

**TEACHER EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF CONCERNS AND ISSUES IN THE
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Teacher education means professional preparation of teachers. It is not merely training of teachers but it is something deeper than mere teacher-training (Deb, 2004). It means the acquisition of knowledge, skills and ability which helps a teacher to discharge his professional duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently and also reshaping the attitudes, habits and personality of teacher. But as per NCTE Act 1993 the term "Teacher education" means programmes of education, research and training of persons for equipping them to teach at pre-primary, primary, secondary and senior secondary stages in schools and includes non-formal education, part-time education, adult education and correspondence education.

Teacher education as a profession has two aspects good as well as not-so-good. Good aspect is that teacher education still exists even after 150 years of its arrival in India when a formal teacher education institution as Normal school was established in Madras in 1826. The development in the field has led to realization of significance of teacher education for teachers teaching at senior secondary, college and university level. It is not a simple achievement. However, the not-so-good aspect is the teacher education as profession has been left demoralized, exhausted, uncertain and fearful about bleak future with the passage of time. To discuss about such developments and shortcomings in the teacher education programme in the country will mean days of discussion without any purposeful achievement.

Teaching has always been considered to be essential for preservation and development of all intellectual life. The development of nation depends upon the quality of teachers and quality of teachers depends upon teacher educators further the quality of teacher educators depends upon

teacher training programmes. The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) emphasized that the educational reconstruction depends upon the teachers' personal qualities, educational qualification and the professional competencies and training. So teacher education is an important means of national development. Teacher education with its pre-service and in-service programmes makes every possible effort to stimulate teacher's attitude to education and produce competent teachers. (Aggrawal, 2000) For this, various commission and committee has been set-up by government of India from time to time to review the policies, programmes and role of teacher education in the light of the goals and priorities of national development. Hence, it is must to create necessary awareness among teachers about their new roles and responsibilities. It is for the human resource development and manpower planning. There is a need to develop vocational competencies and skills for creating new work culture. It should seek solutions to wipe out social evil like castism, communalism, regionalism, child labour and sex discrimination etc., which have weakened the national development.

The Government of India being concerned for the problems with the teacher education programme established number of institutions on the recommendation of various Commissions and Committees. To name a few-- NCERT (1962), CIE (1948), CASE (1964), SIEs (1962), NCTE (1973 and 1992) ---all these institutions were clear about the problems impregnating teacher education in the country. The deliberations in the institutions tried to suggest and implement many innovations. But all the innovations remained short lived. These programmes had limited acceptance in the academic world. The teacher education therefore did not evolve in the country. The process followed to train teachers remained same as it was in 1882 (Hunter Commission). The teacher education system never changed with time, nor there could be institutions or persons who could bring a great change in the profession of teacher education. The sluggish development, inconsistent change with time, lack of good leadership and above all the irrelevance to the needs of the school system raised large concerns in teacher education. All these have been discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

The major issue with teacher education till today is a question---if teacher education is a discipline. As per the characteristics of a discipline it should have boundaries of knowledge, should have theoretical knowledge base, specialized vocabulary, have roots in knowledge structure and should have old and new theories. When considered with respect to the

characteristic that it should have boundaries of knowledge one would find that the education is considered as a wider term. Anything and everything can become a part of education. Compare to other disciplines like Physics, chemistry or History or political science it is quite evident that the education is a discipline with loose boundaries. In Education all aspects of human life become part of the discipline. It has parts of psychology, sociology, political science, administration or management as is evident from the courses of study taken up in the teacher education courses in the universities.

Regarding another aspect of discipline that it should have its theoretical knowledge base one will find that that teacher education is lacking in this aspect. Consider for example the discipline of Sociology or History or chemistry or even management, one will find that all these disciplines have a knowledge base. These have theories based on analytical and holistic process. Sociology has theories of poverty, caste and class, psychology has theories of learning, History has theories of social living or rulers and ruled. But looked in to teacher education one would rarely find any such theoretical base. All learning theories or personality theories are borrowed from psychology or sociology. Teacher education could not develop its own theories with the changing designs of teacher education. Till today the discipline does not have theory of teaching.

When looked in to another aspect of discipline that it should its own vocabulary again it is difficult to say that the teacher education has its own vocabulary. All sciences or arts subjects have their vocabulary but in teacher education such a vocabulary has not been created. Nothing is special about the vocabulary in teacher education. Think for while medical education or chemistry or even political science has its specialized vocabulary. When two specialists in medical sciences talk it is difficult to understand for non-medical scientist, similarly when two chemists talk it is difficult to understand what they are talking. But when two teacher educators discuss their issues it quite in the ambit of non-education scientist to understand what is being discussed. Lack of specialized vocabulary puts a question mark if teacher education is a discipline.

Another aspect of discipline is that it should have role model institution. The engineering discipline has role model institutions in IITs (Indian Institute of Technology), IIMs (Indian

Institute of Management) are there in case of management discipline, AIIMs (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) exists for medical scientists. Such role model institutions create an ideal for others to follow and the scientists in these institutions create knowledge which is usually relied upon. Above all the tag of role model makes other academicians quote an instance to prove that particular aspect belongs to specialized discipline. But there is hardly any institute in the name of teacher education. Nobody can say that the particular institute exists as role model for teacher education. Even the institutes with NCERT or other University system could not create a role model for teacher education. In the absence of such a role model institution the discipline of teacher education not develop as a specialized discipline.

