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ROLE OF NCTE FOR THE QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to make a systematic analysis of the recent steps of NCTE in professional preparation of teachers and its effectiveness in Teacher Education in our country. The Education Commission (1964-66) of free India submitted a comprehensive report suggesting for establishing a uniform national structure of education covering all stages and aspects of education. It stressed on the necessity of professional preparation of teachers for qualitative improvement of education. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was set up for the maintenance of standards and improvement of the quality of teacher education in the country. The NCTE Act confers upon the Council to make every effort for improving the quality of teacher preparation in the country and also to ensure planned and coordinated development of teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher education, education system, NCTE.

INTRODUCTION

“Education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its coverage since the dawn of history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of time”. These words of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 subsequently revised in 1992, give direction to Indian Education. The policy further emphasises that “the Government of India will also review, every five years; the progress made and recommend guidelines for further development”. In the light of the aforesaid statements, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), a statutory body, established by the Government of India for the maintenance of standards and improvement of the quality of teacher education in the country, came out with a Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education in 1998 and placed it before the nation.

The pre-service preparation of teachers has remained by and large unchanged, particularly in its structure and duration. The infrastructural deficiencies of institutions which conduct teacher education, the lack of adequate competencies of teacher educators and constraint of financial resources have made it difficult to initiate effective and efficient teacher preparation. The lack of adequate regulatory mechanism resulting in the establishment of institutions of doubtful quality has also adversely affected the quality of teacher preparation. Education of teachers not only facilitates improvement of school education by preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demand of the system, but also functions as a bridge between schooling and higher education. It has to meet twin demands: (a) challenges of the education system including higher education, and (b) the ever-changing demands of the

social system. The role of teacher education as a process of nation building is universally recognised. Its objective is man-making and producing enlightened citizens. But teacher education in India, because of its history and also due to various factors beyond its control, has by and large been confined to school education only.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) established as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament is expected to ensure that teacher education programmes are of adequate quality and relevant to educational needs. The Council was established mainly to achieve planned and coordinated development of teacher education throughout the country and regulate/ensure proper maintenance of standards.

NCTE as the precursor of the present NCTE had been functioning, since 1973, as an advisory body with the Department of Teacher Education, NCERT, New Delhi as its secretariat. It had initiated a number of activities with the objective of improving the quality of preparing teachers. Since it had no regulatory functions and in a way, advocacy of this led to the establishment of the present NCTE as a statutory organisation with regulatory functions. It was difficult for it to prevent the establishment of sub-standard teacher education institutions. Teacher education in India has a long past but a short history. Gurukul-centred tradition of the Vedic period was somewhat modified and enriched under the influence of Budhistic vihara-based system. This continued till the 11th century A.D. The arrival of the Muslims witnessed the rise of a paralalled Maktab-based tradition and the two traditions thrived side by side till the coming of the British. Both the traditions underwent some modification during this period. Historical records of the decisions taken, the finances made available and their implementation and later evaluation became relatively more systematically organized because of the documentation by the British.

The independence of India on the 15th August, 1947 marks a defining moment in the history of our nation. Our long-drawn struggle for independence that preceded it witnessed much strife and bloodshed. Over the years people became unified as never before. Indians wanted Swaraj and had plans about how the nation would develop after the departure of the British. Indian educational system including that of teacher education saw greater reflection of national aspirations and needs of the people during the post-independence period. Much of what happened during the next two decades (1948-68) is crucial to fuller understanding of what is happening now and in which direction(s) our education system is moving and ought to move.

SET UP OF NCTE

The non-statutory National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was set up in 1974 by a resolution of the Government of India and was located in the NCERT. It brought out its curriculum framework in 1978. The statutory NCTE established by an Act of Parliament in 1993 further came out with a Curriculum Framework (1998) to provide guidelines in respect of the content and methodology of teacher education. As a result of this, the courses of teacher education were revised by many universities and state governments.

As a statutory body responsible for the coordination and maintenance of standards in teacher education, NCTE issued a Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education in 1998. Before issuing it, the Council sought and ensured a national consensus in its favour. This is a comprehensive document that deals with almost all aspects of teacher education including its context, concerns and also the social philosophy of teacher education in Indian society which contemplates a synthesis between unity and diversity, freedom and compulsion, social planning and individual initiative. Its salient features were:

- increased duration and multiple models of teacher education;
- updating of theoretical and practical components of teacher education by giving new orientation and adding new inputs to the existing programmes;
- emphasis on developing professionalism, commitment, competencies and performance skills;
- optimal utilization of the potentialities of community, university and information and communication technology for preparation of teachers;
- making provisions for preparation of teachers for the neglected sections of society, and
- suggesting alternative educational programmes for teachers of gifted children, teachers of senior secondary schools and specialized programme of education for teacher educators.

