



## **Analyzing teacher education curriculum in India: Problems & prospects**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, the author have tried to analyze problems & prospects of the teacher education curriculum in India by looking at recommendations of essential educational committees, salient educational surveys, relevant research literature, along with researchers' experiences from the field of education and suggest some suitable reforms. Researchers have criticized teacher education curriculum for lagging in the present era of information and communication technology as they practice old non-contextual curricula. This paper is divided into two broad areas- first; it critically appraises curricular reforms till date. Second, it tries to analyze problems of contemporary teacher education curriculum. Analysis of the teacher education curriculum reveals that there is a lack of a curriculum which can help in preparing teachers for handling challenges produced by changing social context. Contemporary educational discourse calls for a constructive approach to teaching-learning which is only possible if teachers are trained to relate curriculum with the student's present context.

**Keywords:** prospects, contemporary, curriculum, communication

### **1. Introduction**

Education serves as the fundamental factor for personal and social development (Delors 1996) [8], but the researchers feel education cannot serve as a factor of development without an accurate curriculum. What should be taught and how it should be taught is an utmost important question (Apple 2004; Kumar 1992 etc.) [4, 16]. Initially, in the process of educational planning, curriculum was neglected. Curriculum work is as necessary as classroom activity (Klahn 1961) [15]. A relevant curriculum is a prerequisite for effective teaching-learning and, thereby, the success of any educational program. In India, the curriculum came into the focus of educational reforms in the late 1990s, but researchers in India neglected processes that shapes making of the curriculum (Nawani 2016) [36]. However, Pinar (2015) [38] attempted to analyze the curriculum studies in India through the work of Krishna Kumar, Poonam Batra, Suresh Ghosh, and others. Analyzing curriculum studies in India till date, the researcher observes four trends in the curriculum – the indigenous that focused on preparation for life, colonial that aimed to produce subservient class, third after independence that was mainly concerned with decolonizing education and fourth the contemporary that tries to make a balance between science, technology, and the society.

Besides curriculum, the other vital issue that makes education an important pillar of development and which was neglected in India is teacher education. Teachers take charge of the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, preparation of teachers becomes decisive. University Education Commission (1948-1949) criticizes Indian people for being slow to understand that professional preparation for education is as much important as preparation for other professions. Teacher education curriculum becomes crucial because it inculcates teaching effectiveness. Teaching effectiveness requires a curriculum which helps in the all-round development of pupil-teacher so that prospective teachers can meet the classroom challenges. Pre-service

teacher training plays a vibrant role in developing professional skills among prospective teachers which is essential for the successful accomplishment of school education. Segregation of teacher education from school education is one of the most critical problems of teacher education. Appraisal of teacher education curriculum has no meaning if it is not comprehended concerning the school curriculum. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) claims,

“the context, concerns, and vision underscoring that teacher education and school education have a symbiotic relationship and developments in both these sectors mutually reinforce the concerns necessary for qualitative improvements of the entire spectrum of education including teacher education as well” (NCFTE, 2009, p. 4).

Importance of school education can be understood through the words of Education Commission (1964-1966) “the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms” (Ministry of Education, 1966, p. 23) [28]. Since both are so interdependent, change in curriculum at any level of school education should correspond to the teacher education curriculum, as successful transaction of the school curriculum requires appropriate preparation of teacher. Report of National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) published in 2016 held teacher education responsible for falling standards of school education (National Policy On Education 2016) [35].

Signposting the centrality of the argument, in this paper, the authors have tried to take an appraisal of the teacher education curriculum in India by looking at recommendations of National Council of Teacher Education Curriculum Frameworks, consulting the findings of essential educational committees, salient educational surveys, relevant research literature, along with researchers' experiences from the field of education. The main objectives of this article are to assess the development of teacher education curriculum in independent India to propose an

ideal model of teacher education curriculum. Despite the recommendation of several commissions and undergoing various reforms, studies condemned the teacher education programme for its quality (Kumar 1998a). Analysis of different countries' teaching-learning practices delineates that a properly planned pre-service programme for teacher education is mandatory for the development of efficient teachers along with career-long learning opportunities (Pandey 2011) [37]. Teacher education reforms of various countries focus on restructuring the concepts of educators (Pandey 2011) [37]. Ministry of Education (1948-1949), Ministry of Education (1953), Ministry of Human Resource Development (1993) [23], National Council of Teacher Education Curriculum Frameworks (1997, 1988, and 1998), and many other commissions and committees laid stress on making teacher education curriculum more flexible, localized, making a balance between theory and practice and stressed the need for comprehensive evaluation process of student's performance. For a critical analysis of the teacher education curriculum in India, the first most vital thing is analyzing the trends of curriculum reforms in teacher education and then checking its applicability on the ground level. Since attention on teacher education was paid mainly after independence (mostly after the establishment of the National Council for Teacher Education), therefore this paper appraises its curriculum post-independence.

