

Life, Ideals and Learning(s) to be a 'Teacher' in B.Ed. Interactions, Observations and Learning[†]

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Abstract

The central concern of the paper is an analysis of the definitions and images of an ideal teacher that one gains while being trained in B.Ed. programmes in India. The study explores this theme with the help of numerous student-teacher interactions, interactions with faculty members as well as the 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 the 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. It also looks at a series of studies that emerge from teacher biographies, teacher educators' research, analysis and studies on teacher education programmes, along with a few discussions on the definitions of an ideal teacher.

INTRODUCTION

This paper draws from a variety of experiences that the second author

(Ram Murti Sharma) had during the course as well as through his interactions with the fellow student-

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teachers and teacher educators. A variety of aspects about the teacher's role get communicated through these interactions. Teacher educators are largely responsible for defining and emphasising the role a teacher is expected to play, not merely in classroom transactions but also beyond the classroom in their daily lives and practices. Similarly, student-teachers interact and collectively share their notions about teachers, school and the child outside classroom. As studies indicate, the creation of a definition of teacher emerges from such beliefs of teachers. Morine-Dershimer and Corrigan (1997, p. 299) have pointed out the following.

- Beliefs about teaching are formed during early school experiences, long before students enter the teacher-preparation programmes.
- Beliefs are deeply personal, and have strong emotional component.
- Beliefs serve as a filter or screen, influencing teachers' interpretation of events, and they may distort information processing.
- The longer a belief is held, the more difficult it is to change.
- Beliefs about teaching are initially formed from the perspective of pupil, and thus fail to account for the full complexity of classroom interactions.
- Constellations of beliefs form a belief system, with some beliefs being more central than others. Educational beliefs are connected to other beliefs in the system.

Thus, teacher education programmes play a significant role in either sustaining or rupturing these belief systems. This section of the paper attempts to observe the same in teaching-learning programmes by incorporating author's reflections on discussions, and interactions with fellow student-teachers and teacher educators. We have divided this article into two broad themes: interactions that took place in classrooms or outside, and instances that are unique in teacher education and distinguish them from a graduate programme.

ON BECOMING A 'STUDENT-TEACHER'

Ram was not an ideal student-teacher because he entered student life at an age when he had already crossed the age boundary of 'youth'. Having worked on various issues related to education, he was unlike most other student-teachers. However, B.Ed. was his first formal training in the field of education. In the view of college administration, he was a bad student who had not 'secured' sufficient attendance. On one occasion, during a discussion with a teacher educator about his experience of working with SCERT and NCERT at Eklavya and developing textbooks, the teacher educator advised him — "It is better that you remain silent about your work experience with the other teacher educators for two reasons: most of them would not understand the significance of such a role, and those who do understand will consider you to be a threat to them. Hence, you

will neither gain nor lose!" Thus, the author did not necessarily challenge the beliefs of the teacher educators. However, his fellow student-teacher probably saw him in a different light.

Becoming a student-teacher was not easy for the author as most classmates considered him as an 'elder', especially as he expressed criticism when 'obscene' comments about women and sexuality were made in the college and hostel premises. From then onwards, they avoided making such comments in front of him. Yet, student life in the hostels thrived on this big issue other than serious discussions, which were either political or academic. It is equally important to notice that, occasionally, teacher educators stay 'silent' on issues they are ambivalent about. One such occasion was on the issue of adolescent sexuality. Even though the teacher education programme for secondary school teaching is expected to address adolescents, the teacher educators meekly ask the student-teachers to read those sections on their own from guidebooks. This raises an important question — why do teacher educators lack confidence and feel 'ashamed of discussing certain ideas'. Thus, the teacher educator treats student-teacher 'as kids' just as his fellow student-teacher treated the author as an 'elder'. Following this incident, for the next few weeks, sexuality became a topic of discussion in men's hostel. The issue was trivialised often to the level of misinterpretation and as a

source of entertainment. Throughout the programme, there was no occasion where women were treated with dignity. To a large extent, this indicates how neither the teacher educators nor student-teachers are trained to consider certain issues seriously and trivialise them without any sensitivity.

What 'new' did you learn from B.Ed.?

Occasionally, Ram attempted discussions with student-teachers about the new things they had learned in B.Ed. college as compared to their previous degree experiences. Often, they identified a few topics or skills and specified: "we learnt to control children"; "we know how to make a presentation"; "how to interact with children", etc. But they also often wondered if this knowledge would be useful once they move to real classrooms. Student-teachers found nothing wrong with the things that were taught. For example, they would say "it is necessary to control children", that it is the only way to "deal with children". Student-teachers were never exposed to any alternative perspectives or radical pedagogies or de-schooling thoughts. Ram felt that his classmates during graduation and post-graduation around 15 years ago 'were more articulate', 'had more political views', 'were more exposed', were 'willing to explore and look for new content', as compared to his fellow student-teachers. Teacher education programme did not seem

to promote such ideas either, and sometimes directed them against it.

