

# Life, Ideals and Learning(s) to be a 'Teacher' in B.Ed.

## An Analysis of the Literature of B.Ed. Programme

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### Abstract

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*The central concern of this paper is to present an analysis of the definitions and images of an ideal teacher while being trained in B.Ed. programmes in India. The study explores this theme with the help of student-teacher interactions, interactions with faculty members as well as textbooks and other study material through which the author traverses. These interactions between student-teachers and teacher-educators look into their experiences in the classroom, hostel life, teaching practice and assignments. These aspects have been contextualised and woven along with broader experiences and exposure that the author gained while working in the field of education prior to the programme and the disjuncture that has come to permeate the ideals in teacher education programme. The paper uses these narratives to critique the teacher education programme as well as to highlight its stagnation. The data for this study emerged through detailed documentation, while the author was a student as well as through further discussions after the completion of the programme. The paper also looks at a series of studies that emerge from teacher biographies, teacher-educators' research, analysis and studies on teacher education programmes, along with discussions on the definitions of an 'ideal teacher'.*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the authors, Ram Murti Sharma, began his career in the education sector after postgraduating from the Punjab University in 1993. His 11-year career is spread from the initial days of observing and documenting classroom practices under Eklavya's innovative social science teaching programme to helping the state and national bodies in developing textbooks and conducting teacher and resource person trainings. Yet, when he decided to join the government teaching job in 2005, he was deemed unqualified because he did not possess a degree in education<sup>1</sup>. Hence, he went back to college at the age of 37 to learn about teaching and teachers.

This article attempts to reflect this experience and review the obsolete practices followed in professional trainings to be come a teacher. We begin this study by briefly looking at the prime source of knowledge for student-teachers (STs)<sup>2</sup>—textbooks. We also look at the ideals of a teacher as described in these books. Moreover, centrally, we look at the interactions of the author with his fellow student-teachers (STs) and teacher-educators (TEs). Thus, the article attempts to point out the images of a 'teacher' emerging through the programme.

## RATIONALE AND METHOD

There is a vacuum in the linkage between current practices of teacher education programmes and knowledge paradigms at two levels — first, at the level of actual content which is taught to STs and second, at the level of usability of what is taught in these B.Ed. professional courses. Clubbing them sounds like comparing them with all professional courses. Often, it is pointed out in popular discussions that STs learn notes that were prepared immediately after the Second World War. However, a few attempts have been made to touch upon the lacuna that exists in these notes, or how a student-teacher, in the absence of better learning options, responds to such a classroom, how he/she reflects his/her experiences elsewhere to 're-arrange' himself/herself for the tasks that await him/her in the future institution of the school. The research attempts to explore these questions.

The author recorded numerous events as he attended his B.Ed. classes in 2005–06 with a plan to reflect upon them later. Yet, it may be false to claim that we strictly used documented data for developing this paper. Both the authors interacted

<sup>1</sup>From the 1990s, a number of people were appointed as school teachers, without a formal degree, in many states. However, this option was not available while Ram Murti Sharma was looking for such an opportunity.

<sup>2</sup>We use two acronyms in order to make the reading easier and remove the overlaps in the way the words teacher and student are used. TE is used for 'Teacher educators' and ST for 'Student-Teachers'. STs are those who attend the B.Ed. programme and TEs are faculty members. Hence, when we use the term 'teacher' or 'student', it refers to the larger school context.

over the academic year and exchanged 'stories' informally and promised to 'do something about it'. After the completion of the course, they spent a week together, going through a series of discussions and narratives on their experiences. Free-flowing discussions, clarifications and re-narrations followed and 'data' in the strict sense of research emerged. No formal interview schedules or questionnaires were used for this research. During the same period, the second author spent time reading and understanding guide-textbooks<sup>3</sup> that he had collected to 'pass' his degree course. Extracts from one such book become the key resource for this paper. There was also a small collection of assignments, lesson plan notebooks, teaching aids, etc., that provided a comprehensive view of the B.Ed. programme. Hence, the documentation for the article includes both Braille notes of the author as well as perspectives from the shared discussions.

Here, it is important to clarify that the authors did not begin the process of research with a set of well-articulated questions. The process of documentation and reflection was based on their field experiences and academic research on teacher education in India. While documenting

the experiences, following questions came up: What are the notions of child, school and teacher that are communicated through mandatory courses, like philosophy, sociology and psychology, of education? What did the author learn from courses on social science teaching? What is 'archaic' about the understanding of social sciences? How did the teacher-educators transact ideas? How were these ideas different from or similar to his experience of training with organisations, like Eklavya? Yet, as we began articulating the reflections, we realised that an in-depth analysis would be difficult. Hence, we decided to focus on the key aspect of a teacher training programme — notions and ideals related to the teacher.