## 2. Appraisal of teacher education curriculum

Teacher education gained momentum in India after the foundation of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1973. NCERT reformed senior and senior secondary curriculum in 1975 and 1976 respectively. These reforms gave an impetus to NCTE for bringing subsequent changes in the teacher education curriculum. Thus, it developed a framework to cope up with the contemporary curriculum at the secondary and senior secondary level and do away with the shortcomings of the existing curriculum. The council observed teacher education institutions were isolated from national and academic life and the community. It was also not flexible for adapting to the demands of changing society. Subjective evaluation process added to the woes of the teacher education curriculum. Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NCTE 1978) recommended amending curriculum so that it could reflect national ideology and mitigate the problems of contemporary society through pedagogical courses.

Criticisms for the Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (1978) and the National Policy of Education (1986) set the foundation the Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NCTE 1988). The paradigm shift from rigid to flexible curriculum facilitated the introduction of more elective courses. Guidance and counseling course was added as a compulsory subject giving importance to learner's needs. The inclusion of this course paved the path of the learner-centered curriculum. Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (NCTE 1998) attempted to tackle changing global scenario due to globalization, privatization, and development of information and communication technology. It focused on preparing teachers with fresh outlook having radical and vibrant views to make them competent, committed, and motivated to teach. It emphasized to develop teachers as a life-long learner so that they can meet the varying demands of the student with

changing time and community structure. Thus, it led emphasis on the assimilation of theory and practice to develop the mental power of teachers. It called for making a balance between the aim of teaching, content, and methods of teaching. Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (1998) recommended adopting an interdisciplinary approach to teaching for better understanding. It suggested organizing activities like adult education programmes, environmental programmes, etc. for providing community experiences to pupil teachers.

Right to Education Act (2009) posed new challenges to teachers as this act contributed to the increasing diversity of the classroom by facilitating the inclusion of children from all the strata. Therefore, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE 2009) proposed multi-cultural education and teaching for diversity for sustainable and equitable development of society. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009) also proposed the inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum. It recognized the importance of teacher's aspiration and his/her understanding of self for preparing teachers with a positive attitude. This framework also suggested engaging teachers with curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks so that they can critically examine them without accepting them as it is. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2014) [37] observed the failure of teacher education programme in engaging subject knowledge. It could not see any development in methods of teaching. Moreover, there were no subject-specific methods. It also felt that one year B. Ed programme was not sufficient to prepare efficient teachers, thus urged for extending the duration to two years. It recommended the use of case study, simulation, role play and action research for making the programme problem-oriented and applied instead of theoretical. With this view, the framework focused on engaging pupil teacher in activities that can help in developing their insight. Therefore, it recommended field engagement of twenty weeks in place of simple practice teaching. This framework considered micro-teaching as the reductionist approach of teaching because it isolates skills whereas, for effective teaching, an appropriate combination of different expertise is required. Thus, it introduced EPC (Enhancing Professional Capacities) courses.

## 3. Problems of teacher education curriculum

Analysis of the National Curriculum Frameworks for Teacher Education right from 1978 till date evince need of keeping curricula linked with student's social and cultural milieu has been felt all along. Along with this, these frameworks always aspired to make teacher education curricula up to date with changing global and local scenario. It came up with innovative techniques to prepare the teacher for meeting challenges posed by changing identity and technology. Slow and sluggish implementation of recommendation is evident as it took many decades to extend the duration of B.Ed programme to two years and the semester system is still not implemented. Though these frameworks suggested reforms for making curriculum contextualized and the inclusion of interactive methodology and teaching material in teacher education curriculum despite these efforts, several issues have been found which compels the researcher to appraise teacher education curriculum.

### 3.1 Lack of contextualization in the teacher education curriculum

Thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi (1953) <sup>[12]</sup> and Krishna Kumar (2005) <sup>[19]</sup> asserted for contextualized curriculum- a curriculum which is closely associated with student's socio-cultural milieu. The contextualized curriculum includes the organization of knowledge; the operability of activities; and the pleasure of aesthetics; as its aim is not only teaching of knowledge but also the development of intelligence and quality training (Jilin 2018). Kumar (2008) <sup>[19]</sup> considers the reason behind the failure of the teacher training programme to bring change in teacher's practice lies in the inability of such programme in establishing the relation of teachers to their culture. National curriculum framework (2005) <sup>[5]</sup> emphasized contextualizing the curriculum, shifting focus from the textbook and making examination flexible so that it depicts classroom experiences (Aggarwal and Gupta 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>. Batra (2010) <sup>[6]</sup> pointed out very little attention has been paid in India on issues like the process of curriculum making, type of content selected, the method of teaching and inclusion of knowledge generated by people of lower strata.