Similarly, views about teacher educators were equally ambivalent among the student-teachers. Their preference of a teacher educator was primarily because s/he interacted leniently, and not on the basis of their academic abilities. But if the teacher educator reproduced the textbook during the session, it was considered a 'boring thing to do'. If the teacher educator reproduced some unknown information, s/he was considered a better teacher educator—for example, during a discussion on Human Development Index (HDI), if the teacher educator mentions that according to the recent reports, India's position moved from 125 to 127 or 'in corruption, India is ranked higher than previous year'. Anything that is considered complex is unacceptable. On one occasion, there was shouting of slogans in the hostel — 'Piaget hai hai'; 'Piaget hai hai' in the late evening. This was in response to the day's lecture where they were introduced to Piaget's stages of development. It was communicated by the teacher educator that this was a complex concept in itself. Indirectly, the teacher educator was trying to communicate that this was 'one of the theories that you need not study. If you leave this out, not much harm

would happen to the examination'. When we compare this with the manner in which 'information' is appreciated by student-teachers, such as on Human Development Index (HDI), we notice that there is a faith that aim of education is to acquire information and this is in concurrence with the ideals from guide-textbook. This probably also explains why the paradigm of behaviourism that seem to be 'easily' understood gets perpetuated in teacher educator¹.

Why were author's fellow students unable to question and think differently? Part of the reason could be in the 'newness' that student-teachers feel when being exposed to new domains like psychology with the teacher-educator and textbooks being the authority. Partly, this could be a continuation from the ways in which student-teachers have experienced their classroom processes as students in school. Any student who contradicts or questions the teacher is seen as a threat, and thus student-teachers remain unthreatening. In this sense, Ram as an individual could be argued out to be 'unique' and irrelevant in creating a critique of teacher education programme. Yet, it is true that teacher education fails to create ruptures in student thinking.

¹ In an altogether different context, a teacher educator of DIET in Uttarakhand posed the question "You are introducing theories like that of Vygotsky for BTC (Basic Training Certificate) students, how do you expect them to understand them? We learned these theories in our M.Ed., should we not just stick to Thorndike-Pavlov-Skinner, after all, these are just for teaching primary school children, and others are higher level, abstract theories".

There are no Role Models

Ram was sure that, unlike school or college, none of the faculty in B.Ed. College could become role models for him and there was no emotional or academic attachment to any faculty in the institution. The depth of their academic knowledge or rigour in classrooms was shallow; they often refrained themselves from entering into serious discussions within the classroom. When teacher educators use textbooks like 'Walia', student-teachers find it difficult to respect them. Unfortunately, books like those by Walia (2004) too do not inspire and guide well. However, ironically, these very books idealise the teachers as role models.

Some teacher educators often based their classroom lectures on rote-learning of passages from Walia! Notes that were dictated in class were also from Walia! Teacher educator would advise the student-teachers that "you can reproduce my notes for your examination to get good marks". Moreover, on one occasion a teacher educator gave an assignment to a student-teacher to write down the names of the headings and sub-headings of all the topics she had taught in the previous five months in class—the student-teachers did this by copying from the content page of Walia's guidebook. Teacher educator raised no objection to this and accepted the material. Thus, we see that this continuous merging of expectations of the teacher educator and student-teachers can have

a debilitating effect on the entire education system.

We are a Professional Course

From day one, teacher educators repeat, "You are going to be a teacher, unlike your graduate degree days. B.Ed. College is not a 'free' space; you should not make 'noise' like when you were school children or graduate students. You should act like a teacher. Start behaving like a teacher. You should not create a mess in the campus. You should not break rules and regulations of the school. Act responsibly."

In the above context, the notion of profession is simplified. It gives us a glimpse of a dominant perception among teacher educators about school as a space to discipline and control children. On the other hand, teacher educators use this definition of the teacher to control the student-teachers themselves. One may partially blame the guidebooks that have become central to the teaching-learning process in teacher education. Here, the definition of teaching profession becomes a means to 'control' the student-teacher not for the purpose of professional skill development, knowledge or attitudes but merely in a behavioural/character-building fashion. Teacher educators themselves probably have not imbibed or accepted themselves as professionals in true academic sense, hence transferring such notions to the future teachers. In this context, we can argue that this manner of defining the teacher

is disempowering for the student-teachers. One example of this was author's adventures with organising a protest about which we shall read later.

The absence of the notion of a professional community is also reflected in the discussions on primary school teacher. "Primary school teaching is very easy. You do not need 'much' input for children at this level. The 'complexity' of material (textbooks and concepts) that need to be taught is simpler." This comparison is used by the teacher educator to 'inspire' student-teachers to feel superior to their fellow professionals. It is necessary to notice that this attitude has other implications and is perilous. In our misconceived education system, the primary school teacher is someone trained by those who have an M.Ed. degree. The qualification required to join M.Ed. is B.Ed., whereas to become a teacher at the primary school, the qualification is D.Ed. D.Ed. degree holders thus have teacher educators, who have done B.Ed. and come with a baggage that is antagonistic to a primary teacher.

