

TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE LIGHT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: The National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) and the subsequent Programme of Action (PoA, 1992) and also National Education Policy 2020 laid great stress on the quality of teacher education in India. The real condition of preparation of pre-service teachers and the efforts being made by TEIs are clearly stated in of Justice J. S. Verma Commission (2012). There are inherent problems in the functioning, management and implementation of teacher education (government as well as private sector). If the same conditions continue to exist in multidisciplinary integrated mode also, it will result in a big failure of four year integrated B.Ed. Programme as is the case with present two year mode. The present paper is an attempt to reflect on the major issues/problems responsible for the deterioration of quality of teacher education specially B.Ed. course and also providing suggestions for its possible improvement. The paper highlighted major factors responsible for deterioration of quality of B.Ed. course are absence of mandatory NAAC Accreditation, absence of separate Nodal Teacher Education Agency, Wide gap between the actual needs of school education and the practices being adopted by TEIs and poor quality of instruction and lack of provision for laboratory/practical work. Suggestions are also provided for making a foundation for the implementation of new four year integrated multidisciplinary B.Ed. course.

Key Terms: National Education Policy 2020, Teacher Education, B.Ed. Course, Factors responsible for deterioration and suggestions for improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The first education policy of independent India was formed in the year 1968 there later on in 1986 with small amendments in 1992, since then we are following the same education pattern for the last 34 years. After 34 years, a new education policy has been proposed by the Indian government in the year 2020. On 29th July 2020, the union cabinet approved the new National Education Policy with an aim to introduce several changes to the existing Indian education system. It is meant to provide an overarching vision and comprehensive framework for both school and higher education across the country. It is the first National Education Policy of 21st century. It is only a policy, not a law; implementation of its proposals depends on further regulations by both States and the Centre as education is a concurrent subject.

The National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) and the subsequent Programme of Action (PoA, 1992) and also National Education Policy 2020 laid great stress on the quality of teacher education in India. Indian education system is one of the largest, multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and highly diverse education system of the world. The success of this education system in terms of developing the human resource as per the needs of 21st century is directly linked to the qualities, professional knowledge, teaching skills, dedication and commitment of our teachers teaching across different levels of education. Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) play a major role in the education and training of prospective teachers. As envisioned in the National Educational Policy 2020 that very best and most learned become teachers. To restore the position of India as a world leader in academia, the quality of school teachers and TEIs can never be compromised, diluted and ignored. Teacher education is an integral part of our education system. The real condition of preparation of pre-service teachers and the efforts being made by TEIs are clearly stated in below mentioned observation of Justice J. S. Verma Commission (2012), Paragraph, 15.2. No doubt there is deterioration in the quality of teacher education especially B.Ed. course over the years and different factors/agencies are responsible for this present adverse condition.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

There are definite causes responsible for this severe condition of B.Ed. Programme in India. In democratic setup, there are State and Centre level agencies dealing with the teacher education and its proper implementation. Changing the duration of B.Ed. course from One Year to Two Years and further from Two Years to Four Year Integrated multidisciplinary mode is a nice initiative, but it needs coordinated and serious efforts on the part of different stakeholders dealing with the process of teacher education at different levels. There are inherent problems in the functioning, management and implementation of teacher education (government as well as private sector). If we want

to transform the teacher education and to save the proposed four year integrated B.Ed. Programme from the same deterioration and failure, there is need to study and analyse scientifically the causes of this deterioration and to take all precautionary measures in advance. If the same conditions continue to exist in multidisciplinary integrated mode also, it will result in a big failure of four year integrated B.Ed. Programme as is the case with present two year mode. There is a wide gap between the policy formation at the State & Centre level and its implementation in actual situation. Qualitative and dedicated efforts are needed along with strengthening and giving powers to regulatory and affiliating bodies.

The present paper is an attempt to reflect on the major issues/problems responsible for the deterioration of quality of teacher education specially B.Ed. course and also providing suggestions for its possible improvement. The paper is divided in to two parts. First part is dealing with sections/chapters specifically related to teacher education in National Education Policy 2020 and the second part is dealing with the factors responsible for the deterioration of the quality of B.Ed. course along with providing suggestions for improvement. This will definitely help to provide a foundation for the implementation of new four year integrated B.Ed. course as well as other B.Ed. courses with different durations as envisioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

SECTIONS/CHAPTERS RELATED TO TEACHER EDUCATION IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages the importance of teacher education and envisions the following changes related to the structure and functioning of the teacher education. Mainly two sections viz Approach to Teacher Education (Part-I, School Education, from 5.22 to 5.29) and Teacher Education (Part-II, Higher Education, from 15.1 to 15.11) are specifically related to Teacher Education.