### **RESEARCH ON LEARNING MATERIAL IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

While documenting (or prior to) the experiences of a student-teacher, neither the first nor the second author explored the literature on teacher education. Thus, the studies identified here are not necessarily those which the authors had used to reflect on prior to the research but accessed only after the completion of documentation. Our experiences, observations and interactions helped us to recognise the potential for evolving a criticism of the

<sup>3</sup>It is probably not easy to distinguish the learning material that an ST uses. There are books that have been intended or written for the student audience. These books may cover every topic that is in the syllabus and move beyond that; they may have even been written with the intention of catering to the syllabus of more than one university. However, there are also books in the form of solved questions, which generally collect questions from the previous examination papers of universities. In various parts of the country, we come across terms, like '20 questions', 'digest', 'guides', 'scanner', etc., all of which are interchangeably used.

curriculum. In the context of school education, it is often pointed out that the absence of social world experience for children in learning material and the definition of what is considered as 'valid' knowledge create alienation from the learning material. For example, the theme of comparison between a child's experiences of political ideas from the social world with those taught in textbooks had already been explored and analysed (George, 2007). This research was probably able to create a valid criticism of the ways in which learning material for children are developed. In a similar fashion, in this article, we look into the experiences of an individual and try to contextualise them into prescribed images from the textbook.

Literature pertaining to teacher biographies and debates on teachers are the two strands that have helped the author in writing a critique of teacher education. Life histories permit an individual to critically look at his/her relationship with "individuals, institutions, cultural values and political events, and the ways in which these social relationships contribute to the individual's identity, values and ideological perspective" (Britzman, 1986, p. 452).

In the context of this study, we classify the literature on teacher education into two categories. The first is based on the method we have

adopted for the study — reflections on personal experiences. And, the second is based on the construct of teacher ideals as well as discussions on teacher education programmes. In the context of schooling or teaching, studies that relate to a teacher's experiences are broadly classified into two paradigms — life histories and reflective narratives. A variety of methods are adopted to select and organise the data in this context, such as personal practical knowledge, collaborative autobiography and personal history.

Broadly, such studies argue — (1) Teaching is deeply personal; (2) personal understandings of teaching are profoundly systematic and theoretical; (3) learning to teach is fundamentally a negotiated process; and (4) A sense of mastery in teaching takes a long time to achieve (Carter and Doyle, 1996; p. 134). Given this argument, "clearly and not surprisingly, the most prominent and pervasive recommendation flowing from the biographical perspective is that the examination of one's personal narrative and/or life history should constitute the core of teacher education" (p. 135). We looked for articles with similar themes in the Indian context but couldn't find much work. However, there were a few essays by scholars of higher education such as Pathak (1994)<sup>4</sup>, Singh (1991), and Gupta (2010). These essays

<sup>4</sup>Pathak's argument on the state of higher education is relevant to us. "There is no dearth of books and ideas. From Marx and Engels, to Lenin and Mao, to Gramsci and Luckas, to Marcuse and Habermas, the ocean of ideas creates a special problem for a teacher. He/she can lose his creativity in two ways. First, he/she can rely on a standard textbook or a bazar notebook and, thereby, discourage himself and his students to read better books or original thinkers. Much has been written and talked about this pathetic state of teaching in our country. But what is equally damaging — and, herein, lies the importance of the second point we are making — is the sickness emerging out of excessive dependence on books. For instance, in many good universities, one sees students and teachers always dropping names, talking about every new book that they have read." (on Teachers and Teaching: Reflections on Existing Pedagogical Practices, page 18).

do not discuss school education and its processes or teacher education. They, instead, discuss practices of higher education institutions and learning material from premier institutions that had a certain level of quality and were not dependent on the type of textbooks which the author came across.

In the context of teacher education, studies point out that an ST often has predetermined notions about teaching. Authors, like Gordon (2004), observe that a teacher-educator's role becomes critical in re-engaging with schooling practices distinctly. Alan R. Tom (1997) and June Gordon (2004) draw from their experiences of training student-teachers and reflect on teacher education programmes. Similar study conducted by Ivor Goodson (1992) looks at reflections and narrations by practising teachers. Scholars, like Deborah Britzman (2003), have explored specific aspects of teacher education, like 'practise teaching', in a critical ethnographic framework to study the impact of popular notions about a teacher and the experiences of practising teachers with student-teachers. Sharma himself being an education practitioner for years was more reflective than most student-teachers. He felt that these arguments were being validated while filling various practice teaching lessons. Similarly, Dersheimer and Corrigan (1997) argue that practising teachers have a set of beliefs which have a great impact on how student-teachers are trained. It is, therefore, important

that teacher education programmes encourage student-teachers to reflect on such beliefs. Gary Knowles (1992) observes, "...The small but growing body of knowledge about teachers' biographies suggests that it is not primarily the pre-service teacher education programmes that establish the role identity of a teacher but, rather, previous life experiences as they relate to education and teaching. To understand how to harness the life experience of pre-service teachers and channel them into contributing to more developed and effective role identities will be a valid activity for teacher-educators" (p. 147). In the light of the above mentioned studies, we draw that teacher education institutions play a crucial role in developing and reformulating the beliefs of student-teachers. But in the context of the author's experiences, we notice that our teacher education programmes do not create an opportunity for student-teachers to reflect on their ideals.

