



Teacher education in India: A historical perspective

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Abstract

It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation. The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as a programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre primary to higher education level. The community establishes schools for preservation, progress and enrichment of its traditions and conventions. Teacher education programme is a must in order to have efficient and really capable teachers. Teacher education programme starts moulding from the ancient education system and till the present system of education taking shape according to the global and local needs of the Indian society. The National Policy on Education 1986 emphasize: "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers". The Education Commission (1964-66) professed; "The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms" thus this paper focuses on the historical aspects of teacher education since its inception.

Keywords: teacher education, historical, traditions, enrichment, programme

Introduction

Teaching is one of the oldest and most respected professions in the world. The noble task of shaping the future citizens is entrusted in the hands of teachers. The nature of this task is determined by the expectations of society. In ancient India, the teacher was well versed in temporal as well as spiritual knowledge, and the aim of education was to equip the learner with the worldly as well as spiritual knowledge and prompt him for self realisation. In the medieval ages, the task of the teacher was to impart knowledge to his pupils. But a twenty first century teacher has to act as 'interpreter of knowledge'. In tune with the changes in the role and task of the teacher, the pattern of teacher education is also varied from time to time. In ancient India, the education was centered mainly on the Vedas (Rig, Yagur, Sama and Atharva) and Vedangas (Siksha, Chhandas, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Kalpa and Jyothisha). 'Gurukula' system prevailed at that time in which an intimate relationship between the 'Guru'-teacher and 'Sishya'-pupil existed, and 'individualisation of instruction' was a salient feature of the system. The duty of the teacher was not only to teach pupils but also to practice what is taught, in real life. In the Vedic period knowledge was transmitted orally. The students memorized the spoken lessons from the teacher, by repeating them orally. Since no other ways of 'reference' was possible, the teacher remained the fund of knowledge. Various methods were employed by the teachers to transfer the knowledge to disciples. Parables from nature and stories were used to explicate philosophical concepts. These methods of the 'Gurus' were adopted by the disciples and transferred to the next generations of teachers. Thus the transmission of methods of teaching through imitation and repetition facilitated the transformation of scholars into teachers. The monitorial system of inducting senior pupils to the position of

teachers can be considered as a contribution of the ancient educational system (Dash, 2004).

The Buddhist Period

There was a change in teachers' roles at this stage. The development of knowledge in various fields and disciplines necessitated the teachers to attain mastery in special branches of knowledge. The curriculum included not only the religious studies but also the secular subjects. There were centres for higher education like Nalanda and Takshasila, during the Buddhist period. Teachers employed various methods like discussion, debate, question-answer, exposition etc. in addition to oral recitation making the teaching process more systematic. In the absence of formal programmes for teacher preparation, the mastery of subject matter and skill in the methods of teaching imbibed through imitation of teachers were the ways to become teacher.

The Medieval Period

During the medieval period several educational institutions at different levels were established by Muslim rulers. Mohammed Ghorī started several primary schools called *Maktabs* with an intention to spread the Islamic principles and culture. *Madrasahs* were higher education institutions at that time. Importance was given to the *three R's*-Reading, Writing and Arithmetic-in elementary stages. Study of *Koran* was compulsory. Grammar, arithmetic, logic, science and philosophy were taught in higher stages. Learning by rote was encouraged in the medieval period. Verses from *Koran* were taught by group-drill method. In higher stages some sort of debates and discussions were employed in education. At this period also the method of teacher preparation was mostly imitation of what the old teachers practiced. Good and

experienced teachers appointed talented students as tutors to look- after and teach the junior students in their absence. Thus at the medieval period also the monitorial system for the preparation of prospective teachers was prevalent.

