

Distance Mode (DM) Teacher Education Programme (TEP) in India: An Integrated Approach (IA)

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Abstract : A proverb says “A workman must first sharpen his tools if he wishes to accomplish his work well”. That is, we must make good preparation and lay a good foundation in order to succeed in our task. Today’s education is said to be not good enough for tomorrow’s needs. As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) develops, societal scenario changes very fast and new problems emerge every now and then. At this juncture, integrated approach plays a vital role in day-to-day life as it is found to be very essential. The integrated approach into educational practices brought a paradigm shift in the conventional methods and approaches in teaching and learning process. A remarkable area of higher education system of the present day is teacher education. It is a hard fact that the progress of a country depends on the quality of the education, which in turn depends on the quality of its teachers at all levels of education. Teacher education being an integral part of the total school system cannot remain conventional and static while education itself is dynamic in character. So, it has to transform itself into a progressive, dynamic and responsive system. In this paper, it is clear that with the help of integrated approach, especially utilizing technological advancement in teacher education programme through distance mode can be made effective.

IndexTerms - Distance mode, teacher education, ICT, paradigm shift, Teaching competencies, Integrated approach and Technological advancement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Distance education system has come to stay as an accepted mode of education and has been gaining widespread popularity in recent years. The information age has created increasing needs for teachers and other school personnel at all levels of education to develop, use and disseminate skills including technology as the driving force behind integrated, inter-disciplinary learning experiences that prepare the learners for life in the real world (Saravanakumar AR, 2014). Teacher education being an integral part of the total school system cannot remain conventional and static while education itself is dynamic in character. The integrated approach has to transform it into a progressive, dynamic and responsive system. In India, student-teachers participating in teacher education programmes through distance mode are more in number. The structure of the global society would naturally by multidimensional having wider scope for innovations to be experimented and executed (Ravichandran T, Saravanakumar AR, 2013). The rigidities in the formal system of education and constraints imposed on educational opportunities have resulted in inequalities in the society. Education that has a key role in social change and society itself needs to undergo changes in this particular content. Distance education is the best replacement of the same. Teacher education is a professional course, where a student – teacher wants to develop one’s teaching competencies (Saravanakumar. AR & S. Subbiah, (2012). The student – teachers who are in service undergo distance education would definitely have certain skills developed in them and also they have a platform to practice whatever inputs given to them in the teacher education programme. Therefore there is a need to adopt integrated approach in distance education.

II. TEACHER EDUCATION (TE) THROUGH DISTANCE MODE (DM)

Teacher education through distance mode aims to achieve the objectives of teacher education by adopting integrated approach. The instructional methodology for teacher education through distance mode comprises of print material in the form of Self Instructional Material (SIM), audio-video programmes, assignments, face-to-face academic counseling services, project work, personal contact programmes, teleconferencing, school based activities including community work and practice teaching. (Lever – Duffy, (2007)).

The in-service student teachers seeking admission for the Teacher Education Programme (TEP) come from different backgrounds and different schools. They belong to different levels and possess different characteristics. While Developing the Teacher Education Programme as per the needs of each and every student – teacher, the Self Instructional Materials (SIM) should also be developed accordingly. Thus there is difficulty in developing a programme that would cater to the needs of one and all. Teacher Education through Distance Mode and the issues there in are the outcome of the continuous struggle to impart quality teacher education programme with a visionary outlook, making the Teacher Education more flexible and suitable for those in service. It is confident that the strong philosophical base of Distance Education and a theoretical foundation for the curriculum will be able to explore new possibilities and avenues.

Innovative technologies have created many opportunities in the area of distance education; Technologies used for distance learning span a wide range of cost and complexity are important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each type of technology, cost availability for both the instructor and learner, target audience, available equipments, goals and objectives of the presentation and its effectiveness. (Saravanakumar. AR, S.Subbiah, 2012) The original communicative stance of teachers and students are substituted by technologically mediated interaction between them.

III. NEED FOR WELL EQUIPPED TEACHERS

The education service is one of the most strategic factors for the success of a nation's development, as it is responsible for nurturing the youngsters who will contribute to all aspects of nation building in future.