Attempts to Mobilise

Students from different colleges in this university used to come to Ram's campus to talk over tea. Since the students felt that a lengthy

paper for examination would be a disadvantage for their career prospects in comparison to other universities², everyone agreed to organise meetings at their respective colleges. Ram was asked to lead the process in his college due to his experience in student activism, even though he remained silent during the initial discussions. As the first step, he advised them to write to the University Vice-Chancellor, and ask the Principal for a recommendation. However, the Principal refused to make any such recommendation, since rules were 'already laid out and could not be amended in the middle of the year'. It was decided that strike is the only way out—and everyone agreed that all colleges needed to participate.

Ram asked the teacher educator if she could allow some discussion time in his batch. The teacher educator allowed them on the condition that they do not 'disturb other classes' and 'have a silent meeting'. Ram agreed and told the teacher educator that if she wishes, she too could stay in the classroom. Teacher educator remained in the classroom. Ram explained the practical problems with the pattern of examination and the disadvantages he and his classmates were likely to face in future. Everyone agreed that students who studied in colleges affiliated to this university have serious disadvantage. It was

² Maybe we could have talked about the farce of objective questions themselves or evaluation methods used in our higher education, but it is beyond the scope of the current paper. We briefly pointed out textbooks like that of Walia that are designed to suit the purpose of examination, where students are evaluated by the number of pages they write or the number of points they mention in their answers.

decided that a formal meeting would be held during recess time. Everyone in the classroom agreed to join the meeting.

However, the teacher educator began to explain the disadvantages of organising a strike — the college could deduct their marks for following such practices; why strike is a bad practice; why rules cannot be changed; how college can rusticate those who participate and take initiative, etc. Student-teachers silently listened and the result was visible during the recess. Out of 300 students, merely 10 to 15 came to the meeting — none of the student-teachers with whom Ram had initiated the discussion and who had promised to mobilise in their own batches turned up.

On other occasions, Ram observed that most student-teachers believed that it was discipline that had made them better learners in school days. They would often argue that discipline had eroded and needed to be re-established. This perspective partly helps us understand why the above incident happened. Another important observation about this incident was that students were given the 'permission' to involve in a classroom discussion on the condition that they would not disturb the neighbouring classes. When the teacher educator began talking, the discussion turned into regular classroom scenario

where the knowledgeable teacher 'informs the student' of the dangers going against the norms. Thus, even though teacher educators talk about discussion method in school classroom, they seem to perceive that discussions and activities seemingly break the discipline. School and college classrooms are expected to be spaces where students remain silent rather than active.³

In a broader social context, this event reveals the belief and expectations of teacher educator—standing for one's rights is wrong. It reflects the manner in which power relations are conveyed to the future teacher. It informs that they are weak and disempowered in the education system and cannot change the existing system and structures. In the real world schooling system, they are expected to be obedient. *Thus, subversively, notion of teacher as an agent of change is pushed under the carpet in the favour of obedience.*

Developing Teachers as Strict Disciplinarians

Teacher educators often pointed out that teachers ought to live a disciplined life—punctuality; obeying the authority; doing their duty, etc. As a teacher, it is essential to discipline the children—in 'model classrooms', children are expected not to ask questions—if at all anything needs to be asked, it should be questions

³ It may be noted in the margins. Joshi (2008) observes similar popular perception among the middle school teachers about the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP), where activity/discussion was central to the learning of science teaching.

on content from the textbook. During teaching practices, student-teachers are told that 'you should ask question' and not the students. An ideal teacher is the one who can keep the students quiet in the class. Students should respond only to what is being asked by the teacher. During practice sessions, some student-teachers went to the extent of threatening the students to remain silent. Teacher educators often suggest that 'it is okay' to beat students if they talk or disturb the class.

According to the teacher educator, discipline is important because 'you can teach smoothly' and questions and free interactions from students divert attention. Essentially, discipline is needed for conducting classes in a 'practical manner and completing the syllabus and meeting the other demands from authorities on time'. These ideas largely echo views expressed in guide-textbooks as well as prevailing popular notions about schooling.

Influencing the Teacher through Sweet-talk

In the teacher training programmes, pleasing the teacher educator is considered an essential 'duty' of the student-teacher. Many student-teachers believe that it is important for their 'success' and are 'proud' to engage in such activities. They think that they would score higher marks by influencing the teacher educator. Universities have a regulation that no teacher educator can give a score of more than 85 per cent or less than

20 per cent to any student. Many student-teachers feel that influencing the teacher educator reduces the 'burden of teaching practice sessions' since teacher educator sometimes allows them to skip a few sessions. Teaching practice sessions are evaluated and scored by the teacher educator. Thus, universities belittle the autonomy and trust in the teacher educators on the one side and on the other side, at least a few student-teachers believe that they have scored a higher grade and feel proud of being crafty.