E.R. Ducharme and M.K. Ducharme (1996) observe many critical gaps in teacher education research in India. In their overview article on Indian research, they identify seven research studies that were conducted during the 1980s. Three of them were unpublished Ph.D thesis. Four were about micro-teaching and their impact — all argued for a particular method in teacher education. The other research was on integrated and one-year degree programmes that are available

in the country and argued that there was no significant difference between both the programmes. (It is possible that during the last decade, after the above overview was published, there may have been attempts to evaluate the quality of teacher education research that we are not aware of.)

But the content and curriculum of teacher education research in India has not been explored much. Needless to add that reports from various commissions<sup>5</sup> and government bodies, involved in higher education, have highlighted many glaring gaps in the practice of teacher education. Hence, this article delves into what goes on inside the classrooms in teacher education institutions and the decay that has set in.

The understanding and interpretations of an ideal teacher have been critically explored in several Indian studies, though not always in the context of teacher education. For analytical smoothness, we categorise them into the following types: historical analysis, socio-political analysis of policies and schooling or classroom practices.

In the historical context, the post-Colonial continuities or ruptures have been a repeated theme. Krishna Kumar's (1991) description of a teacher as a meek dictator of the state system has been widely read.

Nita Kumar (2000) extensively writes about the schooling system in Banaras over a century. Certain caste groups have had their own schooling systems and teaching techniques that were not aligned with the Colonial-modern schooling system. The image of the teacher was closely associated with caste and professional identity and knowledge of a specific skill was considered valuable for particular social groups. Similarly, Sanjay Srivastava's study (1998) on a single elite school in the context of the creation of post-Colonial or modern India indicates how the role of a teacher gets differentiated based on his/her background. These notions of an ideal teacher and teaching practises that were required for different social structures probably continue to prevail. As we shall read in this article, student-teachers are often threatened against attempts to collectively mobilise. They are often reminded that disciplining themselves and aligning with power structures are more suitable than resistance.

There have been numerous analysis on policies and practices of teacher recruitment and the role of teachers. We focus on the studies conducted in 2000–10, as there were government programmes to overhaul

<sup>5</sup>The National Knowledge Commission, was closest to our period of study. While talking about higher education, the commission recommends to the University Grants Commission, "Departments that do not update their syllabus for two consecutive years shall be asked to provide a justification. While there is a need to ensure relevance of the curriculum on a continuous basis, it may be difficult to devise appropriate methodologies for student originated curriculum." Available online at <http://www.knowledgecommission.gov.in/downloads/recommendations/HigherEducationNote.pdf>, which reflects the stagnation perceived within the education system. (Accessed on September 2008)

the schooling system and the role of teachers in this phase. Studies conducted by Govinda and Josephine (2005) and Kingdon and Rao (2010) explore the trend of appointment of 'para-teachers' in the last two decades, and critique assumptions focussing exclusively on access to schooling, while undermining the definition and notions of the quality of education. These appointments in various States partially undermine the idea that a teacher education programme is indeed necessary for a person to enter the classrooms to teach.

In this context, we see the linkage that Sadgopal (2006) makes with the neo-liberal political worldviews that have become dominant in the field of education. Further, when there is marginalisation and silence on teachers in the National Curriculum Framework as Batra points out (2005 and 2006) the large socio-political scenario during which Sharma had joined college does not hold a bright image of teachers. Thus, along with the archaic content that student-teachers learn, there is an increased folk message of marginalisation and doubt about the programme itself and de-professionalisation of the role of teachers.

In the context of state-run programmes, studies of the last three decades analyse the role of teachers in classrooms (Joshi, 2008; Balagopalan, 2003 and Clarke, 2003)

and emphasise on the centrality of a teacher in sustaining innovation. The attitude of teachers towards social issues is another key area of exploration, for instance, the manner in which marginalised communities, like Dalits and Adivasis (Samavesh, 2003) or gender perspectives (Nambissan, 2004) get highlighted in studies of this nature. Teacher education programmes should equip student-teachers to respond to the plurality of the society in the classroom. However, neither social sensitivity, nor pedagogical and domain knowledge capabilities are part of Sharma's experience in the B.Ed. programme. The above mentioned studies indicate that there is a disjuncture between the idea of a teacher as conceived and discussed by academic research and as reflected in the learning material and experiences of student-teachers.