A) APPROACH TO TEACHER EDUCATION (PART-I, SCHOOL EDUCATION, FROM 5.22 TO 5.29)

5.22. Recognizing that the teachers will require training in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, teacher education will gradually be moved by 2030 into multidisciplinary colleges and universities. As colleges and universities all move towards becoming multidisciplinary, they will also aim to house outstanding education departments that offer B.Ed., M.Ed., and Ph.D. degrees in education.

5.23. By 2030, the minimum degree qualification for teaching will be a 4-year integrated B.Ed. degree that teaches a range of knowledge content and pedagogy and includes strong practicum training in the form of student-teaching at local schools. The 2-year B.Ed. programmes will also be offered, by the same multidisciplinary institutions offering the 4-year integrated B.Ed., and will be intended only for those who have already obtained Bachelor's Degrees in other specialized subjects. These B.Ed. programmes may also be suitably adapted as 1-year B.Ed. programmes, and will be offered only to those who have completed the equivalent of 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's Degrees or who have obtained a Master's degree in a specialty and wish to become a subject teacher in that specialty. All such B.Ed. degrees would be offered only by accredited multidisciplinary higher education institutions offering 4-year integrated B.Ed. programmes. Multidisciplinary higher education institutions offering the 4-year in-class integrated B.Ed. programme and having accreditation for ODL may also offer high-quality B.Ed. programmes in blended or ODL mode to students in remote or difficult-to-access locations and also to in-service teachers who are aiming to enhance their qualification, with suitable robust arrangements for mentoring and for the practicum-training and student-teaching components of the programme.

5.24. All B.Ed. programmes will include training in time-tested as well as the most recent techniques in pedagogy, including pedagogy with respect to foundational literacy and numeracy, multi-level teaching and evaluation, teaching children with disabilities, teaching children with special interests or talents, use of educational technology, and learner-centered and collaborative learning. All B.Ed. programmes will include strong practicum training in the form of in-classroom teaching at local schools. All B.Ed. programmes will also emphasize the practice of the Fundamental Duties (Article 51A) of the Indian Constitution along with other Constitutional provisions while teaching any subject or performing any activity. It will also appropriately integrate environmental awareness and sensitivity towards its conservation and sustainable development, so that environment education becomes an integral part of school curricula.

5.25. Special shorter local teacher education programmes will also be available at BITEs, DIETs, or at school complexes themselves for eminent local persons who can be hired to teach at schools or school complexes as 'master instructors', for the purpose of promoting local professions, knowledge, and skills, e.g., local art, music, agriculture, business, sports, carpentry, and other vocational crafts.

5.26. Shorter post-B.Ed. certification courses will also be made widely available, at multidisciplinary colleges and universities, to teachers who may wish to move into more specialized areas of teaching, such as the teaching of students with disabilities, or into leadership and management positions in the schooling system, or to move from one stage to another between foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages.

5.27. It is recognized that there may be several pedagogical approaches internationally for teaching particular subjects; NCERT will study, research, document, and compile the varied international pedagogical approaches for

teaching different subjects and make recommendations on what can be learnt and assimilated from these approaches into the pedagogies being practiced in India.

5.28. By 2021, a new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, NCFTE 2021, will be formulated by the NCTE in consultation with NCERT, based on the principles of this National Education Policy 2020. The framework will be developed after discussions with all stakeholders including State Governments, relevant Ministries/Departments of Central Government and various expert bodies, and will be made available in all regional languages. The NCFTE 2021 will also factor in the requirements of teacher education curricula for vocational education. The NCFTE will thereafter be revised once every 5-10 years by reflecting the changes in revised NCFs as well as emerging needs in teacher education.

5.29. Finally, in order to fully restore the integrity of the teacher education system, stringent action will be taken against substandard stand-alone Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) running in the country, including shutting them down, if required.

B) TEACHER EDUCATION (PART-II, HIGHER EDUCATION, FROM 15.1 TO 15.11)

15.1. Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of schoolteachers that will shape the next generation. Teacher preparation is an activity that requires multidisciplinary perspectives and knowledge, formation of dispositions and values, and development of practice under the best mentors. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions including tribal traditions, while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy.

15.2. According to the Justice J. S. Verma Commission (2012) constituted by the Supreme Court, a majority of stand-alone TEIs - over 10,000 in number are not even attempting serious teacher education but are essentially selling degrees for a price. Regulatory efforts so far have neither been able to curb the malpractices in the system, nor enforce basic standards for quality, and in fact have had the negative effect of curbing the growth of excellence and innovation in the sector. The sector and its regulatory system are, therefore, in urgent need of revitalization through radical action, in order to raise standards and restore integrity, credibility, efficacy, and high quality to the teacher education system.