Interestingly, a friendly student-teacher and teacher educator's relation is not seen in a positive light, but is repeatedly viewed as exploitative, or patronising. This probably stems from the experiences of student-teachers as well as ways in which teacher educators decide to place them within the education system. This, however, is important as we assume that such relations get perpetuated further when student-teacher finally reaches his/her school. Patronising cannot happen without the knowledge of hierarchy. Each teacher educator and student-teacher knows the amount of 'influence' teacher educator has on the college Principal. This is reflected when student-teachers approach any one of the teacher educators with a particular demand. It is also likely that sometimes the teacher educators ask their student-teachers to approach another teacher educator who has a 'closer relation' with the Principal. Hence, in the larger scenario of schooling system, student-teachers

are 'informally' trained to function in relation with the officialdom of educational bureaucracy. Probably, a large part of the failure of education system is this failure to see any possible positive aspects in student-teachers and teacher educator relationship.

This clearly is an instance of how and where the ideas of power come from and how it functions within the institutional structures. The network of power relations in college probably is an extension of what and how the society itself organises. A teacher educator is regulated by the university system that determines education/examination pattern—the keen awareness that student-teachers would depend upon and draw from guidebooks and not necessarily from the manner in which teacher-educator (if) wishes to transform the practices discourages innovation. It is important for the teacher educators to sustain and keep the Principal and college administration in good humour just as they probably wish to patronise and have control over the student-teachers.

Doing Things in Real and Ideal

The uniqueness of teacher education programme is the ways in which student-teachers re-learn school classroom practices. We identify and discuss them below. Strangely enough, across the programme, the theoretical courses and real teaching are evaluated separately. As a nation that celebrates 'rote learning', it

would be interesting to observe the 'do it' sessions. While this makes the course different from other graduate programmes, it also makes it at par with professional programmes, where students of medicine, law, etc., start their practice.

The Role of Teaching Aids

In the initial days of the programme, teacher educators talk about preparation of teaching aids, but over the next few months, they disclose that student-teachers need to make teaching aids only during the teaching practice session and final (teaching) examination, which is conducted in the presence of an external observer. They also tell that in real schools, teachers are not expected to use these teaching aids. Some teacher educators go to the extent of asserting that such tools are 'really not useful/essential' for children to learn. We can also see the lowering emphasis on teaching aids since many student-teachers avoid preparing them during the academic year and simply want to complete their course. In such situations, teacher educators encourage the student-teachers to visit the nearby shop where readymade teaching aids can be purchased. Very often, such shops are situated close to the B.Ed. colleges.

Authors also came across a 'tool' called 'pointer' which was radio aerial fixed to an umbrella handle and was available for 50 rupees! As per the textbooks, this 'tool' is to be used by teacher while giving lectures—to

pinpoint a specific area in a diagram, or a place in the map, or part of a body in chart, or an item in a periodic table, etc. It is clear that such tools emerge from the idea that students sit facing the teacher in a classroom and observe the teacher's action and never explore anything on their own. But most often, the products that are sold are thermocol models of tools given in the textbooks. The teacher educator expects the student-teachers to make something from the lists given in the books and make no efforts to teach how to make them. Sometimes, student-teachers recycle the tools available from previous year's submissions. Thus, teaching tools stand to represent some artefact that needs to be made and stored in the higher education institutions rather than being used in school classrooms. In fact, most teacher educators themselves do not use teaching aids to teach the student-teachers.

All this, however, would never be accepted in certain scenarios, for instance, when NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) team was expected to visit the college. Prior to the visit of such evaluation bodies/teams, teacher educators would visit every class and request the student-teachers to answer questions asked by people from the NAAC team in a positive light. They are expected to say things like classroom practice usually happen through discussions; that there are regular symposium and seminars; that teaching aids are used, etc. Hence, the system of rote-

learning and teacher centredness not only refuses to create/use teaching aids, but also indirectly supports those who are against teaching aids.

In the first few months of teacher education, no assignments are given to the students. However, towards the end of the programme pressure starts building up. Students often quote lack of time as an excuse to justify the 'purchase' of models for their presentations. Everyone feels safe having completed the formalities. However, the prime concern is not just the buying of readymade models but that of the underlying lack of faith in using teaching aids and models. This seems to confirm the observations of researcher Britzman (2003). He points out the categories of real and ideal notions about teaching practices and how they sustain. While talking about the teacher educators, Britzman discusses the various ways in which they interact with student-teachers. "...Others will try to be affected by the newly arrived, take them in the confidantes of their secrets, or even try to warn them of the emotional risks to avoid. They will counsel them to just finish student teaching. And they will promise that after student teaching is over, they can become real teachers." (p. 8). In the Indian context, teacher educators are largely aware of the absence of use of activities and teaching aids in school classroom. Hence, they make no attempt to change these practices of school classrooms through teacher education programmes.