Development under Western Power

A new type of educational system, quite different from the existing indigenous system came to be established with the advent of Western Powers in India. European missionaries started several schools for English education in various parts of the country in which native children were also admitted. The need for more and more teachers in the schools paved way to the inception of systematic training of teachers overriding the 'Monitorial System'. Early in 1802 William Carey established a Normal School for primary teacher training in Serampore. Various societies also made attempts for the training of teachers. The Calcutta School Society, established in 1819 took early steps to train teachers. Later, the need for training of teachers drew the attention of Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras. He observed in his Minute of 10th March, 1826 (as cited in Sekhar, 2001, p.22) "no progress in education can be made without a body of better instructed teachers". He further made recommendations to establish central school for educating teachers. For the preparation of teachers for secondary schools a Normal School was established in 1826 under the Government in Madras. Later this Normal School developed into the Presidency College. In 1828, the Calcutta Ladies Society organised training classes for women teachers. Native Education Society of Bombay started a training class for primary teachers. Normal schools were started in Bombay in 1847, Calcutta in 1849, and at Poona, Agra, Meerut and Banaras between 1850 and 1857. Wood's Despatch in 1854 brought about a revolutionary change in the educational policy of British India. Education was accepted to be the responsibility of the Government. The recommendations of this document ushered a new era of organized educational administration, mass education, University education and teacher education. Woods Despatch recommended to start sufficient number of training schools in every province of India. In 1856, the Government Normal School was started in Madras. The Hunter commission 1882, Recommended the establishment of Normal Schools, whether government or private to provide for the local requirements of all primary schools. This commission recommended a pass in the examination in the principles and practice of teaching for permanent employment as a teacher in any secondary schools. For graduates, it suggested a shorter course of training than for others. Hunter Commission's recommendations led to the establishment of new teacher training institutions and by 1892; there were 116 training institutions for men and 15 for women. The Madras Normal School was raised to the status of a college in 1886 and was affiliated to the Madras University. Training colleges were started at various parts of the country offering L. T. (Licentiate in Teaching) and B. T. (Bachelor in Teaching) courses. The Saddler Commission of 1917 observed that the three essential components of teacher education – knowledge of the subject matter, practical training and theoretical training were not fulfilled. It recommended the introduction of education as an optional subject at the B.A.

level, and the introduction of post graduate degree in education. The recommendations of the Saddler Commission helped in the improvement of teacher training programme in India. The Hartog Committee 1929, found that only 44% of primary teachers were trained and that only 28% had passed the middle examination. It suggested that the standard of primary school teachers should be improved and training schools should be provided with better facilities and equipments. Following the recommendations of the Saddler Commission, majority of the Universities set up faculties of education. Andhra University started B.Ed. degree in 1932 and Bombay University launched the post- graduate degree, M.Ed. in 1936. In 1941, there were 612 Normal Schools out of which 376 were for men and 236 for women. The central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) presented a scheme of education "Post War Educational Development in India", in 1994, popularly known as the "Sargent Plan". It made some practical suggestions for the teachers training programme in the country. Meanwhile the teacher education programmes in India got its shape and became almost similar in different provinces at least in the organisation of course: in the inclusion of both theory and practical training. Two-year training course after matriculation was generally accepted for the preparation of primary teachers while one-year course for graduate teachers.

Teacher Education after Independence

With the attainment of independence in 1947 India entered a new phase of development. The changed social, economic and political conditions necessitated a restructuring of the system of education as well as the teacher education. The government of India with an intention to revamp the educational scenario appointed a good number of committees and commissions.

National commissions and Committees

- a. University Education Commission (1948 – 49):** The University Education Commission, constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, just after independence was intended mainly for the improvement of higher education. The Commission observed that even though there was no difference in the theory courses offered in various teacher training colleges, there was much difference in the practices followed, and recommended for remodelling of teacher training programmes giving more time to school practices and more weight to practice in assessing students' performance.
- b. The Secondary Education Commission (1952 – 53):** Under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, the Secondary Education Commission presented one of the most important educational documents of free India. It recommended dynamic methods for teaching and suggested that the teaching should be shifted from verbalism and memorisation to learning through 'activity method' and 'project method'. The Commission made specific guidelines for the teacher preparation also.
- c. Education Commission (1964-'66):** Education Commission, under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, an eminent Indian educationalist, had an international Composition with eleven Indian members and five others

each from France, Japan, U.K, U.S.A., and U.S.S.R. The Commission made the following important recommendations on teacher education.