Another concern with teacher education is a question if it is a profession. By definition a profession should have specialized knowledge, specialized skills, special structure developed over the years, body to regulate and a system of training. When teacher education is considered against these characteristics, there are certain concerns that need to be discussed. As has been discussed in the foregoing pages the discipline of teacher education lacks specialized knowledge. Though in certain concerns, one can say that the profession of teacher education has specialized knowledge. It is difficult to become teacher educator if one does not have specialized knowledge of microteaching or teacher behavior or such likes aspects. But all such knowledge is so simple and so easy to understand that it is hard to consider that the teacher educators have specialized knowledge. Perhaps that is the reason that many educational institution will like to employ teachers without being trained. Many good schools question the relevance of teacher training for teaching in the institutions. All these aspects need to be considered if teacher education has to be a profession.

Another most important characteristic of a profession is that it should have specialized skills. All professions have specialized skills. For example the profession of a medico requires special skill to diagnose a health problem, similarly the profession of an engineer requires a special skill to create and the profession of advocate requires a special skill to investigate. In case of teacher educator such skills cannot be flagged properly. In teacher educator the skills of teaching do make sense but it is difficult to earmark particular skills. That is why it makes difficult to put teacher education as profession.

Profession has a characteristic that it should have specialized structure developed over the years. The examples can be taken from the profession of a physician where a proper structure has developed for simple physician to super specialty doctors. Similar in case of engineering there has developed a structure of education that has developed over the years. There has been bachelor degree in engineering followed by specialty in engineering. Same can be said about Management where specializations develop with respect to finances management, sales management, institution management etc. But in case of teacher education the training process is very general and the structure for specialization has not developed over the years when the profession is quite old. It is difficult to say that a particular person is specialized in management of educational institution or another teacher educator is talented for training good teachers.

Another most important aspect of a profession is that it should have a defined system of training. The engineering, medical, defense and management professionals have a defined system of training. But the same is lacking to some extent in teacher education. The ingredients of practice teaching have yet not been properly defined. The process of Internship has never been defined. The hours of training to be put in essentially have never been laid down. The researches in teacher education have never defined the number of days of practice teaching required for making a teacher as effective teacher. All these aspects pointed out so far do not prove that teacher education is a profession.

In India, large number of teacher education institutions is under private management and some of them operate on commercial lines and collect huge donations/fee for admission but not provide the required staff and equipment. Singh (2003) opined that there is a danger that the self-financing colleges may attract students having less ability but more playability. Some educational thinkers oppose the self-financing aspect of teacher education because of the chances of ills of commercialization and corruption creeping into the system. There are reports about the deteriorating quality of education in some of the privately run institutions, which is alarming. The teacher education has failed to equip the trainee with necessary practical skills for variety of situations. The prospective teacher "teaches" a fixed number of lessons to complete the university requirements. Hence we need to make a critical assessment of the existing theory and

practice of teacher education. Some following issues are to be discussed and debated to find out the solutions.

Thirdly, curriculum is the major issue and concern in teacher education, which demands healthy discussion overall the country. The curriculum framework for teacher education is developed by three national agencies namely NCTE, UGC and NCERT. It has created lot of confusion in the field. There should be effective co-ordination and linking among all the three agencies (Yadav and Rehan, 2006). They further stated that both teacher education and school curriculum are working in isolation and do not have relationship between two. Malhotra (2009) argued that NCTE has been drafting curriculum framework for teacher education but it has usually been criticized for its least adaptation to societal and market needs.

Another concern in teacher education is lack of leadership in the discipline of teacher education. There have been leaders in various professions who researched various problems and later developed a theoretical base for others to think over. By chance the leaders in teacher education could never provide direction to the system of teacher education. Further there has not been association of teacher educators which could function as pressure group in teacher education and could look after the uniqueness of the discipline of teacher education. Various association of teacher education that has been existing over the time could not provide desired leadership to affect the process of training. The meetings of teacher education associations had been merely providing lip sympathy to the profession or criticizing their own creations. All this made teacher education a very weak profession.

All these concerns stated so far do point out a sort of inferiority complex, geocentricism and hostility on the part of teacher educators and negligence on the part of leadership. Nobody has ever thought out plans for the challenges that are ahead. For example the Right to Education requires large number of teachers to be engaged for providing quality education to the elementary schools. The concern is about the institutions of teacher education only producing conventional teacher education of 30/40 lessons without being aware of quality parameters for the RTE. Similarly the Government has not learnt any lesson from the SSA programme and has come out with RMSA (Rashtriya Madhayamik Shiksha Programme). No policy issue has been thrashed out to solve the issue of teacher training to suit the coming challenge of providing

secondary education to all. Also there has to be continuous training of the teachers at elementary and secondary levels. Which agency will take charge of it and how this problem would be solved is a question with the teacher educators. It can be concluded that many reforms took place in the area of teacher education from time to time in the light of recommendations suggested by different commissions and committees set up by government of India, Even then the issues and concerns raised above still need debate and action on the part of both policy planning and implementation. Because the quality of nation depends upon the quality of teacher and quality of teacher depends upon quality of teacher education and teacher training programme, on the whole including human and non-human resources. Hence dire need is to bring changes for the qualitative improvements in teacher-education programmes.

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