In our opinion, there is no emphasis on the need for teaching aids because the knowledge of a subject is seen as information (as we read the case of social sciences). Teaching aids merely substitute a visual spectacle that could replace the voice of the teacher. Hence, thermocol models and pointers are easily accepted. This chasm highlights the failure of an education system to recognise the nature of subjects (like social science not merely as information or textbook-centred) and the need for subject pedagogic knowledge in a classroom. Hence, doing a survey to understand the economic life becomes a wastage of time while teaching economics as the teacher educator does not attempt to create a linkage between pedagogy and nature of the subject. Teacher training programmes focus only on what student-teachers are going to do in the real world — where the only tools that may be used beyond chalk and duster would be thermocol models and pointers. Teacher education prepares the student-teachers to comply and repeat what they have observed as school children rather than develop their unique teaching style.

Teaching Practice and Lesson-plan Notebooks

In the entire teacher education process, which lasted for 10 months, student-teachers enter school 'classroom like' situation only twice. The first time they do so is for 'teaching practice' and the other for 'microteaching'.

These are 'classroom like' situation because student-teachers are aware that they are not 'real' classrooms. They are merely reports to be drafted and submitted for evaluation. For each area of specialisation, students submit 21 days of lesson-plan under teaching practice and 5 under micro-teaching.

Microteaching

This is a mock classroom scenario that a student-teacher enters. The fellow student-teachers sit in these mock classes — few student-teachers are expected to act like students—and one student-teacher conducts the classes. Teacher educator sits in the class as an observer and a few student-teachers may also assist the teacher educator. Within a classroom, multiple groups carry out micro-teaching practice. Microteaching is meant for practice of teaching skills. Teacher educator often points out the skills that could be attempted while doing microteaching, teacher educator demonstrates how to do the session. One of the skills that is expected to develop the 'skill for introducing the topic'. Teacher educator often dictates the kind of questions student-teachers could use in this situation. It is emphasised that these questions need to be very simple and direct, the expected answer should be short sentences or yes/no. Questions should be concrete and without abstraction but giving factual answers. For example, if a student

wants to practice microteaching on a chapter on Constitution, the class would begin as follows—student-teacher would ask, ‘When did India achieve freedom?’, ‘What happened on 15 August 1947?’, or ‘Did we celebrate Republic Day this year?’, etc. But Ram observed that such questions never lead to the topic of Constitution itself. By then, the time limit for such sessions is over, and at the end, the student-teacher is supposed to have learned the ‘skill for introducing the topic!’⁴

Textbook description of microteaching highlights it as a unique contribution of India to the teacher education programmes. Per se, microteaching probably does not provide opportunity to evolve the skill of question-making and hurriedly reproduce the textbookish models of questions. It limits the open-endedness in responses and the questions are expected to ‘hit the target’. It considers teacher as having complete control over the knowledge that will emerge in the process. Microteaching is expected to follow observation schedules that are available in textbooks. Any deviation from the observation schedule is considered a failure. However, many student-teachers fail to create the prescribed textbook scenario. So, they

seek an apology when they fail to ‘hit the target’ and withdraw. Yet, everyone would make sure that recordbooks are submitted with details of what they did in the microteaching session, ‘after all you tried doing it’.

We also found that skills were different from the method itself. Even if ideas like microteaching were significant for student-teachers, given the type of questions and methodologies adopted, these do not seem to be effective. In order to teach any discipline, irrespective of its nature, student-teachers are expected to have skills that can be separated and practised independently, by repeating them in front of a class of imaginary children. Thus, we feel that certain activities in education programmes are created for the sake of making them look like activities — microteaching is probably one of them.

Lesson-plan Notebooks

Another element in the current practice of teacher education is lesson-plan notebooks which claim their lineage from German philosopher and educationist Johann Herbart who lived until 1841. When writing lesson-plan notes, student-teachers just focus on completing the task for the sake of formality. Microteaching

⁴ There are many samples cited in Walia guide-textbooks from B.K. Passi. However, student-teachers sometimes create their own dialogue, for instance:

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| Q. Where do you live? | A. India. |
| Q. In which continent is it? | A. Asia. |
| Q. What is the neighbouring continent? | A. Europe. |
| Q. Name another continent near Asia? | A. Africa. |
| Q. Now which is the smallest continent — hold on, you don’t know this — I will tell you — It is Australia! | |

is done in October–November and teaching practice only towards the end of programme where student-teachers are expected to demonstrate all the different skills of teaching. Often, teacher educators advise the student-teachers to copy from someone else's 'teaching practice copy' for the final submission. Logistically, teacher educator might have a problem giving a detailed feedback. But student-teachers sometimes share that teacher educators harass them by not signing their notebooks. Either way, student-teachers know the 'fake nature' of this classroom since as children they never experienced such situations in school.⁵

There are certain ideas that continue to survive till date. One among them is that 'all lesson-plan notebooks submitted for evaluation need to look uniform, neat, organised'. It is expected that lab reports of all science graduates should look similar. On the other hand, they are expected to follow the structured content of a Ph.D. thesis such as: introduction, hypothesis, literature reviews, statement of problems and so on. The entire education system discourages any other creative ways of expression and representation of knowledge other than the written form.

