

# Experiments in Teacher Education

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## Abstract

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*Experiments and innovations become worthwhile exercises when these are properly documented so that lessons can be drawn to make the system more effective and responsive to meet the emerging needs. With this in view, an effort has been made in this article to enlist the experimental teacher education programmes undertaken in India such that a long term and informed viewpoint can be developed. This perspective will be useful in professionalising and diversifying the teacher education programme to produce reflective practitioners in the years to come. In the Knowledge Age, the system requires efficient facilitators who can help create intellectually strong, creatively inclined and quality-conscious workforce. The present day teacher training system is the weakest link, mainly because of quantitative expansion and its predominantly theoretical orientation, combined with insufficient duration for value formation. The author has, therefore, presented some innovative ideas worth experimenting based on his experience to make the system rigorous, professional and responsive to the new demands of Knowledge society.*

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## Introduction

The history of Indian education has never before witnessed such an overwhelming enthusiasm for expansion, qualitative improvement and readiness for experimentation and innovation to produce reflective teachers who can help shape the destiny of the country in accordance with the constitutional goals and

the aspirations of the people. Many of these experiments done earlier have been forgotten because of lack of documentation. As a matter of fact, many worthwhile lessons can be drawn from the past experiences, thereby consolidating the gains and avoiding any pitfalls in future. These experiences need to be analysed on

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several dimensions like the duration of teacher education programme, general as well as specialised teacher education models, pedagogy-based or content cum pedagogy-based courses and preparation of teachers for academic as well as vocational spectrum of studies. While evolution of teacher education programme for the Knowledge Age will require extensive inputs from technological and digital world, the basic structures suitable in Indian context will have to be worked out keeping in view the experiences gained from the experimentations done so far.

As explained in the Report of National Knowledge Commission, there is a dramatic change in the nature of the world of work. Globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation have laid new foundations for products and processes of teacher education. In the knowledge age manual and mechanical jobs will give way to thinking and knowledge jobs. Youngsters, therefore, have to be trained for new types of opportunities available especially in the booming service sector. These include jobs like medical transcription, call centre jobs, jobs related to cyber world viz. e-learning, e-business, multimedia packaging, computerised photography, video conferencing, mobile technology; event management, resorts, spa and parlour management, jobs in entertainment industry, music industry, sports industry, health and fashion industry, food and nutrition industry, hospitality industry, telecommunication industry, institutional housekeeping, interior decoration, nursery growing, floriculture,

tissue culture, education and training services and in many other emerging areas. We require competent teachers who can inculcate in students the necessary values, ethics and personality traits. They should also be able to provide employable skills to students. Skill development and skill upgradation as well as multi-skilling perspectives are essential to keep a competitive edge in the global market. In today's perspective, general and vocational education paradigms have to come closer to develop a productive but enlightened and humane personality. Creation of a global workforce which is trainable, flexible and quality conscious rests with the teachers. Future teacher education programmes have to gear up to meet the emerging needs on the one hand and remain contextual, cost effective and continuously transform based on indigenous experiences, on the other.

### **Earlier Experimentations**

In independent India, experimentation in teacher education started as early as in 1961 with the emergence of NCERT at the national level as an apex research and development organisation in the areas of school education and teacher education. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission, the then Ministry of Education, Government of India in collaboration with the Ohio State University, USA, established four Regional Colleges of Education in four regions of the country. These colleges were envisaged as pace-setting teacher education institutions. Initially, the colleges were meant to

prepare teachers for the Multipurpose Scheme recommended by the Mudaliar Commission. The Regional Colleges started with a four-year integrated teacher education programme leading to the degree of Bachelor of Technical Education (B.Tech.Ed.). Later, however, three more highly acclaimed four-year programmes followed in Regional colleges and elsewhere namely B.Sc.B.Ed, a four-year integrated programme to prepare Science teachers, B.A.B.Ed., a four-year integrated programme to prepare Social Science and Humanities teachers and recently, a four-year integrated programme of B.El.Ed (Bachelor of Elementary Education) has been started in some selected Delhi University and Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, colleges to prepare elementary teachers for the system.

The erstwhile Regional Colleges (now Regional Institutes) also experimented with many other innovative teacher education programmes like the three-year teacher education programme of Diploma in Industrial Arts and Crafts and two-year M.Sc.Ed. course in Physical and Biological sciences for producing teachers for the Higher secondary classes. Other experiments in innovative teacher education programmes include one-year specialised B.Ed. programmes namely B.Ed. (Agriculture), B.Ed. (Home Science), B.Ed. (Languages), B.Ed. (Science), B.Ed. (Vocational), etc. The products of these courses have been well received by the mainstream education system. Recently few more experiments have been launched to suit the systemic needs, for example,

the B.Ed. (Vocational) programme of Ruhelkhand University, an integrated teacher education programme in Regional Institute of Education, Mysore and pre-service teacher education programmes in DIETs and SCERTs.

### **Need for a Change**

Although four-year teacher education programmes have demonstrated a significant model over more than four decades, these have not yet caught the imagination of education managements, in general in India. The success achieved by the students of four-year courses and their versatility have amply proved that teacher preparation requires early initiation, longer duration, tailor-made curriculum, suitable environment, up-to-date human and material resources along with a farsighted and enlightened management. Young students who enter the four-year teacher education programme just after their higher secondary or intermediate and gradually imbibe the qualities and characteristics of a teacher through content cum pedagogy training, ultimately get shaped into committed, competent and conscientious teachers. It is also an open secret that present day teacher training system is the weakest link mainly because of quantitative expansion and its predominantly theoretical orientation combined with insufficient duration. The worst affected is the secondary teacher education programme popularly known as B.Ed. programme. With the mushrooming of B.Ed. colleges, it is being treated as the hen that lays golden eggs.