### **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLEGE AND THE PROGRAMME**

This paper explores the following questions — What does a student-teacher learn about being a teacher in his<sup>6</sup> training? How do various learning practices and interactions between student-teachers and teacher-educators create the image of a teacher? What notions of a teacher do teacher-educators emphasise on in the process of their classroom teaching and training? How does

<sup>6</sup>We use the male singular pronoun as this study happens to look at a male and not to connote the teacher being male alone.

the training help a student-teacher to reshape his beliefs about being a teacher? Specifically, in the context of the author, in the field of education, how does this training help to reflect on his experiences as a classroom observer and teacher-trainer? In conclusion, we shall draw the picture of the teacher that emerges from this scenario.

The college<sup>7</sup> that Sharma joined for B.Ed. is considered to be the best and the oldest in the region. Around 300 student-teachers enrol for this programme every year and are divided into six batches. Majority of them are girls. A total of 225 girls and 75 boys sought admission in the year in which the study was conducted. The college also offers M.Ed. programme with 20 seats. It has 20 faculty members. The students are selected through a combined entrance examination from three universities — Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Punjabi University, Patiala and Punjab University, Chandigarh. During counselling, the students are allocated teacher education colleges according to their choice, merit, availability of seats and preference of the subject combination<sup>8</sup>. In many cases, student-teachers choose college, largely for it being closer to their homes, the availability of subject

combination and lower fee structure. The perceived quality of education at a college does not seem to be a factor that informs students in their choice.

Even though, officially, there are different labs for teaching — computer, science, social science; the author, who was trained as a social science and Hindi teacher, had never visited one. As approved by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), the university follows a curriculum that is prevalent across the country. The papers include: (A) Core Courses— 1. Philosophical and Sociological Bases of Education; 2. Educational Psychology and Guidance; 3. Management of Education and Education Technology; 4. Emerging Trends in Indian Education; (B) Two Specialisation Papers, and (C) Practice Teaching and Work Experience which includes craft, social service, etc.

The university to which Sharma's college is affiliated has a bad reputation among students. The examination pattern emphasises on long essays, whereas other universities in the region offer multiple-choice questions. Examinations based on essay-writing are not considered 'favourable' by student-teachers because one is likely to score low. The B.Ed. exam scores become important

<sup>7</sup> A college is affiliated to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In the indicators developed by NAAC to rate colleges, this college gained a 'B' grade. In the later part of the article, we describe how colleges achieve the grades. An important debate on indicators and definitions of "good quality of institutions" though would have been necessary and useful, is currently left out of our discussion.

<sup>8</sup> Subject combination refers to options that students choose for their specialisation, such as English and social studies, or Hindi and social studies, or mathematics and sciences, etc.



to students when they apply for jobs or for M.Ed. programmes.

The course begins with an orientation programme, during which the college authorities announce the annual agenda, which essentially means their expectation for better results. The class is divided into groups and informed about the timings, the pattern of examination, etc. This is where optional components under work experience subjects (any two subjects, such as gardening, home science, art, etc.) are chosen. Generally, male student-teachers don't opt for home science. The faculty share their expectations with student-teachers and ask them to maintain discipline, learn well, share the responsibility, participate in co-curricular activities, keep the campus clean, work hard, etc.

In the B.Ed. college studied, students attend nine lectures a day six days a week. The lectures are on four compulsory papers — two teaching subjects and three work experience programmes. Apart from this, five days are allotted to practice micro-teaching in the year. Practise sessions for regular teaching take place for 20 to 30 days. Seminars, presentations<sup>9</sup>, annual competitions and inter-university performing arts and sports activities are also conducted in the college.

### TEXTBOOK IDEALS OF A TEACHER

Guide-textbooks were a major learning material for the author during the programme. We are yet to have a systematic study in the Indian context that analyses the impact of such a learning process in terms of quality, which in itself may reflect the state of affairs in higher education. This section introduces a 'sample' text from chapters about the teacher in these guide-textbooks — the broader theme of this paper.

No one denies the role of good textbooks in the Indian education system<sup>10</sup>. However, one cannot stop condemning the use of 'guidebooks' in classrooms, which are nothing but a compilation of questions and answers. In Sharma's class, the student-teachers never read original articles written by thinkers. They hardly read books on education, like Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* or Gijubhai's *Divaswapna*. Most, if not all, student-teachers confined their reading to guidebooks. However, such books seem to have become crippling for teacher education programmes. They attempt to suit the need of student-teacher to pass the exam and cover the syllabus of major universities in the Northern states of India to ensure wider sale and profit. The guidebooks

<sup>9</sup>One presentation was on the topic — 'How to migrate to Canada?'