Every student-teacher submits lesson-plan notebooks that have been bought from the same shop/printer with the same structure and design. This practice reflects a dominant practice in the education system: 'errors cannot be permitted' and 'uniformity' is valuable than 'uniqueness or creative independence' because equality in the scale of evaluation of students is possible only if every student submits their report in the same manner, and have accepted same indicators. These aspects thus seem to move in recurring fashion, and have been built into the education system.

Assignments, Seminars and Presentations

The author feels that assignments and presentations become redundant because of the absence of continuous input and supervision by the teacher educator. Ram who is an avid cricket fan found it amusing that errors in his write-up on a young cricketer from Gujarat went unnoticed by the teacher educator. As part of a paper on physical education he collected information from all possible sources regarding this cricketer. When he felt the 'length was insufficient, (he) used wild imagination' and provided wrong information. One among the most

⁵ Krishna Kumar (2007) points out numerous problems with lesson-plans becoming a ritual and suggests, "[t]here is a need to conceptualize teacher preparation for the classroom in an altogether different design or mode of functioning. Such an alternative design will have to do away with the idea of a fixed number of lessons and supervision of a certain proportion of them" (p. 98). Sinha (2000) provides a detailed analysis of lesson-plans and possible alternatives to this deep-rooted practice in teacher education.

spurious practices in such write-ups are 'quotations'. With some flair and flavour, a series of observations that were attributed to senior former cricketers from around the world, were added about the young player, and finally prepared into a 15-page write-up. There were numerous 'new records' invented and endorsed in the youngster's name. In his entire life in educational institutions, this was the biggest goof up done by the author. His friend also copied the same passages. Similar incidents happen while doing 'Tests in psychology' (There were three tests: general mental ability test, personality test and aptitude test of people from different age groups). They were provided with inventories and tools developed by different psychologist. The tests are essentially expected to help student-teachers to learn how to calculate scores, how to read the table, how to read the indicators, etc. He had prepared his own copy but then someone else submitted another copy in his name! The fact that teacher educator pays little attention and no feedback is given to the student-teachers often hampers the purpose of such activities.

Gardening is a component under the Work Experience programme. The syllabus says that students are expected to have 'hands on experience' in one area. As we pointed out earlier, this sub-section focuses on experiences of student-teachers in the context of 'to do' in contrast to learning through 'lecture'.

However, in practice, the course title seems to be misleading since Ram learned gardening without dirtying his hands! The only occasion when Ram touched the soil was to do some cleaning in the B.Ed. college garden for the visit by NAAC team. Student-teachers maintain scrapbooks with seeds, roots and leaves; gardener demonstrates preparation of soil, identifies the tools, etc. Most often, the paper is taught by a Botany lecturer. The curriculum covers knowledge of the kind of plants or trees that are 'useful' for garden; their botanical names; information about manure; kitchen gardening; soil and so on. The student-teachers never plant a seed, or water or manure them. The supposed purpose of this course is for gardening with school children but not necessary for B.Ed. students. This clearly shows the meaning of valuable knowledge for B.Ed. College as opposed to knowledge for school children. We noticed a continuity and reiteration of the firm belief among teacher educators and probably in the entire education system that all knowledge can be transacted through lecture. While the botany lecturer provides a list of ideal plants for garden, thankfully there is a gardener to demonstrate the process of planting. The fact that a gardener's knowledge is accepted in the system is certainly a positive aspect but also conveys the message that teachers only talk about knowledge as facts and not its implementation. Moreover, the evaluation is done on

the basis of the scrapbook, which only indicates that knowledge is legitimate only if it is codified and transferred into written words and bound spaces. Just like in the context of lesson-plans, only written word is considered as trustworthy in this system of evaluation. Imagine if all B.Ed. colleges actually planted trees, probably in spite of all its archaic practices, we would have found all those buildings in the middle of thick forests!

In the context of social science teaching, activity or discussion method, etc., are also done through lecture method. There is never an attempt to organise classrooms for demonstration or practice teaching. Teacher educator simply read out passages or dictates notes in the class. Thus, what happens in 'do it' sessions of B.Ed. programmes is just a continuation of what students experience in their school classroom. Britzman makes certain key observations that clearly explain this scenario.

"We have all played a role opposite teachers for a large part of our school lives. It is taken for granted that we all know what a teacher is and does. This knowledge is based upon years of observation. It must be remembered that by the time a person enters teacher education, she or he has spent approximately thirteen thousand hours observing teachers. Observation skills acquired through schooling allow students to 'survive' in classrooms: students not only learn

to interact with formal curriculum of teaching and learning, but act as well within a hidden curriculum. In fact, those who are more 'successful' actively read the text of the teacher – her or his moods, behaviours, values, judgement, discourse strategies, and classroom expectations." (Britzman, 1986, p. 28).

