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Teacher Education in India Dying a Silent Death: Traditional Curriculum Framework, Rigid Control Authorities and other Responsible Factors

Divya Sharma*

Educational Institutions can be attributed with the status of most successful human endeavour in the history of mankind. These institutions have persistently ensured that mankind continues its endeavour for inventing and reinventing its own self. This pursuit to perfection is the igniting points for all that has been invented, discovered or rediscovered. In order to achieve these pursuits individuals always remain in quest for elite institutions, so as to ensure that they accumulate the requisite knowledge and skills essential for achieving a reputed status in the society. Here arises the need of quality education and still more quality teachers capable of imparting education.

Teacher Education- A Profession with Enormous Responsibility

Teacher Education Institutions world over are performing the most significant task of educating the teachers of future. The teacher educators working in these institutions are shouldered with the responsibility of not only teaching and training the students which they receive but they also hold on their shoulders the burden of generations which will be taught by their students once they enter into the profession of teaching.

With this rational in mind it can easily be argued that teacher education can be considered as the profession of enormous responsibility and prodigious accountability.

Who is Responsible for the Criticism of Teacher Education?

In spite of the level of accountability attached to the profession of teacher education today this profession is one of the most laid back profession. Teacher education today is bearing the brunt of severe criticism for having failed to produce quality teachers. The question here arises as to who is responsible for this sorry stage of Teacher Education? Is it the rigid curriculum and traditional approaches adopted by these institutions or is it the unyielding and rigid attitude of the authorities sitting at the helm of the affairs who are not ready to disengage themselves from the powers? Is it the lack of

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vision or is it laxity in attitude which is suppressing teacher education?

Further, the authorities wish to receive professional teachers out of the environment which nurtures teachers in a very ruckus environment and places them in still disorderly adobe. The programs offered are traditional with no novelty in nomenclature, no diversification and no profile-raising awareness for newer avenues of placements.

Why Can't Teacher Education Diversify

One of the most obvious reasons for this sorry state could be that teacher education is not a profit earning venture neither is the job of a teacher lucrative one, so no one dares to break the rigid attitude of authorities or ventures with experimental curriculum.

If we look at the diversification history of the various disciplines it can be easily observed that various interdisciplinary streams and branches have emerged and have poked their noses into each other's disciplines in the name of interdisciplinary approach. Engineering, medicine, management and even simple graduation programs have dived into the domains that were at one point of time considered absolutely unrelated and discrete. Some of the lucrative popular nomenclatures are biomedical engineering, medical physics, chemical physics, Bio-statistics, Bio-chemistry, Astro-physics, Geo-physics, Cardio-physics, Environmental-Physics, Industrial Physics and Chemistry, Agro-physics, Econo-physics to add upon Management programs, offer courses such as management of education, leadership in education ...the list is endless.

The question here arises when each and every discipline is penetrating in each other's dominions, why is teacher education kept isolated and secluded? Why is it not allowed to liberate and have its own wings?

Don't you think it's time to liberate teacher education?

Are the Changes Being Suggested for Teacher Education Apt

Several visionaries have suggested many changes

in the teacher education but they are restricted to the basic modus operandi of either time (one year to two year or vice versa), reshuffling the curriculum (adding or deleting or transferring content from one subject to another or adding or deleting a subject) or change in total credits. Such sudden thoughtless changes have been implemented and have resulted in the negative impetus to the growth of already saddled teacher education.

So wouldn't it be better to think and experiment with something that is apt with the changing times and need of the society.

The education today is much more than a charity. It talks not only about curricular and co-curricular activities but also about social responsibilities. Teacher educators are needed not only in schools but also in education verticals of corporate social responsibility, numerous projects run by the government, various NGOs and much more. So why can't the changes being suggestive to integrate these new vistas. Why can't teacher education be being given a trendier face with not only authorities talking about professionalism but also organisation running with a contemporary and professional outlook.

Are We Scared of Adopting a Professional Outlook?

Question here arises as to why we are scared of plunging ourselves into new areas and provide novel vistas to teacher education. The teachers are needed to disseminate knowledge in almost every field be it graduation, post-graduation, research, technical or professional programs. Almost at every level there is an authority for training the teachers like Academic Staff Colleges for Colleges, National Institutes of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Secondary Teachers Training Institutes and many more. With such a wide applicability definitely the teacher education deserves more respect and a thoughtful methodology to tackle it.

There is a dire need to adopt a professional attitude towards teacher education so as to prevent it from dying an untimely death. There is a need to rejuvenate the lost vigour, admiration, prominence and significance of the teacher education programs. To put it bluntly efforts should be in the direction wherein the teacher education can be included in the rat race of most sought after programs.

This can only be achieved by relooking the curricular framework not only with reference to the syllabus but also with reference to the modes of entry, delivery and placements.