AIMS OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Facing the pressure of diverse expectations of multiple school constituencies and the challenges from the changing educational environment, teachers are often required to accomplish different tasks with diverse goals and objectives within a tight timeframe. Resources (e.g. available time, high quality teaching materials, equipment, facilities, expert and technical support, new teaching methods, etc) often become a critical factor in accomplishing the assigned tasks and meeting diverse goals and expectations. Therefore, teachers are deemed effective if they can maximize the use of allocated resources in their work processes and procure the needed support to overcome difficulties and accomplish different tasks even with diverse and competing goals. Therefore, teacher education aims at helping teachers: i. to understand the nature and importance of resource input to working and teaching processes and achieving planned tasks and education outcomes, ii. to have the professional Competence to procure and manage scarce resources and maximize their use for teaching and school work; and iii. To have social power and skills to win the support and resources from colleagues, parents or the community for their work.

FUNCTIONS

The NCTE has two main functions – regulatory and academic/ professional. The former function entails the development and enforcement of norms, such as the level of infrastructural facilities, extent of financial resources, academic and professional competencies of faculty – which teacher education institutions of different levels and categories and their programmes must fulfill before they are allowed to operate. The norms for various categories and levels of teacher education have been meticulously and systematically developed with the help of professional experts.

Academic and professional functions include among others: surveys and studies, support for research and innovations, orientation and retraining of teacher educators and support for conferences and seminars. A database on institutions and programmes has also been developed. The two functions are obviously interrelated and are equally important. The collaboration with, and support of, various agencies and organizations – central and state – and also of professional bodies and institutions has enabled the Council to play a meaningful role in teacher education and enhancement of its quality and relevance.

Of particular significance in establishing its credibility, have been the judicial pronouncements on cases filed by institutions who found the acceptance of NCTE's norms and procedures difficult since it affected their freedom to establish institutions of doubtful quality and standard. Coming at the initial stages of the Council's existence, these judicial pronouncements helped the Council not to succumb to undue and undesirable pressure.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

The Council has succeeded fairly early in its life, in curbing the tendency at commercialization of teacher education which various correspondence education programmes of universities offering teacher education courses of doubtful quality were promoting. These courses did not adequately prepare teachers for the profession; they only proffered the possibility of a degree in education. The Council decided after careful consideration and critical review of correspondence courses that the first degree or diploma course in teacher education should be primarily on the basis of an institution-based course. It felt that the distance education mode should be limited only to providing in-service training to teachers who have worked in recognized schools for at least two years.

The Council issued guidelines and regulations for B.Ed, through distance mode for compliance to all institutions. The University Grants Commission and the Distance Education Council in consultation with NCTE has evolved a common approach for the purpose, which was largely instrumental in countering resistance from institutions and organizations interested in commercializing teacher education, since it helped them augment their financial resources. A significant initiative by the Council has been to promote the qualitative improvement of teacher education. A major step in this direction was the Curriculum Framework which it developed through the process of nationwide consultations, including regional and national-level seminars, based on a discussion document already drafted by the Council and published in several languages. The final Curriculum Framework was published in August 1998. It had the salient features of flexibility, uniformity and autonomy, stage-specific recommendations, enhancement of the duration of the Bed course, area-specific recommendations and programmes for preparing teacher educators. The Regional Institutes of Education of the NCERT and the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad were the first institutions to start the two-year Bed course. The course will provide more time and scope to introduce meaningful teacher education programmes alongwith promoting professional commitment among prospective teachers and putting greater

emphasis on pedagogy. Other institutions will hopefully increase the duration of their courses, thereby contributing to enhancing the quality of teacher preparation. Another significant initiative taken by the NCTE is developing a competency-based and commitment-oriented teacher education for quality school education. After a series of consultations with experts and academics, the NCTE identified and focused on ten competencies – five commitments and five performance areas around which the teacher education programme can be designed. Three specific documents, viz., Initiation Document, Pre-service Teacher Education and In-service Teacher Education were published by the Council and were discussed at state-level orientation workshops for teacher educators and key functionaries. The NCTE also organized, with the collaboration of the UNESCO, a three-day international workshop in December 1998 in Delhi to orient teacher educators of different countries in the above approach.

CONCLUSION

In short it is suggested that instead of criticizing or finding faults with the Apex body of teacher education (NCTE), let the teacher educators work with a vision and extend helping hand to the NCTE. The objective of the NCTE is to produce quality teachers. Since the NCTE does not have its own staff, it depends totally on the services rendered by teacher educators employed in the Universities and colleges. Also the personnel heading NCTE belong to us. They had been part of the Universities or colleges. The major question is – should we criticize our colleagues because all of us are unable to visualize and perform our own role? The role of teacher educators today is to mend the existing system with vision to help teacher education grow as a profession and produce quality teachers for schools. Within a very short period, the NCTE has registered its presence in the teacher education scene in a big way. Almost all teacher education institutions have registered with it for approval and have followed its prescribed norms and standards. One hopes to see many more successes in the Council's endeavour to bring about a qualitative improvement in teacher education.

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