Through Ram's critical narrative of his interactions with teacher educators and student-teachers as well as exploration in narratives of classroom practices and do-it sessions, we get a perspective on the continuous and stagnated education practices. The rupture that he had imbibed while being in spaces that were alternative to the mainstream views about teacher having no space in teacher education. Yet academic and policy discourses have repeatedly cried out for the need of breaking away from rote-learning. Teacher education that ought to have become a space and opportunity to create such ruptures from/with what children observe in school classroom are alienating to Ram's already ruptured experiences.

LEARNINGS AND DEFINITION OF A TEACHER IN THE PROGRAMME

The question that is central to this research is—What image of the teacher emerges in the programme? How does this image get perpetuated both within the guide-textbooks as well as the practices of teacher educators? For teacher educators and fellow students, there are no

alternative models but for the ones they are already familiar with, yet the system refuses to acknowledge the need for a reform in the existing schooling practices. In contrast, Ram's work in the field of education prior to B.Ed. focused on moving away from rote-learning. We observed that these textbooks bring in elements from all the perspectives on the role of a teacher, and disown them. These books draw from various policies, thinkers and popular notions about teacher, effectively leaving the student-teachers with no specific models or paradigms to identify with. Student-teachers are left to assume that teachers and textbooks are the most important sources of knowledge, and that controlling the students in classroom, disciplining them and in turn becoming disciplined themselves is their central role. The programme denies them an opportunity to reflect upon their own experience of schooling or contextualise their in-built notions about teachers.

Ram had engaged in larger debates about the child's ways of learning and teacher's role prior to B.Ed. These debates were often outside the sphere of teacher education institutions and universities. The state intervention through school programmes [like DPEP (District Primary Education Programme), SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), Lok Jumbish] or activities of NGOs who were involved in such debates engaged mostly with elementary schools and teachers. Teacher education institutions

and universities continue with programmes that are academically un-engaging. A partial explanation could be drawn from how higher education has come to stagnate with limited exposure of the teacher educator and use of textbooks by authors like Walia (2004). However, Alan R. Tom (1997) argues: 'Teacher education program redesign must be an ongoing process of deconstruction and reconstruction, of rethinking and re-creating design in teacher-education needs to be responsive and emergent due to the evolving nature of disagreements over the ends of education (and therefore of teacher education). Unless teacher educators continually renew their programmes through collective reconsideration of current practice, their programmes gradually become inflexible and ultimately become disconnected from educational and social institutions, as well as detached from prospective teachers.' (pp. 70–71). This does not seem to happen in B.Ed. programmes. Tom (1997) also observed that within the university system, teacher educators are 'oppressed' and have to 'carry larger teaching loads' (p. 195). Thus, the lacuna could be identified only if one explores the multiple regulatory bodies that have interest in teacher education programmes like UGC (University Grants Commission), NAAC, NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) as well as parallel expectations from school regulating bodies like State Boards and NCERT. Apart from the above-mentioned

contradictions, the state policies have been further discouraging to the teacher education system, especially so in the last two decades through claims like 'increasing access of schools for children', or 'providing jobs for educated unemployed', or 'appointing untrained personal'. Yet, for someone who had been engaged with school education system, it was surprising that often even the teacher educator did not follow the 'popular discussions—say articles in newspapers and magazines which engaged with ideas about learning and teachers, their engagements were surrounded and built upon textbook notions that brought in stagnation.

Earlier biographic research has drawn our attention to the fact that most people teach the way they have been taught. Gary Knowles (1992) says, "...understanding the origins of student-teacher perspective is largely a product of understanding the impact of biography—those experiences that have directly influenced an individual's thinking about teaching and schools (p. 102)." Within this context, Ram's discomfort with the process of B.Ed. programme emerges from his own biography, the grounding and exposure he received in various social science subject domains over ten years. As an outsider to the university system, Ram has been continuously exposed to alternative ways of thinking/observing teachers in NGOs, yet such reflections are seemingly unnecessary to university programmes. This stagnation of perspective becomes visible through

Walia's ways of defining social science as equated with information which further feeds into the definition of a teacher. Education system itself has failed to observe the changes within social sciences. Hence, the absence of interaction of the social scientists (or for that matter any subject) *vis-à-vis* the education departments and brings in stagnation in defining the role of a teacher in relation to subjects.