<sup>10</sup>In B.Ed. the STs are expected to read material of post-graduate courses since it is offered to graduate students. Today, many major Indian publishing houses publish series titled 'Themes in History', 'Readings in Sociology', etc. Similarly, in the last few years, certain bodies such as Kerala State Higher Education Council have come up with reading lists for graduate-level programmes. The students are mostly exposed to the type of books that we analyse in the following page.

are largely written in the fashion of an answer sheet of an average student with all information about the diverse aspects of education but without clear perspectives and sometimes even opposing views. The content is over-simplified and provides no detailed analysis, or opportunity to think about or problematise ideas. These books have no perspective or theoretical grounding. They often club together contradictory arguments in an attempt to appear 'neutral', where most ideas are redundant. In a B.Ed. programme, the usage of such guide-textbooks becomes even more ironical since they themselves claim, "textbooks belittle the role of a teacher <sup>11</sup>!"

Let us look at an example of over-simplification and appearing 'neutral' approach in these guidebooks. While discussing two methods of teaching, for instance, lecture and discussion—both are difficult for children to understand; time-consuming, dull and boring, etc. This criticism may be the same for other methods of teaching, such as activity method, problem method, etc. Thus, every method of teaching becomes inherently faulty. Yet, the entire programme is based on the assumption that a student-teacher can be trained to become a teacher. Such an approach becomes contrary to the prior experiences of the author, where an in-depth knowledge of the

subject matter was clearly emphasised in the trainings and where the method to teach social sciences is integral to the very nature of the discipline, for example, an activity about making a map of India in Eklavya's political science textbooks did not emerge for merely teaching maps through activity, but also to gain a mental feel of the States located in different parts and then making a unified country. This gives a sense of political division for administrative purpose. Or say, in history, drawing one's conclusion based on two different descriptions about the rule of a king was not merely a 'discussion method' but central to the nature of historiography.

We now look at the learning material closely for a detailed analysis. We selected a section from the textbook that describes the 'qualities of a social science teacher', primarily because this was one of Sharma's specialisation subject in the course and work experience. The author adds a reminder that "most of the qualities expected a of out Hindi teacher was not different"<sup>12</sup> which was his other specialisation.

The book, *Teaching Social science* by J.S. Walia<sup>13</sup> (2004), has a section, (pp. 139–147) called 'Qualities of a Teacher', wherein the qualities have been classified into five categories. The names of these categories are upsetting.

<sup>11</sup> Some of these titles are listed on the website of the university's prescribed syllabus. The website threatens with 'prosecution' if the PDF document is printed.

<sup>12</sup> All quotations, unless specified, are from the notes that Sharma had kept in Braille and which emerged during our discussion.

<sup>13</sup> This particular author has been selected because these books are among the most popular in the universities in that part of the state. Many of his books are also listed on the universities' websites.

The textbook does not provide an explanation as to why there are five categories. The following extracts from each category are followed by commentaries as analysis. This selection has been made on the basis of two aspects: (1) those that are contradictory in certain ways, and (2) passages that over-simplify ideas about the role of a teacher.

### **EXTRACT: CATEGORY 1**

#### **Special qualities of Social Studies Teacher**

- (a) Sufficient knowledge of social studies: Only a competent teacher can guide a discussion, stimulate interest and provide an educational situation. Only he/she [sic] can simplify and reorganise so many diverse elements into one connected whole — the historian's history, the geographer's geography, the economist's economics, the sociologist's sociology, and so on. He must keep himself abreast with current affairs in order to utilise this for supplementing social science and for facilitating instruction.
- (b) He/she should be an expert in the methodology of teaching

social studies<sup>14</sup>.

- (c) He/she should have mastery in techniques of teaching social studies<sup>15</sup>.

**Commentary 1:** Nine sub-qualities have been identified under this category. A good social science teacher has knowledge i.e., facts and information from all four subjects — history, geography, political science and economics. It is assumed that social science needs to be 'simplified and reorganised' by the teacher for its re-narration to children. Social science is treated at par with knowledge of 'current affairs', merely a compilation of 'information' within the subject domain of history, economics, geography, and so on.

Social sciences are seen as static, overlooking the evolution of social sciences and its diverse perspectives and paradigms that provide newer ways of analysing the social world. It evades the fact that these subjects are becoming interdisciplinary and adopting perspectives that cut across themes and ideas. The idea that school social sciences are information packages is a carry-over of older paradigms, where schooling was seen necessary only as an information-gathering process.