1. Removing the isolation of teacher training; teacher education must be brought into the main stream of the academic life of the Universities on one hand and of school life and educational developments on the other.
2. Improving professional education; the essence of a programme of teacher education is 'quality'. This can be done through (i) organisation of well-planned subject orientation (ii) introducing integrated courses (iii) vitalising professional studies and (iv) using improved methods of teaching.
3. The duration of training courses should be two years for primary teachers who have completed the secondary school course and one year for the graduate students.
4. Measures for improving the quality of training institutions:
5. The staff of secondary training colleges should have a double Master's degree in an academic subject and in education.
6. The staff of primary teacher training institutions should hold a Master's degree either in education or in an academic subject as well as B.Ed. and should have undergone special induction courses in teacher education at primary level.
7. All tuition fees in training institutions should be abolished and liberal provision made for stipends and loans.
8. Every training institution should have an experimental or a demonstrating school attached to it.
9. In- service education of school teachers-Programmes of in-service education for teachers should be organised by Universities, training institutions and teachers' organisations for teachers at all levels (Report of the Education Commission 1964 – 66, 1970).

Based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission some notable changes have been introduced in teacher education. M.A. degree in education has been introduced in universities like Aligarh, Kurukshetra and Kanpur.

- d. **National Policy on Education (1968):** Incorporating the recommendations of Education Commission (1964 – 66), the National Policy on Education (1968) was announced by Government of India. The policy made recommendations regarding the service conditions of teachers, academic freedom of teachers and in service education.
- e. **National Commission on Teachers (1983 – 85):** This commission appointed by the Government of India in 1983 under the chairmanship of Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, made a number of recommendations for the improvement of educational process. Regarding the selection of trainees for the teaching profession, the Commission suggested that (as cited in Rao, 1998) "the following factors may be taken into consideration:
 - a. Good physique;
 - b. Linguistic ability and communication skills;
 - c. A fair degree of general mental ability.

- d. General awareness of the world;
- e. A positive outlook on life; and
- f. Capacity of good human relations" (p. 209)

The commission further recommended that the selection of trainees should be made through a combination of objective tests, rating scales, group discussion and personal interviews. The commission also suggested the professional preparation with (1) study of education as a discipline including educational psychology, sociology of education and educational philosophy, (2) practice teaching and its content-cum-methodology, and (3) Learning a variety of skills related to the role of a teacher; including educational technology and preparation of software.

- f. **National Policy on Education (1986):** The government of India announced a New Educational Policy in 1985. Accordingly National Policy on Education was produced in 1986. It made the following important recommendations on Teacher Education.

1. The new knowledge, skills and favourable attitudes should be developed among teachers to meet the present needs.
2. Orientation of teachers should be a continuous process of teacher education.
3. Like SCERT at State level, the district level body may be established and it may be called as the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) (National Policy on Education, 1986).

On the basis of the recommendations made by various Commissions and Committees, many progressive changes were effected in the teacher education programmes in the country. Moreover, the Government of India started the five year plans to achieve sustained economical development by developing different sectors of the economy in balanced manner. Education was regarded as one of the basic sectors of the economy and due importance was given to it in all five year plans. As a result, a number of steps have been taken by the Government of India for the improvement of education system in general and teacher education in particular.

Conclusion

Teaching is a highly professional activity which demands specialized knowledge, skill and behaviour. Teacher professionalism comprises competence, performance and behaviour which reflect on teacher's personality in school and society. Professional competence is fundamental in teaching profession which includes preparation of teacher for classroom processes, acquisition of knowledge of subject and facilitates personality development of children. Competencies of an effective teacher include interpersonal communication, pedagogical empowerment and organizational leadership. Professional competence results in performance of teacher in terms of overall development of children. The competent teacher is supposed to perform better in the interest of the children and society as well. It has been aptly remarked, "If you educate a boy, you educate one individual but if you educate a girl, you educate the whole family and if you educate a teacher, you educate the whole community". At present teachers are not the mere transmitters of information

but facilitators in the path of students urge for more knowledge.

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