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Consumerist culture and quality in teacher education in India

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Abstract

It is true that higher education has become more accessible in the present era of information technology. The purpose of higher education is to produce dexterous citizens who can take up national responsibilities successfully in various fields. Therefore, the institutions of higher education should maintain an elevated standard in general, technical and professional education by inspiring the students to search for a new knowledge and good effort that must be authentic in nature. In this way, the role of higher education is to improve individual's knowledge by being given access to great minds that leads to innovation in every field of our society. In India the marketing of higher education creates various challenges as it is cultivating empty minds and intellectual inactivity. The impact of this marketing on higher education is also affecting the quality of teacher education. Teacher education is the significant pillar for providing well qualified teacher to maintain the quality of education. Therefore, it is a serious issue that teacher education is being purchased just like a commodity. There are too many so-called teacher education institutes which are mainly focused on business and the main concern of these institutes is to make more profit instead of upgrading the quality of education. This scenario of present teacher education is a threat for quality enhancement in education. Education is not something that can be purchased and consume. Today in the age of economic growth, everyone becomes materialistic. Now education sector becomes a market and students are consumers. Now teacher has not to educate instead he has to serve the so-called consumer (student). In the present paper, it is discussed that a consumerist model of education leads to a decline of educational standard instead to improve it and to maintain the quality in teacher education there is a need to emphasize the value, skill and knowledge model.

Keywords: Consumerist, Quality, Teacher Education.

1. Introduction

Education is the essential foundation of a prosperous and innovative society. The quality of education in a society is no less significant for economic development. The importance of education as the key to future success strengthens as competition among economies becomes more intense. Rapid privatization affects all aspects of society, including the status of higher education in society and how education is delivered and received. The quality of higher education especially teacher education is the main focus in the present era of privatization. The most effective pathway to improved student learning outcomes is the quality of teaching, especially the ability of teachers to motivate and facilitate such learning. *The quality of teacher is notably and positively correlated with pupils' attainment.* Teachers should encourage self-motivation and effective learning among students and to be a good role model in the cultivation of values in students.

India need to develop strong and appropriate human capital to stay in the forefront of competition and this will be affected by the quality of education which is provided. To achieve this one of the best ways is to enhance the standard of Teacher Education so as to train high quality teachers. To a large extent the quality of teachers is determined by who are attracted to enter the profession and how they are trained. The community expects teachers to be adequately knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and proficient in pedagogy. It is therefore very important that our Teacher Education programmes are of high quality.

2. Current Teacher Education Scenario in India: The rapid expansion of teacher education institutions and programmes during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. It has led to large scale mushrooming of substandard teacher education institutions. In the present context of privatization and commercialization most aspects of life are gradually being commodified and institutions of higher learning are increasingly forced to treat education

in terms of commerce : *as the buying and selling of goods and services*. This culture of consumerism has affecting the quality of teacher education as students are entering in the profession with materialistic aptitude. This aptitude of so called consumer student develops a tendency of expecting excellent grade as he has paid for it. Today students cease to see teacher education programme as a vehicle for the development of skill, knowledge and value. Instead, they come to see teacher education only in terms of the tangible benefits it provides, especially in the form of paper testimonial for future employment. Enrolment of students is also varying in the teacher education institutes. There are some institutes where the enrolment is near to full but the physical presence is nil. Such institutes are totally commercial rather than educational. There is public private dichotomy in teacher education. There is a pathetic indifference in public sector institutions and unchecked commercialization in private sector. The teacher education degrees conferred by the various universities and institutions are non-comparable. The powerful lobby of private education institutions have their way in running their teacher education shops. The evaluation of teacher trainees is another big joke in the teacher education institutions. The difference in the marks between high achievers and low achievers is negligible and the faculty members are least concerned in either encouraging the trainees to score high or to punish the lazy with low marks. Thus, most trainees who come into these institutions come out with flying colours. In short these students get grade rather than to earn them. No doubt, education is increasingly seen as a consumable commodity that increases one's chances of successfully competing in the global economy and achieving higher retribution. Education is increasingly seen as a means to an end as in economic terms rather than being seen as a valuable end in itself. A sign of this change in the field of teacher

education is degrading the quality of education as colleges have become vendors and students have become customers. (O'Meara 2001).

2.1. Quality framework and teacher education: Quality in teacher education leads to quality education in schools so it is a major concern to develop a professional and accountable prototype of Quality Assurance framework for initial teacher development. The teacher's role is not to sell a product or gratify customers. Instead it is to challenge students to provoke new ways of thinking, to make students uneasy with what they have taken for granted. The measure of achievement is not 'customer satisfaction' but intellectual intensification. The fast food approach to teacher education reveals only the tip of the educational iceberg to our trainees. The deeper, more difficult educational work is neglected. The teacher education programmes need to integrate in various skills and competencies and to prepare and develop student teachers with values, skills and knowledge. For quality enhancement in education it is necessary for the initial teacher preparation programmes that these are designed to emphasise inquiry, innovation, reflection, personal connection, mutual respect, teamwork and community in student teachers. Teaching is a dynamic and vivacious profession and teachers are lifelong learners with specific professional needs. The conceptual framework in the figure is built on the strategies and pedagogies that enable student teachers to reflect on the values dimension of teaching and to develop the skills, knowledge and values necessary for inclusive practice. Today the tendency of getting a certificate in reference of our qualification can do nothing for quality improvement of teacher education. It is the significant requirement of present that the skills and knowledge of teacher trainees should be developed in the context of values.

