

Perspective on the Two Year B.Ed. Programme: Reflections of a Teacher Educator

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Abstract

According to NCTE, (1998), the teacher is the key component of any educational programme. The quality of professional training imparted to trainee teachers has an immense impact on their teacher competence level. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has made comprehensive changes from 2015-2016 academic year to produce quality teachers. An important significant change is that it has increased the duration of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme from one year to two years, in addition to modifying the curriculum. Experts from the field of education feel the change will lend the this programme the same valuable status shared by other professional courses like BE (a four year course) and MBBS (a five-and-a-half year course). The aim is to produce quality teachers with enhanced professional competence.

KEYWORDS : B. Ed.curriculum , NCTE, professional competence .

INTRODUCTION

NCTE became a statutory body in 1993 by Act of Parliament to maintain norms and to improve the standards of teacher education and brought out two editions of the National Curriculum Framework on Teacher Education, during 1998 and 2009. Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education-1998 recommended that education of teacher educators has to correspond to teacher preparation programmes in order to cater to the needs of stage-specific and category-specific requirements of teacher training programmes.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education-2009 suggested that the need is now being effectively articulated for identifying the objectives for the education of teacher educators and the designing of programmes that offer specializations for meeting the needs of different levels of schooling.

The quality of teacher education cannot be given within one year duration, therefore NCTE formulated the (Recognition Norms and Procedure) Regulations, 2014 of national policy for higher education for B.Ed, course duration as two years in India.

WHAT DEFINES A TRUE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL?

The teacher , like other professionals, has to acquire three characteristics (Chopra, 1998) :

1. Expert knowledge of the subject.
2. Special training in core teaching skills and methods.
3. Continuous in – service growth for justice to their work.

The two year syllabus of the B.Ed. course according to the guidelines provided by NCTE Regulations, 2014 , has been structured in such a methodical way that it covers the above mentioned characteristics for professional training.

STRUCTURE OF THE TWO YEAR B.ED. COURSE

The NCTE helped to improve the quality of teacher education in terms of modern curriculum. This programme components fall in the below mentioned three broad interrelated curricular areas–

1. Perspectives in education :

Perspectives in Education includes courses in the study of childhood, child development and adolescence, contemporary India and education, theoretical foundations of knowledge and curriculum, teaching and learning, gender in the context of school and society, and inclusive education. This component of the course gives adequate opportunity to the student teachers to be able to focus their attention on the personal relationships between teacher and learners, relationships among the learners themselves, autonomy, self-esteem and freedom experienced by learners . Student-teachers can now analyse teaching as a profession, reflect on their beliefs and practices, multiple responsibilities of a teacher in an institutionalized setting, and the need and opportunities for professional growth.

The course named Childhood and growing Up gives knowledge about child development, and diversity of childhoods in different social contexts. It gives a hands on training in preparing a detailed case study of a child which helps student teachers to use this in their professional career later.

In the course Learning and Teaching , Student – teachers get a chance to bring their own experiences into their world of work and simultaneously reflect on the teaching – learning process as a whole. Reflective tasks carried out by student-teachers on teaching have the following broad components:

1. Teaching as a complex activity
2. Analysis of teaching in diverse classrooms
3. Teaching as a profession

Reflective tasks carried out by student-teachers on learning have the following broad components:

1. Understanding learning: socio-cultural and cognitive processes
2. Understanding the learner
3. Learning in and out of school

As a cumulative effect of all such reflective tasks inherent in the new syllabus , Student-teachers can understand and appreciate that all teaching is directed at learning, and that the learner is at the heart of teaching . Simple activities such as maintenance of a daily diary during the Pre School Engagement programs cultivate a sense of importance of critical observation and the need to record it for referral in future.

In the course titled Gender, School and Society the student teachers get a chance to study the process of gender identity construction and formation of gender stereotypes in the society.

In the course Knowledge and Curriculum , the difference between knowledge and information is made clear. Also it focuses on the different bases of modern child centered education using the ideas of thinkers like Tagore, Gandhi, Rousseau and John Dewey.

