

# **A Study of the On-going Processes of Pre-service Elementary Teacher Education Programme in Maharashtra\***

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'The destiny of India is being shaped in its classroom' as quoted by Kothari Commission has its relevance even today to re-emphasise that Education is one of the factors that contributes significantly towards nation's building and development. It is certainly true that the progress of our country to a large extent depends on its quality of education imparted in schools and higher education institutions. The strength of an education system, on the other hand, largely relies on the quality of teachers, who play a vital role in imparting this 'quality education' within the classrooms. However, the performance of teachers is likely to depend on the kind and nature training they had received during the pre-service programme. This ultimately lead us to the core factor, the teacher education programmes which are accountable for developing competent teachers who are expected to perform effectively in different educational systems. This in other words, implies that the school education has a symbiotic relationship with the teacher education (Joshi and Ahuja, 2004).

Although, teacher education programmes in India, have undergone reforms time and again, it has been consistently indicated that learning outcomes in primary schools are far from satisfactory (ASER, 2011; Pratichi Education Report, 2002; PROBE, 1999). ASER has reported that even after four years of schooling, close to 70 per cent of children cannot easily navigate text that is meant for children two grade levels below. The report also shared that although children do learn some things during the course of the school year, the level that they attain is insufficient for them to get to an adequate or comprehensive level of learning as currently expected, or build the foundation for learning in higher grades. In early 70's Chinna

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Chacko, a former member of NCERT, in a paper presented at the International Reading Association in 1971, highlighted that “Many things are done the same way they have been done for centuries and, as a result, our primary teacher-training schools and primary schools are like museums in which old ways are carefully preserved” (Kumar, 2011). This situation continued to be the same and even today. Teachers prefer continue to adopt traditional methods of teaching in spite of the advent of advance technologies. Further, it is more disheartening to know that majority of the aspirants choose the career to be a primary school teacher in India, because it is a last resort (Kumar, 2012; Ramchandran and Pal, 2005).

These findings to a large extent reflect on the efficiency of the teachers in our school system and also highlights that reforms in teacher education has not significantly changed the scenario of elementary school education. Over the recent years, the sector of teacher education has suffered from commercialisation and other setbacks which have led to significant deterioration in the quality of teacher educators serving in institutes and colleges of teacher training” (NCERT, 2009). The task of bringing qualitative change in institutional efficacy of the teacher education system in itself is a huge and challenging one (Joshi and Ahuja, 2004). Looking at the prevailing status of elementary school education, several queries are raised on the efficiency of the pre-service elementary teacher education programmes. Hence, an attempt was made to study in detail the nature and kind of inputs provided in the elementary teacher education programmes, by observing the classroom practices and teaching practices of both the teacher educators and student teachers respectively, involved in elementary teacher education programme.

### **Objectives of this Study**

1. To observe and analyse in detail the ongoing process of D.Ed programme in terms of their;
  - (a) Teaching learning processes in the classroom
  - (b) Practice teaching classes – school experience programme
2. To analyse the student teachers’ and teacher educators’ perceptions with regard to the on-going processes of elementary teacher education programme.
3. To suggest and devise alternate frameworks for improving the pre-service elementary teacher education programmes.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the prevailing on-going processes in the prevailing D.Ed teacher education programmes?
2. How do the student teachers conduct their practice teaching in the schools?
3. What are the student teachers and teacher educators' perceptions of the prevailing teacher education programme?
4. What are the recommendations for the improvement of the prevailing D. Ed education programmes?

### **Methodology of the Study**

The present study envisages to study in detail the classroom process of the elementary teacher education programme in Maharashtra. Since, the classroom processes has largely been captured through observations, both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected.

**Sample:** The present study is confined to four D.Ed colleges located in and around Pune city. Since the college is the unit of the sample, their selection was done purposively to ensure that they represent different geographical locations and management. Observations of 216 teacher educators and 294 student teachers representing these colleges were conducted. The feedback was obtained from 122 student teachers and interviews were conducted with 12 teacher educators.

**Tools:** The data was collected by adopting the following four tools;

1. Observation Schedule for Teacher Educators
2. Observation Schedule for Student Teachers
3. Feedback Questionnaire for Student Teachers
4. Interview Schedule for Teacher Educators

**Data Collection:** Observations of both teacher educators and student teachers were conducted after obtaining prior permission from the respective college principals. The observations of the complete class were hand recorded on the developed observations schedule.

The student teacher feedback questionnaire was administered to the whole class. Prior to administering the questionnaire, instructions were provided to the student teachers and while filling the questionnaire, measures were undertaken to ensure that the student teachers did not discuss among themselves.

Interview with the teacher educators were conducted individually depending on the availability of the teacher educators. Only those willing to be interviewed were selected for this purpose. The responses of the teacher educators were recorded on the interview schedule while they were responding.