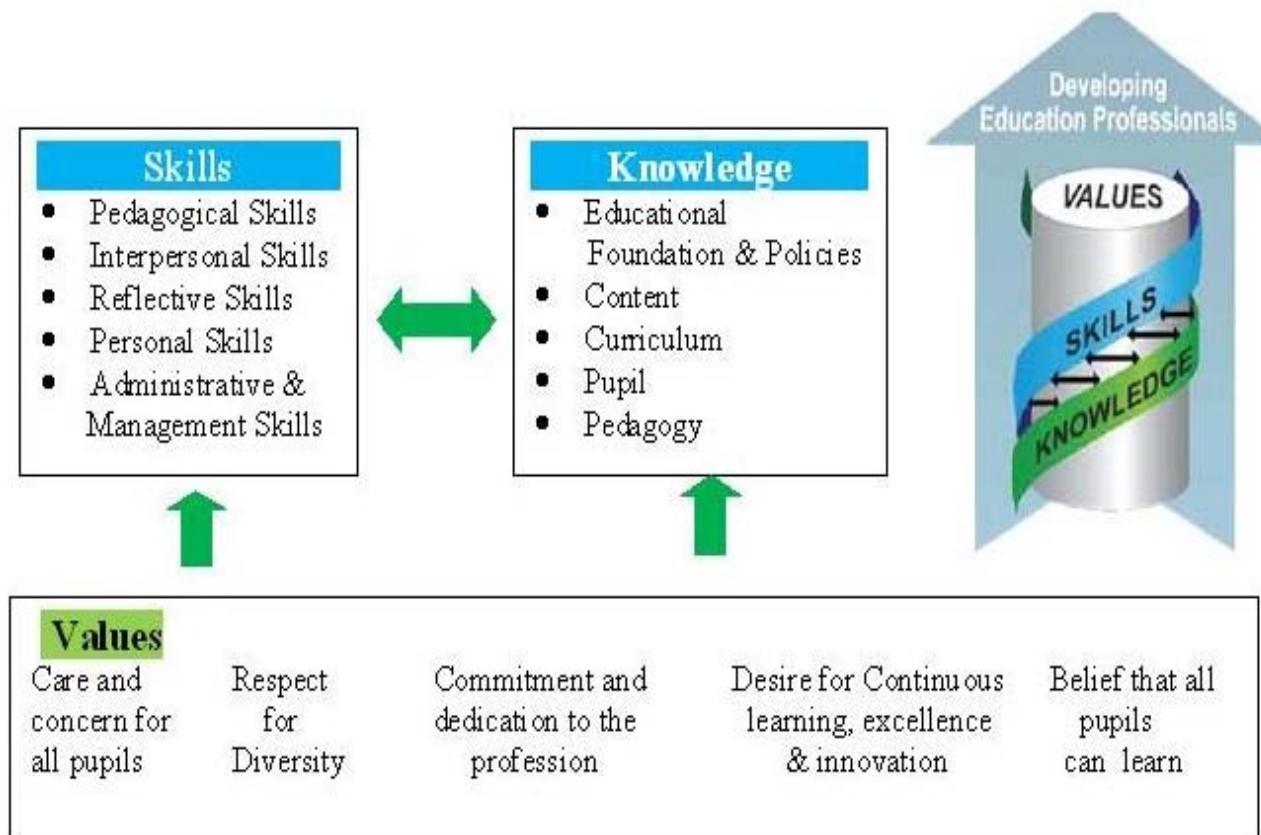


Fig 1: (Source: NIE'S VSK Framework)

The value, skill and knowledge Framework is significant as it is directing the education professional towards a common vision and commitment for values, principles and goals.

Quality is a complex concept. It centres on three major principles:

- *Control* refers to how resources are utilised for outcomes.
- *Accountability* explains the ways in which stakeholders' needs are met.

- *Improvement* refers to how the essential inputs, processes and outputs interact to meet goals and objectives (Harvey, 1998).