15.3. In order to improve and reach the levels of integrity and credibility required to restore the prestige of the teaching profession, the Regulatory System shall be empowered to take stringent action against substandard and dysfunctional teacher education institutions (TEIs) that do not meet basic educational criteria, after giving one year for remedy of the breaches. By 2030, only educationally sound, multidisciplinary, and integrated teacher education programmes shall be in force.

15.4. As teacher education requires multidisciplinary inputs, and education in high-quality content as well as pedagogy, all teacher education programmes must be conducted within composite multidisciplinary institutions. To this end, all multidisciplinary universities and colleges - will aim to establish, education departments which, besides carrying out cutting-edge research in various aspects of education, will also run B.Ed. programmes, in collaboration with other departments such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience, Indian languages, arts, music, history, literature, physical education, science and mathematics. Moreover, all stand-alone TEIs will be required to convert to multidisciplinary institutions by 2030, since they will have to offer the 4-year integrated teacher preparation programme.

15.5. The 4-year integrated B.Ed. offered by such multidisciplinary HEIs will, by 2030, become the minimal degree qualification for school teachers. The 4-year integrated B.Ed. will be a dual-major holistic Bachelor's degree, in Education as well as a specialized subject such as a language, history, music, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, economics, art, physical education, etc. Beyond the teaching of cutting-edge pedagogy, the teacher education will include grounding in sociology, history, science, psychology, early childhood care and education, foundational literacy and numeracy, knowledge of India and its values/ethos/art/traditions, and more. The HEI offering the 4-year integrated B.Ed. may also run a 2-year B.Ed., for students who have already received a Bachelor's degree in a specialized subject. A 1-year B.Ed. may also be offered for candidates who have received a 4-year undergraduate degree in a specialized subject. Scholarships for meritorious students will be established for the purpose of attracting outstanding candidates to the 4-year, 2-year, and 1-year B.Ed. programmes.

15.6. HEIs offering teacher education programmes will ensure the availability of a range of experts in education and related disciplines as well as specialized subjects. Each higher education institution will have a network of government and private schools to work closely with, where potential teachers will student-teach along with participating in other activities such as community service, adult and vocational education, etc.

15.7. In order to maintain uniform standards for teacher education, the admission to pre-service teacher preparation programmes shall be through suitable subject and aptitude tests conducted by the National Testing Agency, and shall be standardized keeping in view the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country.

15.8. The faculty profile in Departments of Education will necessarily aim to be diverse and but teaching/field/research experience will be highly valued. Faculty with training in areas of social sciences that are

directly relevant to school education e.g., psychology, child development, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, economics, and political science as well as from science education, mathematics education, social science education, and language education programmes will be attracted and retained in teacher education institutions, to strengthen multidisciplinary education of teachers and provide rigour in conceptual development.

15.9. All fresh Ph.D. entrants, irrespective of discipline, will be required to take credit-based courses in teaching/education/pedagogy/writing related to their chosen Ph.D subject during their doctoral training period. Exposure to pedagogical practices, designing curriculum, credible evaluation systems, communication, and so on will be ensured since many research scholars will go on to become faculty or public representatives/communicators of their chosen disciplines. Ph.D students will also have a minimum number of hours of actual teaching experience gathered through teaching assistantships and other means. Ph.D. programmes at universities around the country will be re-oriented for this purpose.

15.10. In-service continuous professional development for college and university teachers will continue through the existing institutional arrangements and ongoing initiatives; these will be strengthened and substantially expanded to meet the needs of enriched teaching-learning processes for quality education. The use of technology platforms such as SWAYAM/DIKSHA for online training of teachers will be encouraged, so that standardized training programmes can be administered to large numbers of teachers within a short span of time.

15.11. A National Mission for Mentoring shall be established, with a large pool of outstanding senior/retired faculty – including those with the ability to teach in Indian languages – who would be willing to provide short and long-term mentoring/professional support to university/college teachers.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERIORATION OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION PROGRAMME AND DISCUSSION

Following practices/factors as mentioned below are responsible for the present severe condition of B.Ed. course in majority of TEIs and hence they are titled as ‘substandard standalone and degree selling institutions for a fixed price’ in National Education Policy 2020.