Relooking the Curricular Framework

The scope of teacher education for pre-service and in-service teachers is big enough to allow it to be integrated, so as to be provided from a single portal wherein education and training can be integrated in a single curriculum. Further the scope of the pre-service teacher education programs can be expanded from merely the primary and secondary teacher providers to provider of teachers for higher, technical and professional education. It is high time that teacher educators regain their lost glory and be detached from the tag that they are here because they had nothing else to do. Thus the curriculum framework can be improvised in the following areas:

Modes of Entry

There has to be a more robust system for entering teaching profession and it definitely should not be incidental. The system should offer programs for entry as teachers not only in primary and secondary education but also for higher, technical and professional education.

Currently admission to almost all the major professional and technical courses have been centralised with candidates mostly gearing up for national level competitive examinations like NEET, JEE, NATA, CLAT, AIEED, for medical, engineering, architecture, law, design respectively and much more, after completing their higher secondary. There is a need to institute a national level examination for entry into teaching profession. There can be two modes of entry:

- One through a single door entry of a separate entrance test,
- Second by allowing lateral entries and opening an additional window in the existing national level examinations wherein student get a choice to enter into teacher education in the relevant subject and pursue integrated bachelor of education program.

Relooking Nomenclature

When engineering degrees like B.Tech. in Educational Technology or M.B.A. in Management of Education are on platter then why can't Teacher education offer programs like B.Tech. Education or M.B.A. Education. So the scope and nomenclature of programs should be broadened so as to embrace areas never reached before. Some of the attractive nomenclatures could be:

- Bachelor of Education with specialisation in Instructional designing for placements in e-content development organisations.

- Bachelor of Education with specialisation in Curriculum Design and Development for curriculum development organisations and text book bureaus.
- Bachelor of Education Technology with specialisation in computer applications for placements in online education portals and universities.
- Bachelor of Education with specialisation in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation for placements in various projects.
- Bachelor of Education with specialisation in social responsibility and
- Integrated degree programs for Bachelor of Technology and Education. (B.Tech. Ed.) for being a professor in degree engineering programs.
- Integrated degree programs for Bachelor of Business Management and Education. (B.B.M.Ed.) for being a professor in degree management programs.

Finally options for the lateral exit should be there to pursue post graduate degree in academics or education and credit earning to seek entry in other programs should be offered.

Expanding Vistas for Placements

There is need to look into teacher education in the new light wherein there is need to bring about a change in primary thought process. The realisation that teacher educator can only be a teacher is a view point of past. The placement cell should look for changing the outlook of employer as well the student. Today teacher educator can spread its wings not only in schools but also in curriculum development agencies both government and private, content development and e learning organisations and institutions, various projects like SSA, MSA, RUSA, e content development, skill development etc. being run by government and public sectors alike, corporate social responsibility wing of almost all the big shot industries and much more. The spread of this realisation is imperative to revive the lost glory of teacher education. There has to be a well-placed placement cell which ensures placement opportunities from newer vistas.

Internship

The present structure of internship is intermittent encounters with the schools, this results in gaps in the learning experiences. Further the internship is more or less limited to schools only. Thus there is a need to explore corporate avenues like e content development

organisations, online education portals, corporate social responsibility (CSR) wings, NGOs, curriculum development agencies and much more for internship. Further a continuous stretch of internship for at least one complete semester can open avenues for paid internship and opportunity for placements before the course is complete.

Community Work as an Extension and Integration with Corporate Social responsibility

Presently community work is an important component of teacher education program. This work again is random and mostly goes unrecorded. Collaborations and sponsorships with corporates and NGOs can be explored to seek fund under CSR or other grants and well documented and outcome based community work can be proposed. This can also be the volunteer based work and can open placement avenues for those who want to work here.

Modifications and Improvisations for Survival

The above discussion is just the pointers for the realisation that there is an urgent need to improvise and modify not only the curricular framework but also an overall attitude in order to fit teacher education in the rat race of esteem and numbers.

Finally, there is a need to realise that professionalism is not a label to be murmured but a practice to be charted and emulated. Professionals are built with a desire to excel in the professional world so we can't expect them to crawl in an unprofessional organisation.

So if we really want liberate teacher education we need to free it from the clutches of traditional mind set which thinks that outcome of a traditional teacher education programs should be a professional teacher. A drastic reform is needed in the approach of curriculum and designers should accept that schools are not only about teaching but much beyond. The opinion on nomenclature needs a shift so as to accommodate programs with new and trendy titles and societal needs.

Further the organisation who are sitting at the helm of affairs need to come out of their rigid attitude and let the teacher education fly to brighter avenues with perkier future.

Lastly, we need to realise that a good teacher is the foundation stone of every society. So if the society really want teacher education to survive, all the stakeholders of teacher education should practice professionalism rather than preaching it. □