teachers training programmes in India (http://ncte-india.org/ncte_new/):

✓ New teacher education programmes have to be compulsorily offered in composite institutions i.e., a higher education institution offering undergraduate or post-graduate programs in liberal arts / humanities / social sciences / sciences / commerce / mathematics, or an institution offering multiple teacher education programmes;

- ✓ The Teacher Education institutions should obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency approved by Council within five years of recognition;
- ✓ The new regulation (norms and standards) includes three new teacher education programs such as B.A. B.Ed. / B.Sc. B.Ed., B.Ed. (Part time), B.Ed. M.Ed. (Integrated) and removed the M.Ed. (Distance) programme. The nomenclature of Diploma in Early Childhood Education (D.E.C.Ed.) has been changed to Diploma in Preschool Education (DPSE);
- ✓ It has provided for the maximum number of years a candidate can pursue in each of the program;
- ✓ It includes the details of Curriculum (theory, practicum and internship), program Implementation and Assessment;
- ✓ It introduces changes in number of positions for an unit, subject specialization, qualifications, infrastructural requirement, equipment and material required for classroom instruction etc.

The new regulation states clearly that new recognition will be given only to the composite institutions thus incorporating one of the major recommendations of Justice Verma Commission that, new teacher education institutions should be located in multi and inter-disciplinary academic

environment. However it fails to strengthen the other important recommendation made by the same Commission as well as by NPE 1986 that, a dedicated school should be attached to every teacher education institution as a laboratory for student teachers. School attached with the teacher education institutions will help student teacher and teacher educators to work on real classroom problems on a daily basis and enable them to develop better understanding about classroom teaching before engaging in internship. (Sonwane, 2015)

In the absence of such a provision, the institutions need to have tie ups with nearby schools through the concerned authorities. These schools can then become the practice ground for the practice teaching aspect of the programme. But, the question which arises here, is that 'would a regular school really cooperate with the TIEs by allowing its premises to raw teacher trainees whose ground level teaching experience is nil? Even an extended practicum within a traditional program structure, working in schools and with students for months at a time, is not necessarily seen as adequate preparation: "Exposure does not constitute experience, either in the faculty or in the field" (McPherson, 2000) Thus to have a school lab where practice teaching could be organised with continuous teacher supervision by the teacher educators and mentors has to be given more thought.

In a number of countries, most pre-service programs now are situated in university settings with expectations for research as well as teaching. However, this move into universities may have reinforced an epistemology of technical rationality 'that largely ignores learning from experience' (Schön, 1983, 1995). Similarly, the accumulation of a massive "knowledge base for teaching" has been a major research achievement; but it falls short of its goal when such knowledge is taught to would-be teachers as content. It should have been rather constructed from their practicum experiences if it really has to be effective

The regulation provides that the degree level teacher education programmes are affiliated to the universities and diploma level programmes are affiliated to either SCERTs or Boards of School Education. The affiliating bodies prescribe the scheme of examination of different components of the teacher education programme including internship. The affiliating body shall have to assign weightage to each component of the internship and thereafter should specify the procedure to be adopted by a TEI for determining the assessment grade or marks for individual student-teachers in different components. The affiliating body will formulate the evaluation scheme and develop the guidelines for TEIs. It should also chalk out a plan to monitor and supervise the organization of internship by the TEIs affiliated to it, for which it may devise "monitoring-cum-supervision Performa". The Regulation provides that a consolidated monitoring report along with monitoring reports of individual institutions should be sent to NCTE for its reference and use. (School internship: framework and guidelines, January, 2016) At ground level, however, the implementation of all these regulations seems to be practically tardy, elusive and unachievable.