<sup>14</sup> There is a complete chapter dedicated to address the methods of teaching. Due to limited space, we are unable to analyse them at this stage. However, they include — lecture method, question-answer method, problem method, project method, unit method, observation method, storytelling method, source method, laboratory method, socialised recitation method, inductive and deductive method, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Similar to the methods — there is a listing on techniques, like exposition, explanation, narration, description, review, recitation, discussion and device such as illustrations, textbooks, homework, assignment, dramatisation, questioning and answering, and play-way devices and maxims of teaching, like to proceed from known to unknown, from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract, and from empirical to rational, etc.

Another predominant aspect is clubbing together of worldviews and values to social sciences and social science teacher<sup>16</sup>. Occasionally, by bringing together worldviews and values, contradictory and opposite perspectives are expected to be fused in. For example, these textbooks expect a teacher essentially to have a 'national outlook' — which 'he/she should inculcate in children by his/her conduct'; yet in another instance, it would appreciate the need for 'critical thinking'. This burden of conformist stand to the cause of nation is never criticised, and limits the worldview to people in social sciences. It draws a thin line between social sciences and value education and nationalism. Teaching social science is assumed to be the most crucial for nation building.

Guide-textbooks do not explain how the method or technique (item c and d) of teaching emerges or has an impact on or relation with the nature of the subject. For instance, reading and analysing various interpretations of history can be a way of teaching history; similarly, visiting and observing life in marshes for geography teaching or conducting a survey of school expenses or a family household to understand economics. Guide-textbooks are dismissive of different practices in classroom because 'methods' are seen not as emerging from the disciplinary

requirement, but some assumed requirement of diversity in ways of interacting with students.

### **EXTRACT: CATEGORY 2 GENERAL ACADEMIC QUALITIES**

- (a) Mastery of the subject matter: Any weakness on his/her part will lower his/her prestige in before students. Unless a teacher himself/herself has adequate knowledge, he/she is not in a position to inspire others to learn, nor can he/she kindle the minds of others with the flame of knowledge unless the same flame burns within him/her. Besides he/she must love his/her subject. A teacher who does not love his/her subject fails to inspire his/her students and runs the risk of becoming a hypocrite.
- (b) Adequate general knowledge: He/she must be conversant with various branches of learning. He/she must be a jack of all trades and master of one. He/she must have a working knowledge of related subjects and possess a fair knowledge of current affairs. The teacher must have the knowledge of his/her community and other communities.
- (c) Thirst for Knowledge: He/she should improve his/her knowledge by making a good use of libraries,

<sup>16</sup> The role of a social science teacher is to create linkages between subject domains. One wonders if that is not a tall claim in the Indian context, where we have repeatedly talked about the integration of subjects for school curriculum and continue to treat them in different school textbooks.

visiting exhibitions and museums, and attending educational seminars and refresher courses, etc.

- (d) Fluency in expression: He/she should possess good pronunciation skills. His/her voice should be pleasant, clear, audible, moderately-pitched and well-modulated. There are three ways of changing the voice — pitch, loudness and pace. The voice must appeal to the aesthetic sense of the pupils.

**Commentary 2:** These passages reflect the notion of a teacher as the sole source of knowledge. This idea gets repeated in different ways, and one dominant way of asserting it is by arguing that “any weakness on his/her part will lower his/her prestige in the eyes of his/her students”. The idea of knowledge being defined in relation with information (current affairs) is reiterated and the sources of knowledge are clearly associated with institutions, such as libraries, exhibitions, museums, seminars, etc. As per them, the child or the society with whom the ST interacts cannot become a source of knowledge. The teacher ‘himself/herself’ accumulates it and acts as a transmitter of knowledge for children. In this scenario, information banking is clearly given validity over the knowledge generated in a classroom interaction.

There is no rationale in dividing the qualities into four sub-categories — a, b, c and d. Further, finding a relation between a, b, c and d is a

tough task. But in the examination system, the length of an answer is important to gain higher scores, and thus, sub-categories a, b, c and d merely symbolise such aspiration and validate the ranking system.

Another underlying assumption is that all classrooms will use ‘lecture method’. Under general categories, other possible methods of teaching disappear, and thus, the assumption that a teacher is the only source of knowledge gets reasserted. It is unjustified that we expect every ST to have a voice that is pleasant and that he/she should be ashamed of his/her native pronunciation, just as it is equally unjustified that every pupil in a classroom should have the same ‘aesthetic sense’.

### **EXTRACT: CATEGORY 3**

#### **Professional Efficiency**

Love for profession: The teacher must have his/her heart and soul in the profession. ‘Once a teacher, always a teacher’ — must be his/her motto. He/she must take pride in the profession and be wedded to it. He/she must possess a strong vocation and devotion towards teaching. If a teacher takes his/her work just to make his/her living because nothing else is available, he/she will lack the zeal required by the profession.