Contemporary educational discourses call for a constructive approach to teaching-learning which is only possible if teachers are trained to relate curriculum with the student's present context. Kothari Commission reported that teacher education programme lacks vitality and realism; it overlooks the changing needs of the society and operates traditionally (Ministry of Education 1966) <sup>[38]</sup>. National Policy of Education criticized teacher education curricula for not being up to date and its unsuitability to contemporary society (MHRD 1986). Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education (1998) <sup>[31]</sup> attempted to address issues of changing world due to globalization and expansion of ICT and reflect changing condition across the globe. Pandey (2011) <sup>[37]</sup> also exhibits effort of teacher education curriculum to run parallel to changing identity.

Kumar (2005) <sup>[19]</sup> observes school children visiting the zoo and museum. He finds teachers and students were only focused on maintaining the order of the line and not on gaining knowledge from the excursion. This incidence not only reflects drawback of the school curriculum but also reflects inadequate preparation of the teacher. Thus, there is no meaning of changing school curriculum, if it is not accompanied by a subsequent change in teacher education curriculum (Batra 2005). She adds that school can only act as an agent of transformation for making society egalitarian and just if teacher education runs parallel to the school curriculum. Brinkmann (2015) also opines teacher's beliefs can adversely affect the process of the shift towards learner-centered curriculum, so it becomes essential to analyze the relationship between beliefs of teacher and educational practices. Amagi (1996) gave prime importance to pre-service teacher education for uplifting quality of teacher and schools. He suggests developing teaching material, textbooks, methods, and aids simultaneously with the curriculum so that teacher education curriculum could reflect the school curriculum.

Harris (as cited in Teasdale 2008) suggests compartmentalizing western and indigenous knowledge. Harris also believes that western knowledge should be learned but need not be internalized. Investigation of reports of various commissions, committees, and policies reveal emphasis is led on making teacher education curriculum

contextualized to prevent isolation of teacher education from the needs of the society (Pandey 2011) <sup>[37]</sup>. Despite these recommendations, studies delineate the failure of teacher education curriculum in addressing the requirements of contemporary society. The reason behind this failure is though NCTE Frameworks suggests useful reforms, they are not practically implemented.

International Commission on Education Report (UNESCO 1996) considers one of the significant tasks of education is to resolve the tension between various groups such as spiritual and the material, tradition and modernity, global and local, and between universal and individual. In South East Asia, English language is globalized rapidly which sidelines local languages and knowledge. Teasdale (2008) feels the need for representation of these languages and knowledge in a balanced way in the curriculum. He asserts outsiders cannot impose the amalgamation of the local languages with the global. Curriculum localization can only be truly achieved from within. He gives an example of Rarotonga seminar (1992) which was dominated by this theme. He affirms indigenous or local cultures must own all the aspects of the education of their people (ibid). Mahatma Gandhi and many other thinkers recognized the importance of indigenous knowledge in the generation of new knowledge. Gandhi (1953) <sup>[12]</sup> suggests imparting education for developing student's understandings of their culture and social system. Teachers need to be trained to link indigenous knowledge with the school curriculum so that students can relate to it and use it for scientific development. Nawani (2016) <sup>[36]</sup> reveals that the idea of community participation in education can only be successful if it includes social and local ethos of the specific region. Gupta (2015) also reports more or less the same story. He brings to light that early childhood curriculum is also based on western school as western pedagogy is considered good. The lifestyle of western children in comparison to non-western students differs a lot. He reveals early childhood teachers are disturbed by changing the lifestyle of children. Teacher education curriculum should include ways by which prospective teachers could handle this kind of situation tactfully. It is important to train teachers to teach those values that we want to instill in children. They should be prepared to inculcate among children respect and love for their culture and knowledge.

### 3.2 Unaddressed- diversity and difference

Analysis of teacher education curriculum manifests that there is a paucity of a curriculum which can help in preparing teachers for handling challenges produced by changing multiple modernities. Migration and development of science and technology are the two most important causes of changing modernity and students' identity. Migration is one of the most potent factors for change in social structure. In India, both inter and intrastate migration is very common. Studies have revealed education of students suffers a lot whether they migrate with their parents or stay behind (Smita 2008; Srivastava 2012) <sup>[42, 43]</sup>. One of the greatest ironies of teacher education reforms in India is its negligence towards migrant students. Social and cultural milieus of migrant students are very different from the rest of the students of their class. Teachers are not trained in dealing with diverse migrant students.