### **Summary of Results**

The results of the study have been presented in the following categories

- (a) Teacher educators' classroom processes
- (b) Student teachers' classroom processes
- (c) Student teachers' feedback
- (d) Teacher Educators' perceptions

### **Classroom Processes**

Teacher educators from four different teacher education institutions were observed and a total of 216 observations were conducted. The behaviours of the teacher educators were recorded on the developed observation schedule. The summary of the findings are given below:

The proficiency of teacher educators in terms of knowledge adequacy was found to be 'above average'; majority of the teacher educators adopted lecture method, followed by discussion and demonstration. They rarely adopted seminar or other methods; the extent to which the teacher educators initiated their class was found to be 'below average'; majority (60 per cent) of them utilised support material while teaching. Close to one-fourth of them (23 per cent) did not utilise any support material while teaching; they extensively used textbooks or self-notes (37 per cent) during teaching and a small percentage (24 per cent) utilised other teaching aids like flash cards, real objects, apparatus and relevant documents. Teaching aids like charts, OHP, LCD projector and computers were rarely used; the teacher educators rarely facilitated student teachers to participate while teaching and seldom established linkages of the subjects they taught with other subjects or social context. This implied that they adopted unidisciplinary approach rather than multidisciplinary approach while teaching; a little more than 50 per cent (54 per cent) of the teacher educators provided examples while teaching; the scope of the content taught by majority of the teacher educators (79 per cent) rarely went beyond the subject being taught, they confined to the content given in the textbooks; the frequency

of the questions raised by the teacher educators lied mostly in the range of 1 to 10 questions in a class (37 per cent). However, the number of questions ranged from 11 to 20 in more than quarter (27 per cent) of the observed classes. Among the total observations conducted, 18 per cent of the teacher educators did not raise any question in the class; they largely (42 per cent) asked close-ended questions while 26 per cent raised open ended questions. These questions were commonly spread over 1 to 15 students in a class; by and large the number of student teachers who responded to the questions raised by the teacher educators in the classrooms (62 per cent) varied in the range 1-5; in majority (76 per cent) of the classes, no queries or questions were raised by the student teachers in the classes; the extent of interaction between the teacher educator and student teachers was found to be high in majority (49 per cent) of the classes. The average mean score was 3.27, indicating 'above average' interaction; the interaction within the peer group was found to be low in 50 per cent of the observed classrooms; in Majority (54 per cent) of the observations, the teacher educators displayed confidence while teaching; the teacher educators were by and large found to be self-motivated in most (63 per cent) of the classes; the audibility of the teacher educators' voice was found to be 'above average'; little more than one-fourth (26 per cent) of the teacher educators did not utilise the blackboard while teaching. Among those who utilised, a majority (53 per cent) used for writing illustrations and keyboards and less than one-tenth used for writing statements (7 per cent), drawing charts (4 per cent) or maps (one per cent); the teacher educators seemed efficient in maintaining eye contact with the student teachers; with regard to physical space, it is seen that majority (60 per cent) of the teacher educators preferred to remain confined to their chair or table while teaching; majority (63 per cent) of the teacher educators were efficient in using gestures and voice modulation while teaching in their classrooms; in general, while teaching it was seen that the teacher educators obtained feedback from the student teachers by asking questions (35 per cent), or giving home work (1 one per cent), writing assignment (2 per cent) or asking them to perform (5 per cent) and the overall performance of majority (71 per cent) of the teacher educators in their classrooms was found to be 'above average'. The performance of few teacher educators (4 per cent) was rated as 'high'.

### **Practice Teaching Processes**

A total of 294 observations were conducted and summary of the findings are given below:

Fifty per cent of the student teachers had shown 'above average' ability in subject knowledge and the remaining were 'below average'; the student teachers commonly adopted lecture method (36 per cent) while teaching in schools and close to one-fourth (17 per cent) adopted lecture cum demonstration method. Less than one-fifth (8 per cent) adopted demonstration and text reading with questioning during their practice teaching lessons in schools. The techniques rarely adopted by student teachers were narration, games, dramatisation, questioning and discussion; it was seen that majority (53 per cent) were not successful in initiating the class, while 39 per cent were able to initiate interest, curiosity and gain attention of the students during class initiation; more than three-fourth (86 per cent) of the student teachers utilised teaching aids during practice teaching. Teaching aids in the form of pictures (43 per cent), and charts (35 per cent) were largely used by the student teachers. Less than 10 per cent utilised aids like maps, models and flash cards; it was seen that close to half the percentage (49 per cent) of the student teachers received 'above average' rating for the appropriateness of teaching aids; one-third (34 per cent) of them were able to facilitate interaction and learning while teaching; only 12 per cent of student teachers were able to establish inter-linkage of the content they taught to other subjects or real life situations; 73 per cent of student teachers did not provide any illustrations while they taught; majority (84 per cent) of the student teachers confined their content to those prescribed in the textbooks and only a small percentage (13 per cent) made an effort to teach content beyond the textbook; most of the student teachers (87 per cent) asked close-ended questions, and the least asked open-ended (one per cent) and probing questions (4 per cent); in none of the practice teaching classes, queries were raised by the students to the student teachers; the interaction between the school students and student teachers was 'below average' or 'low' in majority (57 per cent) of the classes and in 39 per cent of the classes 'above average' performance was noticed. Such interaction was 'high' only in one per cent of the classes; the interaction between the