In the course Creating an Inclusive School , the student teachers are sensitized about the meaning of inclusion, types of disabilities in children and the need for inclusive schools.

2. Curriculum and pedagogic studies :

Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies offers a study of the nature of disciplines, critical understanding of the school curriculum; pedagogy as the integration of knowledge about the learner, the discipline and the societal context of learning, and research relating to different aspects of young children's learning. This component emphasizes on the critical understanding of the school curriculum and of the pedagogy involved. These courses help to develop in student-teachers, an understanding of the curriculum, thereby linking school knowledge with community life.

One of the subjects included in this component which is titled, 'Language across the Curriculum', helps in appreciating the role of language and the pedagogy of reading and writing across other subjects. It is essential to understand that assumptions about the language and literacy background of students influence classroom interactions, pedagogical decisions and the nature of students' learning. Thus, it is important to understand their language background and know how oral and written language can be used in the classroom to ensure optimal learning of the subject area. Student teachers can also realize the impact of multilingualism in a classroom and what level of competence in the teacher is required to deal effectively with the challenges of a multilingual classroom. This is specially useful in the present scenario of high multicultural diversity in classroom situations.

It also includes the in- depth study of pedagogy subjects by the prospective teachers, in order to gain knowledge of the subject which is a fundamental requirement of a professional teacher with competence. Pedagogy is to be understood as the integration of knowledge about the learner, the subject and the societal context.

Also in this component of curriculum and pedagogic studies, an optional course is also to be studied by student teachers. There is a variety of subjects to choose from – subjects like Guidance and Counseling, Value Education, Peace Education, Environmental Education, Work Education, etc.

The course Understanding Disciplines and Subjects throws light on the role of disciplines like Maths, Science, Language and Social Science in the school curriculum.

2. Engagement with the Field :

The B.Ed. curriculum provides for a continuous and sustained engagement of the trainees with the Self, the Child, Community and School, at different levels, and through establishing close connections between different curricular areas.

This curricular area would have three components –

- i. Tasks and Assignments that run through all the courses as indicated in the year wise distribution of the syllabus.
- ii. School Internship .
- iii. Courses on Enhancing Professional Capacities (EPC).

Engagement with the Field is the curricular component that is meant to holistically link all the courses across the programme, while it also includes special courses for Enhancing Professional Capacities (EPC) of the student teachers. According to NCTE (1998), the teacher is the most important element in any educational program. The quality of professional training imparted to trainee teachers has an immense impact on their teacher competence level. To retain the respect of students and colleagues and provide students with the best education possible, professionalism is required in all

aspects of a teacher's career. Professionalism is defined simply as “ the competence or skill expected of a professional by virtue of possessing special knowledge ”.

The mere acquisition of a professional qualification cannot ensure that the service provided by a teacher is of professional standards.

Professionalism is defined simply as “the competence or skill expected of a professional by virtue of possessing special knowledge.” It includes the aims, qualities and conduct that characterize a professional person. It is defined as the following:

1. ‘The **expertness** characteristic of a professional person.’
2. ‘The **competence** or **skill** expected of a professional by virtue of possessing special knowledge.’

Professionalism is not a trait or feature with a single dimension. Rather it is multidimensional and therefore it is difficult to define (Brehm et al., 2006). Despite the significant role professionalism plays there is a lack of a universally accepted definition of professionalism in teacher education programs.

Certain values have to be imbibed and inculcated by a teacher through careful selection. These values define what that teacher is known for , by both students and colleagues . Some of the value related objectives that the reviewed two-year B.Ed curriculum attempts to develop among the trainee teachers are commitment, competence, accountability, dutifulness etc. of the trainee-teachers towards the profession.

The provision of a well structured school internship programme of sixteen weeks duration has been included in the second year of B.Ed. participate in all the school activities, including planning, teaching and assessment, interacting with school teachers, community members and children. Interactive methods and processes such as individual and group reflection , critical thinking and constructivist approach to creating knowledge etc have been incorporated to make it an innovative approach towards training of teachers. It gives an opportunity to student teachers to observe classroom teaching by a regular school teacher and engage in teacher observations and peer observations in addition to delivering lessons in the class. Therefore it give greater hands -on training towards the professional skill of lesson delivery by using microteaching, lesson plans using multimedia as an application of use of ICT in the teaching process.