1. Absence of Mandatory NAAC Accreditation of TEIs offering B.Ed. Course

There is a need to provide a chance for TEIs to improve their standard and quality of teacher education programme in government as well as private sector in a time bound manner. If the situation remains the same, then it is better to shut down these substandard intuitions whether they belong to government sector or private. Presently, like other businesses, teacher education in private sector is also a top class business of making money by narrowing the scope and quality of B.Ed. course and adopting different malpractices. This system results in the tremendous increase in partially trained and inadequately prepared B.Ed. degree holders every year in the country. Absence of mandatory NAAC assessment and accreditation for TEIs offering B.Ed. course is one of the major factor responsible for survival and growth of poor quality TEIs across the country.

There is a possibility of improvement in functioning of TEIs when they participate in NAAC assessment and accreditation process. If we want to change the face of teacher education in India by adopting four year integrated B.Ed. programme, we have to make NAAC accreditation mandatory for every teacher education institution along with attaining and maintaining at least ‘B’ Grade. No teacher education institution will be allowed to function in the absence of NAAC accreditation. It should be a regular and mandatory feature of institutional functioning. The poor quality substandard teacher education institutions will be classified through this NAAC assessment and accreditation process and progressive, responsible and better quality teacher education institutions will automatically survive. There is need to establish active state level nodal agency(not only to designate) which will help the existing teacher education institutions to get themselves accredited and provide necessary guidance. TEIs take NAAC accreditation process either as burden or they are afraid of this agency. Substandard institutions are aware of the fact that they will either get poor grade or not qualify for NAAC accreditation process. Hence, such substandard institutions are against this NAAC accreditation of TEIs. It is an organised business of power, politics and money. The level of corruption is too high and everyone who is associated with the teacher education is familiar with this system and its operating procedures. There is need to understand the utility and purpose of NAAC accreditation process for improving the quality of different institutional practices (academic and administrative) in a wider and realistic perspective. NAAC accreditation process is meant for quality enhancement and achieving excellence in higher education.

2. Absence of Separate Nodal Teacher Education Agency

NCTE, New Delhi has clearly mentioned in its (Recognition Norms and Procedure) Regulations-2014 for B.Ed. Programme that there shall be at least two hundred working days each year exclusive of the period of examination and admission. It means an institution need atleast hundred working days in each semester particularly for instructional purpose. The ground reality is somewhat different. Universities are accountable for conducting entrance test for B.Ed. course every year, but the timely commencement of the academic session is not a concern for them. The end semester examinations are conducted by the affiliating universities without any consideration of the requirements of at least hundred working days. It is a serious concern and one of the important issues related to the

curricular aspect and its transaction. The curriculum framework/syllabus of a particular semester is prepared according to the specified time limit. Due to shorter duration of the semester, teacher educators focus on only selected content which is important from examination point of view. There is no scope available for any academic enrichment.

As mentioned in the NEP-2020, that all stages of school education requires highest quality teachers. Preparation of highest quality teachers requires highest quality teacher education institutions with adequate resources (human as well as material) as well as proper time for quality instruction. No Indian university/institution will be allowed to take end semester examination before the completion of at least hundred working days in each semester. There should be at least one separate teacher education university in each State and Union Territory dedicated to teacher education. It will acts as a guiding premier institution for other affiliating colleges of education providing teacher education under its jurisdiction in terms of teaching, research and training. Accountability at every stage should be fixed right from admission (entry) to examination (exit). Proper management, monitoring and adherence to regulatory norms should be ensured.

3. Wide Gap between the Actual Needs of School Education and the Practices being adopted by TEIs

Colleges of Teacher Education are working in complete isolation. They have neither any linkages nor any concern for the needs and requirements of school education and other societal needs. B.Ed. students undergo internship in nearby schools for 20 weeks in their two year B.Ed. course. The main focus of the internship on the part of the student-teachers is to complete the conditions of the delivery of minimum number of lesson plans and other related tasks. They take it as burden. The quality of the lesson plans is also a major concern. Proper selection mechanism should be there in place and only those who have the aptitude for teaching and want to become teachers should be motivated to join the teaching profession.

The idea behind providing internship in nearby schools under the guidance and supervision of teacher educators of the institution and the mentor teachers of the concerned school is that they have to become aware of the real classroom issues, processes and problems. There is urgent need to make a qualitative change in the procedure adopted for internship and to bridge the gap between the needs of school education sector and preparation of student teachers in teacher education institutions. There is need to create a pool of reputed, efficient and interested local school subject teachers (from government as well as private schools) and taking all possible pedagogical help. We have to utilise the talent and expertise of such school teachers teaching different academic subjects. We have to focus on collaborated efforts to develop subject specific lesson plans. All possible academic help should be provided by the nearby TEIs to the adjoining schools to raise their standards of teaching. Before internship, proper sensitisation of all stakeholders should be there and there is need to actively involve the teaching staff of practising schools. TEIs can play a vital role to fulfil the resource gap as per the local needs in the nearby schools. Different functions and important days are celebrated in the TEIs. It is the responsibility of TEIs to establish a relation with nearby schools and break the present culture of isolation in order to achieve the vision of the National Education Policy 2020.