students themselves within the classroom was 'below average'; nearly half the percentage of the student teachers had shown 'above average' or 'high' level of confidence; 37 per cent showed 'below average' motivation to teach, while 52 per cent showed 'above average' or high level of self-motivation; majority of the student teachers were not fluent in the language; the ability to explain concepts was also found to be 'below average' among them; the student teachers largely utilised the blackboard for writing keywords (76 per cent) and illustrations (20 per cent). Very few wrote statements, or drew diagrams on the blackboard; most (56 per cent) of them were able to maintain a distributive eye contact with the students in the class; majority (82 per cent) of the student teachers preferred to confine to limited physical space while teaching. In other words, the student teachers hardly moved around while they taught; most (55 per cent) of them had 'below average' skills related to gestures and voice modulation and they commonly evaluated the students learning after completion of the lesson through several methods viz., by asking questions, fill in the blanks, match the following or solve the given examples.

### **Student Teachers' Feedback**

The student teachers were moderately satisfied with regard to the following aspects in teacher education programme: Teaching techniques adopted by teacher educators; teaching aids utilised by the teacher educators while teaching; whole Examination system; theory test-marking system; practical report-marking system; feedback after practice lesson; theory teaching conducted in college; practical work/input given in college; admission procedure adopted; college facilities - ICT, science lab, Classrooms and College uniform.

Majority of the student teachers opined that the content taught during the D. Ed programme could 'often' or 'always' be applied in school situations; according to the student teachers, among the different teaching techniques taught in the D. Ed programme, methods like discussion, self-study and play-way method could be adopted 'often' in schools, while the rest could only be adopted 'sometimes'.

The student teachers experiences with respect to the following were not satisfactory: Allotment of class for practice teaching; carrying teaching aids to the practice schools and transport facility from home to practice schools

### **Teacher Educators' Perceptions**

The perception of teacher educators was diverse and this varied within and between the teacher education institutions. The variations were related to selected features like the appropriate classroom size, entry qualification, subjects to be taught and the whole programme framework. On the whole, the teacher educators were in favour of revising the curriculum of the prevailing elementary teacher education and insisted that the theory taught should be related to the social context, the work load of the student teachers should be reduced, practical activities should also be lesser in number and ultimately the programme should be based on realistic principles.

### **Discussion of the DTE**

The curriculum of the Diploma in Teacher education adopted by the elementary teacher education institutions in Maharashtra is found to be well structured and clearly specified the weightage of each subject in terms of written marks, practical marks and weekly periods to be conducted for the same. In general all the D. Ed teacher education institutions adopted a common schedule wherein for every subject, the theory teaching is first completed and then practical inputs are followed by. In the present study four teacher education institutions were observed among which two were urban, one rural and one semi-urban, and with regard to medium of instruction, two were English medium and the rest two were Marathi medium. The classroom size of the students enrolled in this programme varied from 12 to 93 and the average class size was 36.91. The following issues have emerged from the results and have been discussed in detail in the report:

- (a) Curriculum distinct from school realities
- (b) Ongoing process
  - (i) Teacher educators: Confident and interacted
  - (ii) Lectures predominant in classrooms
  - (iii) Less efforts to bridge theory and practice
  - (iv) Absence of content flexibility
  - (v) Limited participation of student teachers
- (c) Practice Teaching process
  - (i) Difficulties with practice schools
  - (ii) Difficulty in class management
  - (iii) Commuting to practice schools
  - (iv) Prevalent disparities
  - (v) Inadequacies – Knowledge, communication and interactivity



- (d) Student Teachers' feedback- Demands
  - (i) Efficient teacher educators
  - (ii) Adequate Institutional facilities
  - (iii) More individual guidance
  - (iv) Balance between theory and practical
- (e) Teacher Educators' perceptions
  - (i) Disparities within teacher educators
  - (ii) Recommendations
- (f) Benefits of this programme

### **Conclusion**

The existing elementary teacher education programme has both its strengths and weakness. Some of the good aspects of the programme are that selected inputs are meticulously planned and implemented, especially those related to practice of micro-teaching skills and conducting school teaching practice programme. In spite of the various hurdles faced by the teacher educators to identify appropriate schools for practice teaching, sincere efforts are made to structure the timetable for practice teaching by allotting required teaching time periods for each student teacher. Yet it is important to know that the nature of classroom transactions or teaching-learning process taking place both in the colleges and the practicing school situation need improvement.

The study submits a conclusion that performance of the students teachers were largely reflections of their teacher educators, thus indicating that proficiency of student teachers is dependent on the proficiency of the teacher educators. Hence, to improve the effectiveness of teacher education programmes, there is a need to first enhance the efficiency of their teacher educators especially in the areas related to communication skills, interlinking theory to practice, facilitating student teachers participation, adopting interactive teaching learning methods and facilitating constructive methods in their classrooms. For this purpose, intensive capacity building programmes for teacher educators should be conducted to enable them to unlearn traditional practices and relearn new approaches like constructive and collaborative, to enhance the quality performance of teachers in the State.