Assuring quality in education, to improve the present scenario of teacher education and teacher education institutes is most important. Stufflebeam *et al.*'s CIPP Evaluation Model (1971 & 2007) [2, 3], which is based on holistic approach, can be analysed in the context of teacher education quality improvement as shown in the following flowchart:

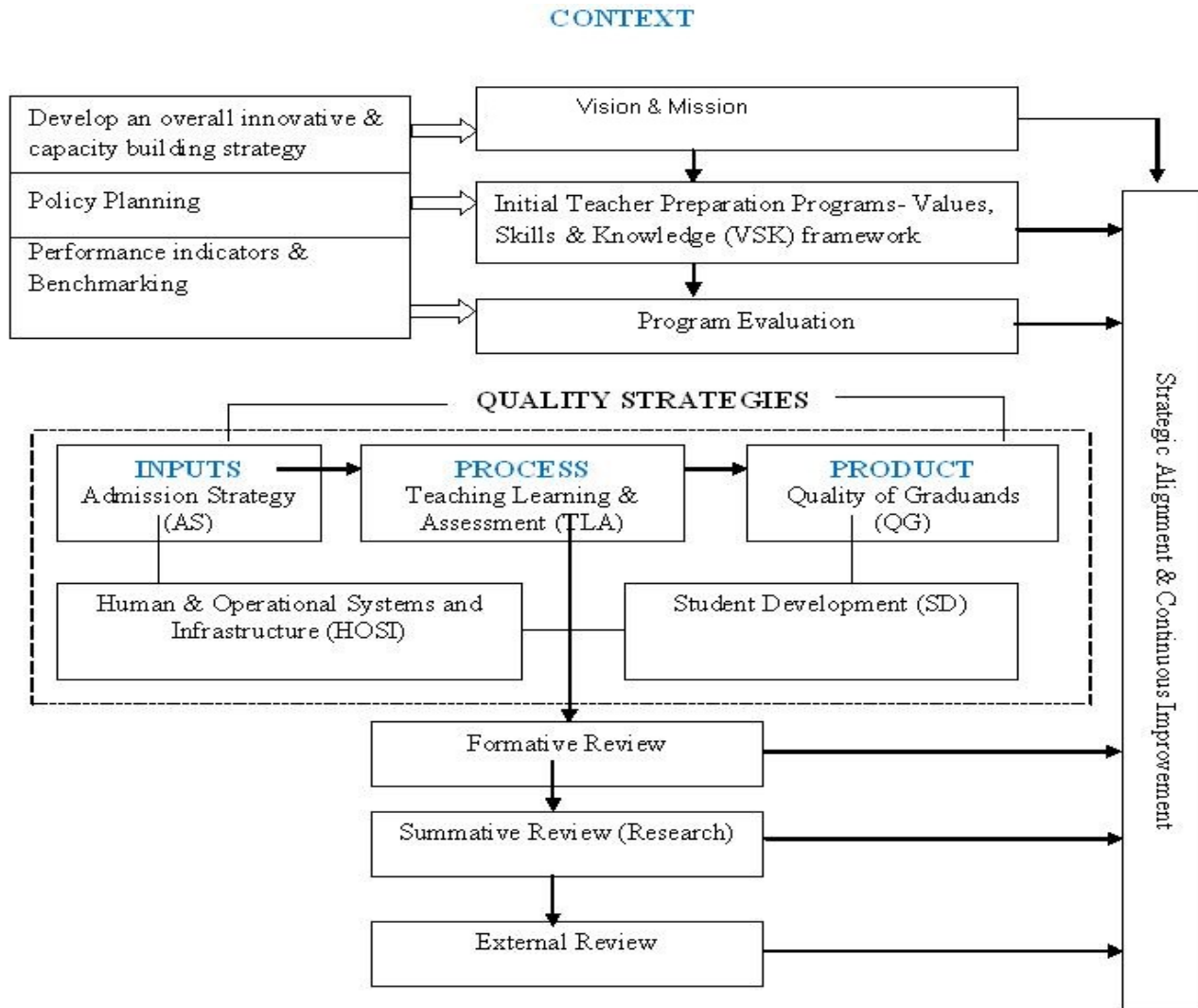


Fig 2: Source: (Stufflebeam *et al.* 1971, 2007)

- ✚ Context aspect of model is related to planning decisions that directs what should be done.
- ✚ Input aspect is related to structuring decision and gives direction how should be done.
- ✚ Process aspect is related to implementing decisions that makes aware about the doing condition: planned or not.
- ✚ Product aspect is concerned to recycling decisions that gives answer that it works or not.

Thus CIPP is an effective tool to provide long term quality strategy for improvement and innovation in teacher education

3. Conclusion

Spectre of consumerist culture is prevailing in the present scenario of teacher education and the growing institutions in this field with the aptitude of making money is affecting the

quality of education severely. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has observed that teachers are the single most significant element of the school system, and the country is already facing a severe scarcity of qualified school teachers at different levels. Therefore it is urgent to restore the dignity of teacher education and the institute which are providing it as well. Our primary focus should be maintaining the quality of teacher education instead to get and to provide excellent grade without any intense knowledge only for fulfilling the requirement of getting a job. When quality will be the main concern, we will have the qualified and committed teachers.

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