**Commentary 3:** Some other qualities identified within the category are — adequate professional training (pre-service), in-service training, teaching experience and progressive

outlook. Training and experience seem to be the key factors in this definition of profession. However, more curiously, here the 'motto' sounds like a burden, a chain from which a teacher cannot escape. It is important to note that there are many first-generation graduates who join the profession as student-teachers. For them, teaching becomes a tool for social mobility. These social realities are completely ignored by textbook authors. The social context of teaching as a profession does not emerge in these bookish descriptions. The description makes no attempt to define 'profession' against other categories of employment and vocation. At the same time, there are imageries, such as 'vocation', 'devotion', 'wedded to', etc., being used to describe the role of a teacher.

**Extract: Category 4  
Personality Traits**

(a) External appearance: A good social studies teacher is known from his *dastar* (dress), *guftar* (behaviour) and *raftar* (pace of work). A teacher should look well outwardly so that the students are attracted by his/her charm, imbibe love for him/her at the very first sight, develop loyalty and profound faith in him/her. Dress holds importance professional life as it appeals to the masses. The social studies teacher should be smartly dressed. He/she should be considerate, humble, modest,

and should not arrogant, or conceited. He/she should be careful of his/her conduct and cautious in his/her behaviour.

- (b) Physical health: He/she has to deal with children, who are full of energy and vigour. If a teacher often complains of headache or frequently changing weather, he/she will not be able to do justice to his/her job. Thus, the teacher should maintain good health by having a balanced diet, doing regular exercises and participating in games.
- (c) High character: A social studies teacher should be a person of high character. He/she should possess moral alertness, courage, patience, love and humility. He/she should be frank, sincere and industrious and should possess purity of thought, word and deed. He/she must avoid everything that is petty. Children are imitative and suggestive by nature. They imitate the dress, voice and behavioral habits of their teachers. The likes and dislikes of the teacher become their likes and dislikes.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad said, "Their (teachers') own character should be such that there is no difference between what they say and do. When we act upon this ideal, then alone we can be sure of a bright future for our own country." Mahatma Gandhi

said, “Woe to the teachers who teach one thing with their lips and carry another in their heart.”

**Commentary 4:** Some other sub-categories in this list are — love for children, sense of humour, optimistic and democratic outlook, justice and impartiality, sympathy and wisdom, punctuality, self-confidence, self-analysis, enthusiasm and industriousness, sociability, emotional and mental health, intellect, etc.

Statements, like “if a teacher complains of changing weather, he/she will not be able to do justice to his/her job”, leaves you aghast. They remind you of perspectives prevalent until the nineteenth century where climatic conditions affected an individual’s nature and behaviour<sup>17</sup>. The passage also defines child as someone who “imitates”, another prevalent archaic notion supporting the popular argument that most practices of higher education are ‘frozen for decades’.

Teachers are expected to be compliant to these definitions and any difference that is inherently humane is overlooked. The teacher is portrayed as a super human, especially in the context of defining the notion of morality, character, or health. Inevitably, on such occasions, they cite authorities, like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, without any reference to

their own context to evoke respect among student-teachers, it would twist a popular saying, like ‘jack of all trades’, or use words like *ruftar*, *guftar*, *dastar* to get rhyming sentences. However, in the larger context, the expectation is that the teacher would be regulated on the personal front, even on aspects of health by following rules of diet, voice, and physical and cultural specificities. In effect, it expects a teacher to be a conformist to the core.

Even as educationists speak of inclusive classroom practices, it is important that the presence of student-teachers, who are physically challenged in various ways, is ignored by textbook authors. These books convey the idea that one’s disabilities are likely to create repulsion among school children and they are discouraged from taking up teaching as a profession. This reflects that the voice or looks of a teacher are expected to attract children, which further assumes that they have a uniform sense of reason to feel associated, either with adults or with ideas.

#### **EXTRACT: CATEGORY 5**

##### **Qualities from Different Points of View**

- (a) From the point of view of the pupil: Hart in his investigation found the first five traits —

<sup>17</sup> For instance, it was a prevalent notion that the hot and humid condition of India was responsible for the size of its population.

- (1) cheerful, good-natured, sense of humour; (2) humane and friendly; (3) interested in understanding pupils; (4) making work interesting, motivating them to work with pleasure; and (5) commanding respect.
- (b) From the point of view of the parent: The best teacher is the one who helps a child score the best results, pays individual attention to each child and shows sympathy to each child.
- (c) From the point of view of headmaster: An ideal teacher should be cooperative, obedient, loyal, industrious, respectful, punctual and one who gives the best results (good pass percentage and the maximum number of scholarships) to students.
- (d) From the point of view of higher educational authorities: A teacher should be humble, cooperative, resourceful and should give the best results.
- (e) What the teacher should not be: A teacher should not be a drunkard, gambler, shabbily dressed, conservative, cruel, cynic, selfish, sarcastic, dogmatic, discourteous, gloomy, haughty, inconsistent, impatient, irritable, ill-adjusted, undemocratic, unsympathetic, unreasonable, partial, prejudiced and pessimist.