Fortunately, a significant innovation in teacher education was suggested by the NCTE in its Teacher Education Framework. They conceptualised an enhanced duration B.Ed. Course of two years. It suggested an enriched curriculum framework for teacher education with a view to produce teachers who will have character, competence, confidence and compassion. The Regional Institutes of NCERT again took the lead and introduced the innovation after making due preparations. The two-year B.Ed. programme is running successfully in these Institutes since 1997-1998. Researches done by Sen Gupta, Kakaria and Chugtai (2002) and Yadav (2010) on the status and efficacy of two-year B.Ed. programme have indicated empirically the positive difference the two-year programme has made in the attitude and competence of students due to intensive training and extensive school exposure. But the fact remains that except NCERT's Regional Institutes no other institution or University in the country has replicated the well thought out reform. The present one year B.Ed. programme, though looks quite robust on paper, turns out to be dismal at the field level because in effect the course turns out to be of eight-nine months duration in which stress is on pedagogical principles largely in a theoretical framework. Practice teaching in schools has degenerated into a routine affair. Can such a written examination-oriented course produce competent, committed and a reflective teacher is a question that needs to be debated upon. Further, attitude formation is a long drawn process.

### **Further Ideas for Experimentations**

It is time that some innovative ideas are considered and experiments are conducted to make the system more effective and efficient. For example, the ongoing B.Ed. one-year course being popular among students and managements, that is evident from the number of teacher education colleges in each State and pressure from students for admission, the possible suggestion is that let it continue with certain systemic modifications. But, the degree awarded for one-year course may be renamed as B.Ed. (Pass). Simultaneously, let there be another attractive option made available to students, parents and the managements. This would be in the form of a two-year B.Ed. programme with an enriched curriculum as suggested by NCTE for which universities may be persuaded to award the degree of B.Ed. (Hons.). Hopefully, sooner than later the two-year Honours programme will become popular with the degree-conscious psyche of students and parents. Subsequently, B.Ed. (Pass) course can be tailored to the needs of secondary classes while the B.Ed. (Hons.) curriculum can be specifically tailored to senior secondary classes. In fact, the system today badly requires an advanced degree specially suited to senior secondary classes, in view of the different specialisations opted by the students and also due to the emergence of vocational and skill oriented subjects.

Another innovative idea worth experimenting is the establishment of separate universities of teacher education both at the Centre and at the

State levels on the lines of technological and agricultural universities. This step would focus the need and importance of teacher education within the university system. This is also necessary to obviate the effect of academic orientation of the present university system in which teacher education becomes yet another option rather than a rigorous professional training programme. A specifically directed mandate of the said university will allow it to address the total system of teacher education right from the pre-school to higher education level in a structured and graded manner by establishing much needed horizontal and vertical linkages. Also, teacher education courses of varied specialisations and durations can be developed and experimented upon to create a cadre of job-specific professional teachers. An inbuilt mechanism of vertical mobility will ensure professional growth and onward specialisation both in content and pedagogy for teachers at different levels.

Also initiatives need to be taken for developing a cadre of rural teachers. Just as Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas have been created for nurturing rural talents; on similar lines rural teacher education colleges need to be created and based in rural areas with content cum methodology courses suiting to rural needs and specialisations. These colleges will attract rural talents to the teaching profession. These colleges can be affiliated to the rural universities. The trainees being from the rural areas will be well conversant with rural ethos, needs and limitations. They will not only stay in rural areas but also

slowly develop into a cadre of teachers based in rural areas having specialised knowledge of rural adolescents.

In the field of in-service teacher education as well the situation is not very rosy. Driven by the need for continuous training and retraining, it has become almost customary to organise orientation or refresher courses for teachers and teacher educators with a view to coaxing and cajoling the kingpin for better performance. An in-service training or orientation programme can have lasting impact only if parallel and simultaneous inputs are provided into the school system like provision of desired infrastructural facilities, curriculum reform, efficient systemic management, use of ICT and due recognition of teacher's status. Opportunities for professional growth and a helping and innovative institutional ethos are other requirements for bringing out the best in a person as a teacher. In other words the teacher has to be seen in a total perspective and dealt accordingly.

### **Conclusion**

We require a new generation of teachers nay managers or facilitators who can create intellectually strong, creatively inclined and versatile workforce. As someone has rightly said 'You cannot manufacture great teachers but you can always manufacture great facilitators'. In the forthcoming knowledge age a paradigm shift is required from the authoritarian teaching to joyful and active, participative, democratic learning opportunities. Also, there is a need to re-examine the teacher

education curriculum to humanise it to eliminate the inhuman activities and incidents. This is more so because to get quick material comfort and money, educated youths are taking the path of unsocial acts like cheating, stealing and killing. Teacher education thus is facing many challenges due to contemporary socio-economic and political compulsions. If we want to continue our march towards an enlightened and humane society, many more possibilities have to be explored

to prepare teachers who can befittingly face challenges posed by the forces of modernisation, globalisation and consequent rising aspirations. Rich experimental experiences are available in this country that should be looked into carefully to evolve parallel or alternative models of teacher education that can take care of the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which Indian manpower has to take a leading role for creating a peaceful, prosperous and progressive society.

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