Whatever be the curricular reforms and remedies at the course level, it goes without saying that it should primarily and ultimately produce effective and capable teachers for all

grades of school teachers. Various state and national educational boards provide for at least three grades of teachers in India: PRT, TGT and PGT grades, catering for primary, secondary and Senior Secondary levels respectively. NCTE Regulation 2014 states that Teacher Training institutions should obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency approved by Council within five years of recognition. However, suitable accreditation agencies to measure the standards of these different grades in a given school are not available as yet. 'Effective curriculum frameworks for initial teacher education aimed at developing professionalism in pre-service teachers are expected to have their base in well defined standards for various categories of school teachers.' It has been suggested that 'in India, the development of teacher education curriculum framework is mostly an academic exercise due to the absence of such notified standard for school teachers.' (Pandey, 2011)

Schools and universities are organizations built on a conservative epistemology, with a complex interaction of existing practices and diverse assumptions about the nature and purpose of teaching and learning. As such, they do not change easily. It is also imperative to explore what efforts are being made by the Teacher education institutions to translate the vision of the reforms into practice. (although they may also be facing fund crunches). Literature review in this area reveals that Innovation, Collaboration and cooperation between schools and universities are major elements in successful programs that have brought real change to teacher education elsewhere in the world. Innovation is about doing things in new or different ways. It may range from continuous improvement of existing practices through to transformation of how we achieve goals or rethinking what those goals are.

The TIEs must:

- ✓ Evolve and enforce the basic merit criteria in admissions and minimum attendance criteria for eligibility for term end examinations to strengthen the quality of student teachers.
- ✓ Chalk out the ways and plans of collaboration with public and private schools for the interns
- ✓ Seek to provide and organise for the capacity building of the teacher educators not in isolation but in association with the higher education academicians so as to give them more equitable exposure at the common intellectual platform.

The degree of motivation in both the student teachers as well as the teacher educators needs to increase to improve the general quality of the training programmes. The teacher educators as important stakeholders need to contribute their share in translating the curricular vision into reality. If the teacher educators are responsible for preparing the future teachers for the schools of our country, they should also have the first hand ground level experience of teaching the children. It is easily observable that there is a world of difference in the pedagogical practices adopted in the higher education and the schools: this gap needs to be bridged to whatever extent possible. It has been suggested that the innovative methods like seminars, Workshops, conferences, projects and discussions should be organized regularly for the improvement of teaching learning process. (Gajpal Singh, 2014)

The pedagogy of teacher education has been viewed as a problem area involving the curriculum, professional knowledge base and learning which highlights the challenges faced by the teacher educators and confirms the need for the teacher educators to scrutinise their own practices to assess what they need to know and do in the context of India. (Rajashree Srinivasan, 2016)) The system needs to respond to 'teaching for understanding' as opposed to rote memorisation, and to opt for 'innovative' as opposed to time tested traditional methods. It is indeed sad that

"in spite of constructivism being regarded the acceptable approach for both school education and teacher education institutions, in most of the institutions, efforts and achievements of learners are still being evaluated using behaviourist approaches and quantitative grading systems." (Pandey, 2016)

While high-stakes standardized certification exams may be able to assess a teacher's knowledge of a subject, the "how" of teaching is certainly not easily measured. The link between experience and professional development suggests that no matter how well prepared a beginner is, he or she is still a beginning teacher. This runs contrary to traditional thinking that assumes that preservice education prepares one to teach before actually entering the profession (Olson & Osborne, 1991). In reality, Berliner (2000, 1994, 1987) and others (Calderhead, 1989; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Schempp, Tan, Manross, & Fincher, 1998) have clearly reported that the majority of teachers do not feel or demonstrate professional competence until three to five years into their careers.

In their study, Tom Russell and Suzin McPherson, 2011, argue that Innovative programs often begin with the understanding that entering teacher education is not the equivalent of switching on the ability to think like a teacher. Candidates must first comprehend and question the learning to teach process from within their own limited and personal perspectives created by years of observing teachers.

If the pupil teachers are able to recognise the educational objectives and their task of teaching children with individual and specific ethnic differences, they would learn to blend their pedagogy with the ways and methods familiar to the children. The focus must always be on the quality of learning for each school's students, and this focus can become central when teachers sense coherence, collaboration, and cooperation in their daily professional lives. It is often suggested that we can use technology more creatively to move beyond classroom

walls and we can transform education with completely new ways to learn new skills. However, for an average pupil teacher as well as an educator, there may be various infrastructural and knowledge constraints, especially in backward states and regions. It should be remembered that 'hole in the wall' (www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra) is about the idea that learning can take place without a teacher, while a trained teacher works to fulfil the prescribed educational objectives through permitted value oriented innovative ideas.

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