Consequently, migrant students could not relate to classroom activity. Though curriculum frameworks aspire

for preparing teachers who can understand the social and cultural needs of their students, none of these frameworks mentions the necessity of preparing teacher for migrant students. There is no provision to train teachers for catering diversity caused by migrant students. Dealing with difference created by the migrant student is crucial, and this need has been felt by researchers in other countries also like Salend *et al.* (1998) <sup>[41]</sup> reveal there is a scarcity of programs for migrant students with a disability in teacher education. They suggest including case study in teacher education programme so that teacher can get well acquainted with the diversity and intensity of problems faced by migrant students. They recommend using multiple resources, methods, instructional material, and activities to add variety in special teacher education curriculum so that prospective teachers can serve the special migrant students in better ways. Teacher education program in India should adopt a strategy like training teachers in other states for a few months apart from their native states so that they could be exposed to the social and cultural scenario of other states also. Training in the other state will help them in dealing with migrant students and will also make them flexible.

The inclusion of 25% student from the economically weaker section as per the Right to Education Act (2009) has contributed to the enhancement of diversity in the classroom. Researchers have highlighted problems faced by teachers due to this increased diversity (Pandey, 2011) <sup>[37]</sup>. It is not easy for teachers to meet the needs of these diversified classrooms. ASER (2016) reports a rise in school enrollment rate (this is mostly due to the Right to Education Act), but it also delineates poor performance of students in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Student's poor performance is directly or indirectly linked with the inadequate preparation of teachers because when students are admitted in schools, teachers must look after their educational performance. Poor performances of student could be related to the inability of teachers to cater to individual differences among students.

Another factor that enhances the diversity of the classroom is the languages difference, not only among different groups of the student but also between the teacher and the taught. If students would not be able to understand the language of their teacher, their learning will suffer. It is also not right to compel the student to learn a new language and forget their mother tongue because, with loss of language, culture is also lost which in turn results in linguistic deculturation (Raj & Raj 2004) <sup>[10]</sup>. Preservation and transmission of culture are also significant aims of education apart from vocational goals. Finding suggests the use of technology, practical classes along with theory classes during practice teaching, contextual curriculum, and development of skill to tackle problems caused by diverse culture and language. Raina (1999) <sup>[39]</sup> also criticized teacher education in India for not addressing cultural, linguistic, regional and geographical diversity. Optimum educational achievement is essential for proper integration of different minor and excluded groups in a society (Dronkers, Velden, & Dunne, 2012) <sup>[9]</sup>. Despite National Council of Teacher Education Framework (2009), recommendations for proficiency in language and development of abilities to meet the demand raised by RTE (2009), teachers education curriculum lags in terms of performance.

### 3.3 Mooring of Science and Technology and other pedagogical issues

Before independence, Indian writers paid much attention to philosophical and literary work in comparison to science (Ghosh 2013) <sup>[13]</sup>. However, curriculum frameworks for teacher education post-independence recognized the importance of science and technology and therefore made the recommendation for keeping pupil-teacher up to date with the latest science and technology. Despite these recommendations, no significant improvement is observed among prospective science teachers. This is because different subjects require different skills. Though pupil teachers are trained to use the subject-specific method, this does not serve the purpose altogether. Falling standards of education especially science education calls for revolutionizing the teacher training process. The Yashpal Committee (MHRD 1993) and the National Council of Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (2014) suggests extending the duration of teacher training to make the teacher education program practicum-oriented. Though stress is laid on practice teaching for the development of practical skills, there is no clear allotment of practical classes for science teacher during their training in schools. Consequently, the pupil science teacher completes their internship by taking only the theory class. Preparation of prospective science teacher should not be considered complete if they are not trained for practical classes. Various reforms have taken place, but none of them pays attention to the importance of practical class during practice teaching. Teaching demonstration method theoretically cannot solve the problem. Pupil-teachers need to demonstrate things practically.

Another issue with teacher education curriculum for science teacher is lack of indigenous perspective in it. Researcher and thinkers across the world recognize the importance of indigenous science and suggest including it in the curriculum. Therefore, it becomes essential to prepare teachers for understanding and imparting indigenous knowledge. National Council of Teacher Education Curriculum Framework (1998) recommends inculcation of skills for preparation of indigenous and low-cost material, but this practice is hardly observed during the teacher training process. There are various scientific equipment that can be prepared easily at low cost like the periscope, and the pendulum, etc., but prospective science teachers are not trained to develop such teaching aids. This type of craft work helps the student in understanding concepts and getting rid of monotonous learning. Therefore, pupil science teachers need to be taught skills of making small scientific apparatus. Teaching through craft will help in instilling skills in both teachers and taught. Government skill development programme 'Make in India' recognizes the importance of innovation and skillfulness. The success of this mission depends upon student's creativity which can be polished by their teachers.