As pointed out earlier, there is no real difference in the list of qualities identified for a teacher because s/he specialises within a subject domain. On the contrary, the same qualities are identified across subjects. How and why does this happen? Part of the reason could be the overdependence of education on ideas like Bloom's taxonomy, and not specificities of nature of various subjects. It is assumed that every subject domain—Music, Mathematics, Social Sciences—can have the same nature and can be taught and measured in the same manner. This belief in defining every subject as having certain fixed taxonomy leads to the assumption that what teachers need to do is pick up any theory of learning like behaviourism or constructivism and fix it into some set of methods of teaching, some set of scales of evaluation, and resources to be used in classroom. Thus, any understanding of the ways of learning becomes appropriated when fit into the existing list of rituals for student-teachers. A teacher in such teacher education programmes is defined as someone who can evade or negotiate

through such paradigms. In contrast to this, the social science programme of Eklavya, with which the author is familiar, did not use such magic taxonomy solutions in guiding the learning process but emphasised on social science skills and abilities (*kaushal*). Moreover, it was strongly beyond the understanding/definition of social science as merely information recall (Eklavya, 2012).

Exam orientation remains at the heart of the programme. The classroom processes are neither designed in such a way that they enable the student-teachers to understand/engage/critically think about school classrooms nor visualise their role as teachers with clarity. The available opportunities, which move beyond lectures that have been built into the programme, are easily turned over as ritualistic requirements. In the entire programme, there were many aspects where student-teachers were told not to engage with, or their boundaries were marked and pointed at, for instance: shying away from talking about adolescent sexuality, discussions on theoretical areas like in the context of Piaget or Constitutional provisions on the side where content transaction may be crucial. On the other side, through various practices of interaction between student-teachers and teacher educators, it restricts student-teachers from engaging with the manner in which B.Ed. students would be evaluated, direct them to remain apolitical and

unorganised as a community of teachers, or even distance themselves from fellow professionals like primary school teacher. In the textbookish definitions, all teachers are expected to have subsumed their individual abilities and have acquired collective (often misguided) qualities. Further, teacher education programme gives no opportunity to the student-teachers to reflect upon their own images of teachers or guide them to move away from dominant practices of teacher-centred classrooms, with strong interaction and centrality to the children. Hence, the definition of teacher that student-teachers carry home at the end of this disconnect is an ideal, official version.

Student-teachers are instructed on how to write the exams; how to get hold of models during practical teaching exam; how to negotiate with teacher educators to score better marks; how to reduce the 'burden' of real practice, etc. It is often argued that Benjamin Bloom has become the most dominant perspective in Indian teacher education, and most teachers have come to trust behaviouristic theories alone. It is interesting to observe that this was one of the topics that every teacher educator avoided teaching during Ram's training! At the end of the course, while the two authors were 're-reading' the textbooks, Ram was surprised to know that there were chapters in the guide-textbooks that were dedicated

to Bloom's Taxonomy⁶. Ram too had filled in lesson-plan notebooks and created questions without hearing about Bloom. For reasons good or bad, what comes to notice is that anything that the teacher educator feels student-teachers would not understand or the teacher educator him/her had not understood is left out. This is guided by an exam-oriented motive and student-teachers are advised, "You must attempt the alternative questions in your examination." Thus there is no particular psychological theory (or for that matter any education theory) in which student-teachers are trained because examination provides an opportunity to become a professional without any such perspective. Or, as we have seen from textbook analysis, every theory is described and criticised as 'time consuming', 'not relevant to the Indian context', etc. The evaluation of examinations is expected to be based on a number of points written down by the students. Hence, irrespective of what you think about any theory or apply and think through them, what makes a professional is the ability to reproduce a large number of points for or against a theory. In this cultural understanding, learning is defined as getting the sheet of certificate. It makes you eligible to enter classrooms without knowing or understanding the world of children, school or knowledge and become a teacher.

If one considers the cultural myth pervading the notion of a teacher,

the teacher-education programmes and schooling experiences of student-teachers seem to substantiate and sustain it. Breaking new paths beyond the textbook and teacher-driven/centred classroom remain illusionary in B.Ed. programmes. Hence, certain practices become rituals, the traditional assumptions about classroom practices repeatedly re-enacted in teacher education classrooms. Even though the syllabus and curriculum include themes like 'different methods of teaching', they are never reflected in the practices of teacher educators, and hence, they re-enforce or neutralise any effort to change. In that broader sense, attempts to define the 'quality' either through changed syllabus cannot resolve the glaring problems in higher education system.

Finally, if we assume that Indian school system needs to change, we first need to visualise teacher education as being able to create a 'rupture'. Ram's learning from his previous job experience, in curriculum, classroom observations and subject expertise leads him to reflect upon the teacher education he underwent. However, since other student-teachers or teacher educators do not have such exposure, they often fail to appreciate any criticism that may emerge from his point of view. Rupture in images of the teacher or defining their role is possible if only teacher education is designed to provide more opportunities for being reflective.

⁶ An engaging critic that analyses problems of taxonomy in teacher education programmes of the USA (Moore, 1982).

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† Notes of the author, Ram, running over 1,500 pages in Braille; microteaching and lesson-plan notebooks, etc., have been used as primary sources for this study.