The role of teachers at present day is more of a helper or facilitator rather than a teacher in the strict sense of term. As a facilitator the teacher has to provide a conducive and congenial environment. Of all the professions, teaching alone is considered to be the noblest because it is a service rendered by the professionals who are actually the social agents. A teacher who is fully qualified and equipped for the profession will make every learner achieve the objectives of instruction in each class. The marginalized children sitting in the last row with hesitation and inhibition have to receive special attention from such teachers. To achieve quality assurance, every teacher should continuously update his or her knowledge with the help of World-Wide Web and other Internet-based Collaborative tools.

The information age has created an increasing need for teachers and other school personnel at all levels of education to develop, use and disseminate skills for including technology as the driving force behind integrated, inter-disciplinary learning experiences which prepare students for life in the real world.

There is a growing and continuing need for systematic efforts to infuse instructional technology in relevant ways in all professional education programmes preparing administrators, teachers and counselors.

- Assisting instructors in becoming more creative and a better problem solver
- Stimulating curiosity and increasing enthusiasm
- Addresses teacher's needs, includes instructor input, offers opportunities to develop a wide range of teaching and utilizes a variety of instructional methods.

IV. TEACHING COMPETENCIES

Teacher Education is a professional course, where a Student – Teacher has to develop one's teaching competencies. In distance education the STs are in service, so they have certain skills developed in them and also they have a platform to practice whatever inputs are given to them in the training programme. Considering this background we have developed a training continuum to develop their teaching Competencies (**Prema P, 2011**). Functional purpose of innovation in education is the implementation of integrated approach in teacher education. Structural purpose is the change of basic fabric in teacher education. The visionary purpose is the continued articulation of teacher's role and the fundamental purpose is in our image of teacher as the key reformer in education. Any functional or structural improvement in the integrated approach in teacher education should be guided or judged by the image of teachers as reformers. In institutionalized system of education, direct and face-to-face teaching and instruction is of great significance. The teacher and the taught share their knowledge, the success of educative process depends upon the efficiency of the teacher education system in the country (Jazeel AM, Saravanakumar AR, 2017). In a micro-teaching training program for trainees pursuing B.Ed through distance education, the trainers used the techniques of Visualization, Diagnosis, Remediation, Scaffolding and Knowledge Integration. The Trainees were given exposure to Online Workshop, Seminars, Tele-Conferences and Expert advices were sought with the help of Internet. Then their teaching competency was assessed through CCTV's. The Pros and Cons of their Teaching Method were analyzed by the peers and the experts (**AM Jazeel, AR Saravanakumar, 2016**). Thus the results showed that ICT helps in shaping the Teaching Competency of the teacher trainees.

V. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES (TEP)

The following must be taken into account,

- Closing the gap between educational objectives and teacher competencies
- Teachers as learners
- Teacher education is a continuous process
- Reviewing cost-effectiveness criteria applied to teacher education
- ICT has rendered education portable, flexible, electronic, convenient and enjoyable
- School autonomy implies teacher autonomy
- An integral approach to teacher professional development.

VI. APPLICATION OF ICT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Application of information and communication technology (ICT) especially in support of distance education activities, adds enormous value to the training. It enables and empowers trainees and participating teachers to share experiences, curriculum, learning materials, lesson notes, feedback and collaborative programmes. It encourages paced learning through tools such as assignment, tutorials, broadcast programmes, computers, conferences, etc.

The advantages of ICT lie in its potential for increased interaction with and between learners, quick delivery, response time to queries, feedback on assignments, greater access to communities of teachers and quicker lead for updating course materials while at the same time the establishment of effective quality assurance procedures are needed (Punie, Y (2007)). The usage of ICT and CD-ROMs is becoming more common for material developers of distance education programmes of all kinds, for supporting administrative processes and staff involved in learners' support.

VII. BENEFITS OF DISTANCE LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

- Greater access to learning resources for students, teachers and adults
- More opportunities for collaborative learning among mentors, colleagues, and instructors around the world
- Alternative higher education opportunities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In India, student-teachers participating in teacher education programmes through distance mode are more in number. The integrated approach along with effective management and monitoring system certainly make teacher education through distance mode appropriate and adequate. Therefore, it is very much essential to evolve effective management and monitoring systems which would take care of students admitted to these programmes. In conclusion, integrated approach with the teacher education programme through distance mode is the need of the hour. Effective technology management with integrated approach will enhance the teacher education programme through distance mode and benefit a lot to the society.

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