**Commentary 5:** Here, the teacher is defined in relation with the

expectations of different actors in the education system. However, there is no explanation as to how these expectations are different or similar to the qualities that were identified earlier and the rationale for making these expectations. And curiously, the teachers are left thinking that they need to be seen only in the context of those who are in authority or to whom they are expected to cater.

Across the system, the only common expectation from all stakeholders, except for the child, is 'good results'. No effort is made to analyse such contradictory (at least sometimes) expectations from the teacher, which makes teaching a complex task. But these guide-textbooks and teacher-educators are satisfied that the student-teachers just mug up these passages. Similarly, the student-teachers are conveyed the idea that the education system expects 'loyalty' and 'obedience'. Apart from portraying the teacher's qualities using positive jargons, the author resorts to further simplify them through negative qualities, especially, in the context of educationists (whoever the textbook author expects to fall into this category) who have the most unimaginative and outworldly cherubic notions of a teacher.

### CONCLUSION

Textbooks of the above mentioned nature provide no scope for independent thinking. Thus, on becoming an student-teacher, the



author, Ram Murti Sharma, got alienated from the programme. However, this may not be the case for students who join teacher education programmes without field experience. Such textbooks provide excuses to teacher-educators through arguments, like “that is given in the text, do not criticise”, “that is what you will be evaluated on by the university”, or “this is what will get you a job certificate”. While the teacher-educator is probably aware of his/her disempowerment, these books perpetuate stagnation through bookish re-articulation of their roles. It is probably in this context that a teacher-educator could have made a difference by creating critical spaces for engagement.

How do teacher-educators use guide-textbooks in everyday interaction? Initially, teacher-educators talk about books other than textbooks during classroom interactions but after a week, those references disappear. Many teacher-educators bring these guidebooks to the classroom and often suggest the names of the book to be bought. As the exam dates approach and assignments are to be completed, immediate references are made only to guidebooks. The author felt that the social science teacher-educator was among those strongly dependent on textbooks. She left out portions that were considered difficult and focused more on examination results. For example, when the teacher-educator

found Constitutional provisions in the context of education to be “difficult”, she chose to skip the topic in the class and advised the students to choose areas that were “simpler”. It is important to acknowledge that many of these teacher-educators themselves continue to “read” books by Walia (2004) for their M.Ed. examination. The teacher education system is creating a vicious cycle for itself.

During the teacher education programme, the list of qualities became a laughing stock. The author and his fellow student-teachers are aware that these qualities are practicable only in ideal situations. They gloss over such lists by saying “our social realities are different”. These lists of qualities are only to be reproduced in the examination. At the end of B.Ed. training, a commonly asked essay question is — ‘Describe the basic traits of a social science teacher in the emerging Indian society’. Inevitably, student-teachers draw their answers from books by Walia. A variety of headings and sub-sections introduced in the textbooks help them to write their answers and score better marks. Interestingly, when these guidebooks talk about textbooks, they send across a message that textbooks disempowered the teacher.

The authorities who determine the syllabus and examination pattern for B.Ed. programmes have adopted and maintained archaic paradigms for understanding the subjects. The

examination pattern approved by the universities and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) continues to evaluate student-teachers on the basis of false assumptions about the qualities of a teacher. Yet, a textbook author can play an equally critical role by drafting learning material that could help a student to think and not merely act as an agent who recalls information. The possibility and potential of good textbooks that are better than the books mentioned here cannot be denied. However, books like the one authored by Walia represent a group of textbooks that are badly designed and conceptualised.

'Who is a good teacher?' is a perennial question at the heart of the (teacher) education system. Many definitions have been given by different actors in the education system. In the current practice, the criterion to define a good teacher emerges through awards for teacher,

policy documents, writings by academicians, tests to evaluate or recruit teachers for a job, tools used by school inspectors (sic), and so on.

In an ideal situation, one would have expected textbooks to contextualise these parameters within the larger context of a student-teacher's experience as a child, along with the predominant notions and narratives in the society, as against the expectations of the state system. In the current phase of neo-liberalism, as Shore (2008) points out and with the entry of corporate managerial perspectives, the discussion often gets diverted to lists of indicators and is in dissonance with the discussion that teacher education should articulate. The broad definitions of a teacher in books are unearthly and bookish, attempting to define a teacher in terms of qualities. The teacher education programme, thus, merely becomes a passport to the perpetuation of a redundant learning.

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