4. Poor Quality of Instruction and Lack of Provision for Laboratory/Practical Work

There is urgent need to improve the quality of classroom teaching and institutional academic climate of TEIs with a focus on academic enrichment. There is need to integrate ICT applications for effective teaching with Learning Management Systems (LMS), Swayam Prabha, e-Learning Resources etc. Presently there is limited use of ICT (only in terms of PPTs) in classroom teaching. TEIs should also focus on innovative strategies like use of e-content, seminars, debates, field exploration, library work, discussion on relevant issues in the classroom through active involvement, preparation of utility based assignments related to significant academic issues and its presentation, guest lectures for student-teachers and active interaction with resource person, participation in extension services and community engagements, outreach programmes, using action research for solving classroom problems, participation in small group discussions on topics (like National Educational Policy 2020, NCF 2005, NCFTE 2009, PWD Act 2016 etc.), problem solving methodologies, brain storming and group-wise project work etc.

One another problem related to functioning of our TEIs is the neglect/limited use of the different educational laboratories and resource centres like language laboratory, ICT Resource Centre, Educational Psychology Laboratory, different pedagogy laboratories, TLM development Laboratory and Curriculum Laboratory. In order to meet the new challenges of 21st century, TEIs must have to equip student-teachers with adequate professional knowledge and skills. In some TEIs, there is lack of such infrastructure and in some other infrastructure is available but there is either limited or no use. It is not merely the availability of the space and infrastructure, but the way in which it is maintained for productive utilization that decides the quality of the infrastructure. There is a need to understand the utility of such laboratory/practical work in curriculum transaction and appropriate time should be given in the time table. It will save the student-teachers from excess load of theory lectures and provide better opportunities for practical work.

5. Issues related to Internship and Feedback Mechanism

Managing school internship as a pivotal component of pre-service teacher training is a complex process involving multiple simultaneous steps. The following suggestions are provided to improve the quality of school internship and the feedback mechanism.

- ❖ School Internship Programme should be perceived as an important and integral part of acquiring knowledge, insight and first-hand experience. It is not only limited to visiting the school for a definite number of days. Student-teachers should be sensitized and motivated to participate effectively in school internship.
- ❖ Effective use of institutional level training procedures like Micro teaching and Simulation teaching etc. along with using the science of preparation and use of teaching-learning material.
- ❖ Development of scientifically designed Training Manual for different training procedures adopted by the TEIs with an aim to bring together instructions, guidelines, formats/ templates for each stakeholder (viz. teacher educators, student-teachers, mentor teachers and heads of practice schools) in one volume. This manual should be made available to students in soft copy format in order to reduce financial burden. This manual must be revised periodically.
- ❖ Giving feedback is both a science as well an art. Therefore, it is imperative to build capacity of those who are expected to provide timely and specific feedback. It is not enough to provide information about the strengths and limitations of students' performance, it is equally important to guide them on how to use the feedback for advancing their learning and improving their performance.
- ❖ Undeveloped feedback (one word/phrase) does not give any insight for improvement. Hence explanatory, descriptive or developed feedback should be preferred. While giving feedback is an art, receiving feedback, both positive and negative is a set of skills and attitudes. Therefore while training programme on ways of giving positive and negative feedback should be conducted for student-teachers (peer evaluator), teacher educators and mentor teachers, a session on receiving feedback would be useful for all the student teachers who will be getting input from a multitude of sources.

6. Other Miscellaneous Factors and Suggestions

There are other issues that are also responsible for deterioration of the quality of current B.Ed. Programme and need improvement are listed below.

- Developing robust mechanism for rational and proper use of internal assessment.
- Qualifications, salary, service conditions and professional growth of teacher educators working in private TEIs.
- Improving the quality of question papers in house examination as well as end semester examination conducted by affiliating university.
- Proper evaluation of answer scripts of student-teachers in final university examinations.
- Putting a complete ban on the system of non-attending culture in TEIs.
- Making Final Skill in Teaching practice examination as a serious exercise and not only as a marks awarding ceremony.
- External academic audit should be a regular feature.
- Enhancing exposure of student-teachers through purposive educational tours, exchange programmes and also motivating them to participate in different educational/cultural events from local to global level.
- There is need to empower the affiliating as well as regulating agencies associated with the implementation of teacher education.

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