A course on Critical Understanding of ICT is included to prepare teachers to use technology in the classroom and also in administrative work in addition to using it for teaching – learning processes.

The course on Drama and Art in Education also helps in understanding the self and as a form of self-expression for enhancing creativity. The components of fine arts helps in developing aesthetic sensibilities in student-teachers and learn the use of art in teaching learning process.

The aim of the course titled Understanding the Self , is to develop understanding of student-teachers about themselves – the development of the self as a person and as a teacher, through a continuous conscious process of reflection. The course is transacted through a workshop mode by more than one resource persons.

The course focuses on aspects of development of the inner self and the professional identity of a teacher. This enables student-teachers to develop sensibilities and skills that helping them in facilitating the personal growth of their own students while they teach.

The course titled Reading and Reflecting on texts enables student-teachers to enhance their capacities as readers and writers by becoming participants in the process of reading. The purpose is to engage with the readings interactively- individually and in small groups. This involves framing questions to think about, while preparing to read something, reading a text, and reflectively placing what one has read in the context of both the texts and one's own experiences. This way it creates a chance for peer learning and cooperative learning.

CONCLUSION

The two year B.Ed. curriculum aims to increase the quality of teacher training and thereby of the quality of teachers by using a multidimensional variety of approaches, such as, case studies, group presentations, projects, discussions on reflective journals, observations of children, and interactions with the community in multiple socio cultural environments.

' A bouquet of quality educational institutions has to be created so as to give students those options best suited to them and to make them to get opportunities to improve their levels of academic performance', R. A. Sharma, (2004). This two year programme of B. Ed. intends to bring integrated development of the trainee-teachers including both cognitive and non- cognitive aspects of their behaviours. It is primarily practical oriented. It gives stress on practical activities like internal assessment, project works, sessional works, internship in teaching, practice of micro-teaching skills, community works, practical works relating to work experiences innovative ways for conducting practical activities related to health and physical education, work experience, fieldwork with community etc. A few of the significant key elements of the two year B.Ed. curriculum are as follows :

1. Availability of more time duration for greater development of professional skills in student-teachers.
2. More opportunity for increasing teacher competence.
3. More exposure of the actual school environment given to student -teachers. Sixteen weeks of School Internship is preceded by four weeks of Pre School Engagement program in two phases.
3. More focus on both cognitive and non cognitive areas in the teaching –learning process.
4. Greater emphasis on reflective technique – observing phenomena around us and reflecting on them as a method of self improvement by self conscious thought and decision.
5. Availability of a variety of subject specific practicums and seminars and workshops to complement the classroom based theoretical subject knowledge.
6. Organisation of co curricular activities by student –teachers in schools and recording experiences of these activities in a reflective journal.
7. A good exposure is given for training in ICT skills with a view to provide better quality of computer literacy and also to enable student-teachers to use technology for

construction of lesson plans , transacting curriculum in the class and also for nonteaching administrative purposes.

8. A good opportunity is provided for development of aesthetic sense by specific courses like Drama and Art in Education. Student teachers visit places of art and culture and develop creativity in themselves.
9. There is a good chance for student teachers to be sensitized to Inclusive school set up and its need in the present times of high diversity among children in a classroom. This was much needed and is a welcome addition in the B.Ed. curriculum in the form of a well designed course.
10. A good scope is available for student teachers to think about the existing gender roles in our society and to rethink about modifying gender stereotypes themselves , as well as to inculcate this new way of thinking in their students also.

There was a much awaited need to revamp the existing teacher education courses run by different universities and affiliating Bodies and revise their course curriculum and syllabus by incorporating above mentioned issues and also in the light of RTE Act 2009 , NCFTE-2009 & NCTE Regulations, 2014 for improving its quality and preparing professional teacher educators through this programme. These changes in the B.Ed. curriculum will surely go a long way in enhancing the quality , competence and professionalism of prospective teachers.

*The above mentioned views are exclusively of the author of this paper.

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