

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS : A BLUEPRINT FOR NATIONAL PROGRESS

Dr. Hemlata Kashyap

HOD of B.Ed. Department

Institute for Educational and Technical Sciences,
Muradnagar, Ghaziabad, UP

ABSTRACT

Manu, the ancient law-giver, once observed, "A teacher is the image of Brahma." In Indian culture, a child is said to receive their first physical birth from their parents and their second birth at the hands of a teacher. Throughout history, teachers have been respected and revered for their noble mission: "Good education requires good teachers." In the Western world, teachers are also highly regarded, viewed as the backbone of the educational system, the makers of mankind, and the architects of society. As stated by the NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education,-- The teacher is the most important element in any educational program, primarily responsible for implementing the educational process at every stage. Educational institutions play a crucial role in providing learning experiences that guide students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. Teachers are essential in facilitating this transformation. The American Commission on Teacher Education aptly observes, "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 any single factor, upon the quality of their teachers." The quality and extent of learner achievement are primarily determined by teacher competence, sensitivity, and motivation. The National Council for Teacher Education defines teacher education as a program of education, research, and training for individuals teaching from pre-primary to higher education levels.

Keywords : Empowering, Education, Blueprint, progress, Curriculum.

Introduction

This program aims to develop teacher proficiency and competence, enabling and empowering educators to meet professional requirements and face challenges effectively. Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory, and professional skills. Teaching skills include training and practice in various techniques, approaches, and strategies that help teachers plan and deliver instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement, and conduct effective assessments. These skills also cover classroom management, preparation and use of instructional materials, and communication skills. Pedagogical theory incorporates philosophical, sociological, and psychological considerations, providing a solid foundation for practicing teaching skills in the classroom. This theory is stage-specific, based on the unique needs and requirements of each educational stage. Professional skills include techniques, strategies, and approaches that help teachers grow professionally and contribute to the advancement of the profession. These skills encompass soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieval and management skills, and lifelong learning skills. An integration of teaching skills, pedagogical theory, and professional skills fosters the development of the right knowledge, attitudes, and skills in teachers, promoting holistic development.

Nature of teacher education:

- Continuous Process: Teacher education is an ongoing journey, with its pre-service and in-service components complementing each other.
- Teachers are Made, Not Born: Based on the theory that teaching is both an art and a science, teacher education emphasizes the acquisition of both knowledge and skills.

- Broad and Comprehensive: Teacher education extends beyond pre-service and in-service programs, encompassing various community programs and extension activities.
- Curriculum and Structure: The essence of teacher education lies in its curriculum design, structure, organization, delivery methods, and overall suitability.
- System Interdependence: Teacher education is a system characterized by the interdependence of its inputs, processes, and outputs.

Teacher Education at different levels of Education:

Teacher education reaches educators at all levels, including pre-primary, primary, elementary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary education. The needs and requirements of students vary at each level, making level- and stage-specific teacher preparation essential. Additionally, teacher education aids in developing teaching skills for instructors in professional institutions, special education, and physical education.

Vision of Teacher Education: Teacher education must become more attuned to the evolving demands of the school system. It should prepare teachers for a dual role as encouraging, supportive, and humane facilitators in teaching-learning situations, enabling learners to discover their talents, realize their physical and intellectual potential to the fullest, and develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens. Teachers must be responsive and sensitive to the social contexts of education, considering the various disparities in learners'

backgrounds and the broader national and global contexts. They must also address national concerns for achieving equity, parity, social justice, and excellence. To meet these expectations, teacher education should instill the following qualities in student teachers:

- Care and Affection for Children: Develop a genuine love for being with and caring for children.
- Understanding Contexts: Comprehend children within their social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Reflective Learning: View knowledge generation as an evolving process of reflective learning.
- Personal Experience and Meaning: Understand learning as a search for meaning derived from personal experience, with knowledge constructed within the shared context of teaching, learning, and personal experience.
- Social Responsibility: Embrace responsibility towards society and work to build a better world.
- Critical Analysis: Analyze curricular frameworks, policy implications, and texts critically.

Innovations in Educators Education: The National Curriculum Framework 2005, under the heading "Encouraging Innovations" in Chapter 5, titled "Systemic Reforms," makes several key observations. Individual teachers often explore new ways of delivering the curriculum to address the needs of students within their specific classroom contexts, which may include constraints such as limited space, large class sizes, lack of teaching aids, student diversity, and examination pressures. These efforts, though pragmatic, creative, and ingenious, often remain invisible to the broader teaching community and are usually undervalued by the teachers themselves. Sharing teaching experiences and diverse classroom practices can foster academic discourse within schools, enabling teachers to interact, learn from each other, and encourage new ideas. This collaborative environment can facilitate innovation and experimentation. To support and encourage innovative teaching and learning practices, the system must create structured spaces within schools and at the cluster and block levels for teachers to share and discuss their classroom practices and experiences. If deemed valuable, some of these ideas and practices can be systematically followed up and integrated into the educational system. Additionally, bringing together groups of teachers within and across schools and providing them with resources and time to work together is crucial. Increased research that documents classroom practices reflectively and analytically—whether of programs or individual classrooms—should be included in the body of knowledge available to student teachers. Institutional

capacity and capability to innovate and create are prerequisites for pursuing excellence.

In the face of rapid technological and economic developments globally, schools face increasing pressure to prepare students who are adaptable to change, empowered to alter their environments, creative, innovative, and capable of applying knowledge to solve problems confidently. Teachers in such learning environments must take on the more demanding roles of mediator and knowledge broker, providing guidance, strategic support, and assistance to help students assume increasing responsibility for their own learning. The challenge for teacher education institutions is to prepare teachers who are open to new ideas, practices, and information and communication technologies (ICT). These teachers must learn how to learn, unlearn, and relearn and understand and accept the need for change. The pre-service teacher education program in these institutions plays a crucial role in preparing quality teachers during their apprenticeship phase, grooming them to be change agents in schools.

There is a clear need to incorporate research methods and methodologies into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Researchers must address policy issues, curriculum matters, evaluation procedures, training strategies, and classroom practices. Teacher preparation must also focus on children with special needs, gifted children, and those from specific cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Surveys and studies, whether exploratory or diagnostic, should be encouraged to promote new initiatives and innovations. The concept of field interaction and the laboratory area approach, particularly in the context of establishing DIETs, is timely. Additionally, student teachers and educators must have adequate access to digital technologies and the internet in their classrooms. High-quality, meaningful curricula and culturally responsive resource materials must be available to both teachers and learners. Teachers need the knowledge and skills to use new digital tools and resources effectively to help all students achieve high academic standards. Teacher education programs should orient and sensitize teachers to differentiate between developmentally appropriate and detrimental uses of ICT. Furthermore, these programs must equip teachers with the competence to use ICT for their professional development. The newly envisioned Teacher Education Program, as proposed by NCERT, emphasizes learning as a self-directed, participatory process within the learner's social context and the broader community.

CONCLUSION

Today's need is for teachers who can ensure quality education with professional excellence, attainable through a holistic approach to teacher education. Teacher education must be considered a national priority, with institutions provided with adequate and appropriate human, physical, and academic resources to meet the new challenges of an evolving society.

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