Contemporary society lays much emphasis more on smart work than hard work. Teachers need to be trained to adopt the latest technology. To keep teachers up to date with technological advancement requires a lot of practical skills. Close observation of practice teaching by the researcher reveals that even in the present time, pupil-teacher hardly



uses technology for delivery of contents during classroom teaching. They are still limited to the use of chart papers as teaching aids. It is also evident through the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2016) which reveals receipt of Teaching-Learning Material grant has declined by approximately 83% in Bihar from 2011-2016. Teaching-learning material not only makes the teaching-learning process stimulating but at the same time, it helps in the clarification of the concepts. ASER (2016) also shows a decline in the use of the computer by students (from 4% in 2011 to 0.8% in 2016) in government schools Bihar. A similar condition is observed in many other provinces also. This kind of problems arises because teachers are not trained adequately to use technology for teaching assistance. These reports indicate the dire need for training pupil-teachers to use technology and modern teaching-learning aid. Prospective teachers cannot afford to lag technically. Therefore the teacher education curriculum should focus on the adoption of technology that enables prospective teacher to walk at the pace of changing society so that they could meet the expectation of their students.

The traditional method of teaching does not appeal to contemporary students. To maintain their interest in teaching learning process teachers need to incorporate interactive teaching aids. This not only arouses student's curiosity but also presents the real picture of the fact. E.g., in biology, a 3D image of an organ will help in better understanding of its structure than a mere diagram of that organ on chart paper. Similarly, technology helps in understanding concepts better in other subjects also. Therefore teachers need to be trained to make optimum use of technology during their training process. Maheshwari and Raina (1998) revealed that the use of interactive video technology helped a lot in improving the classroom practices and in-service education of teachers especially in developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, etc. Therefore, pupil-teacher should also be evaluated by teaching-learning material they use during their internship.

Time constraint and centrality of the curriculum provides minimal opportunity to pupil-teacher for their democratic participation in the process of training. This kind of participation is needed for the promotion of critical thinking at each level of the teaching-learning process. The need for critical thinking in the process of teaching and learning has been felt since long. Freire (2017) <sup>[11]</sup> calls for critical pedagogy for the revival of humanization. Curriculum frameworks (2009, 2014) also aspired for the development of human values among teachers which is only possible if pupil-teachers experience these values in due course of training. Therefore, there is a severe need for critical pedagogy in teacher education. Expecting critical thinking from school student is vain if the teacher lacks this kind of thinking. Introduction of EPC is significant steps towards this approach. Subjects like understanding the self and reflection from Drama and Art etc. were included to provide prospective teachers with ample opportunity to think critically. Since this concept is newly introduced, so it is very early to comment on its success or failure. However, the failure of other reforms due to improper implication warns teacher educators to prevent this attempt from getting failed.

#### 4. Epilogue

Our education system is guided by the centrally written curriculum which gives the teacher minimal scope to teach something that is demanded by immediate social settings and need of the individual child. The whole learning experience is predetermined and time constraint adds to the woes. Kumar (1998b) <sup>[19]</sup> calls for giving professional self-reliance to teachers. He believes the teacher should be given a role in syllabus preparation and should also be given the freedom to choose books. He considers textbook symbolizes authority under which the teacher must accept to work. Professional self-reliance will motivate the teacher to teach without any constriction of limited resources and time. All these require proper training of the teacher. Teachers should be trained to design curriculum keeping the diversity of classroom in mind. Teacher education curriculum should run parallel not only to school curriculum but also to the changing society.

Various education reforms took place post-independence, but till date, our education system has failed to incorporate formative ideas of Indian thinkers like Gandhi, Tagore, and Aurobindo, etc. in one curriculum. Indian thinkers had suggested for curriculum which includes not only social science but also science, yoga, sports, indigenous craft, Vedic knowledge, and international understanding. These suggestions should not only be implemented at the school level but also with the corresponding level of teacher education. Our education system views teacher education and school curriculum separately. One should not forget that the ultimate aim of teacher education is preparing teachers for teaching in school. The suggested model can help in developing an ideal teacher education curriculum which would satisfy the needs of the contemporary education system of the country.

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