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Contemporary Teacher Education: Issues, Reforms and Emerging Perspectives

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Abstract : Teacher's education is important programme to improve the quality of higher education.In a landmark directive towards ensuring quality teacher education, the National Council of Teacher Education has made sweeping changes from this academic session. It has increased the duration of B.Ed. programme from one year to two years with major changes in curriculum. However, the revision in the norms regarding duration of the course and curriculum is the result of extensive and exclusive debates and discussions. It has emerged as an idea that has been expressed at various forums over the years. Now that the execution phase has begun, the idea is to be analysed in terms of its actual feasibility. It is to be seen whether the prolonged course duration proves into historical transformation in the system of education or turns to be rather 'a not so preferable profession' in the era of professionalism and human capital. However, it is even more pertinent to understand why such changes were felt needed and what strategies have been evolved to implement the revisions effectively. So far the studies have established that the existing training programme does not provide adequate opportunities to the student teachers to develop competency because of the anomalies and defects in the system of implementation of the programme and curriculum of the programme.
Keywords: Teacher education programme,Issues.

Introduction: A student teacher should know the meaning of education, its objectives, the socio-cultural and politico-economics background, the principles that guide construction of curriculum etc. Teacher performance is the most crucial input in the field of education. Whatever policies may be laid down, in the ultimate analysis these have to be interpreted and implemented by teachers, as much through their personal example as through the teaching learning processes. We are on the threshold of the development of new technologies likely to revolutionize teaching in classrooms. But unfortunately, the process of updating curricula of teacher education has been very slow. Today teaching is a profession requiring specialization in terms of knowledge and skills. There exists a wide gap between theory and the knowledge and skills of teaching required in the actual classroom curriculum transaction. For this reason, a routine-bound teacher cannot act in accordance with the emerging needs unless he or she is trained and frequently oriented. One of the most important requirements to promote and strengthen education is the training of teachers who are the key resources in the reform, redirection and renewal of education. In this backdrop the present paper reflects upon the actual reasons of revision in the programme. The paper also focuses on various challenges and issues considerable enough in the implementation of the programme. Some of such challenges are increased financial burden on the parents of aspiring B. Ed. Students, setting up of enriched infrastructure to meet the needs of various curricular enhancements and most importantly the restructuring of teacher education curriculum that aims at all round human development. The paper tries to reflect upon the feasibility of the prolonged programme from the vantage point of the aspiring B. Ed. students and various stakeholders such as administrators, school managements, parents of aspiring candidates and curriculum designers.

Development of Teacher Education in India : The training of teachers assumes great significance in the educational system. Teacher education system is an important vehicle to improve the quality of school education. It is a continuous process. It is well recognized that the overall quality in education depends amongst other things on the quality of teacher and that a sound programme of profession education of teachers is essential. The Government of India realized the importance of Teacher Education as a result of which many reforms were brought out particularly after independence. Various committees and commissions have time and again made recommendations to bring about required changes in teacher education programme. The University Education Commission (1948) recommended that theory and practice of pre-service teacher education must support each other. The Secondary Education

Commission (1952-53) recommended the adoption of new techniques of evaluation and suggested that more capable and intelligent persons should be attracted to teaching profession. Education commission (1966) stated that the professional preparation of teachers had been recognized to be crucial for the qualitative improvement of education since the 1960s. In the year 1973, the government of India constitutes the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) to act as national advisory body on all matters relating to teacher education and review the progress plan scheme to ensure adequate standards in the field of Teacher Education. The expansion of pre service teacher education is impressive if one looks at the continuous growth in the number of teacher education institutes. From a mere 10 secondary teacher training institutions in 1948, the number increased to 50 in 1965 and 633 in 1995. These figures grew as high as 4868 in 2002 and 11712 in 2010. The significant revisions in the teacher education programmewere last recommended in National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education in 2009 and subsequently with amendment in the constitution to make Education a Fundamental Right, curricular reforms and duration of the programme were reviewed.

Issue of implementation of the two year programme: The primary issue that may emerge due to implementation of two year programme is of lack of interest among the students towards the B.Ed. course. Given the fact that two year programme would require higher financial burden on the parents of the aspiring student teachers, such parents are very likely to be reluctant to spend in the course. As far as the attitude of the students is concerned, it may be hypothesized that because of the prolonged duration and increased financial burden, students' participation in the B. Ed. Programme would go down. Importantly, the enrolment in various courses of Education discipline has been slightly fluctuating in the previous years. According to AISHE Report of 2011-12 the enrolment in Education discipline was 3.10%, which remained same in the session 2012-13. As concerns the data of 2013-14 the figures grew to 5.42% of the total enrolment in higher education. Though the pertinent data of 2015, the year in which two year B. Ed. Programme was launched is yet not available. It may be speculated as has been unofficially reported by number of B. Ed. Colleges across the country that the admission in B. Ed. Two year programme is going to be very scant. My visits as external examiner for B.Ed. practicals in couple of colleges affiliated to Kanpur University have revealed the ground realities of fewer admissions in the two year programme so far.

It is important to note that the attitude of the students who earlier got attracted towards the course and the profession was primarily guided by the possibility of easy access and short duration of the course. But now given the fact that the duration of the programme is prolonged and certain eligibility criteria is fixed for the entry in the profession, the students who found it an easy and attractive profession are likely to be reluctant. It has been observed that quite a few students have also dropped the course and most of them have reported the long duration of the course to be the reason for their withdrawal. Moreover, in the neo liberal and globalised world where human capital and professionalism is cherished, less number of students would get attracted towards a long and expansive course which leads to a low paid profession.

Implementation of Two Year B. Ed. Programme would also require great deal of infrastructural adjustments to meet the curricular requirements of the revised course. The revised curriculum as has been prescribed by the National Council of Teacher Education primarily requires the semester system to be in place, and the duration of teaching practice to be increased to not less than six months. Considering these revisions, there would be a need of more number of faculty members, experimental schools attached to various colleges, enriched library to fulfill the additional course requirements and proactive administration to execute the innovative programme more efficiently. As far as the new course curriculum is concerned, it has been observed that the curriculum constructed by NCTE is focused around complete personal and professional development of the pupil teachers. Drawing upon the constructivist approach of teaching, various changes have been called for. As has been earlier reported by various studies that one year B.Ed. programme is insufficient in realizing the goals of education, the new course focuses on the knowledge construction. Now the idea of learning is not remaining to be a passive process, as it has been established that learner its active himself in the process of learning. Courses like Gender and Education, Art Education and Curriculum Development are some of the newer additions making the B.Ed. course to be much more comprehensive and sensitive towards the present social scenario. However, it would be interesting to observe whether such courses are also transacted with adequate vigor and sensitivity. It is also to be seen whether the combination of theory and practical works towards the intellectual as well as the professional development of the pupil teachers.

Reasons for revisions in teacher education programme: An immense writing has appeared on educational quality in recent years, examining factors that help improve education and proposing ways to promote better learning in schools. The issue of quality has become critical in many countries. In countries like India where with constrained resources, the successful effort to increase access to basic education has often led to declining quality of education. In a search for the factors that promote quality, programs as well as the literature increasingly emphasize teachers, schools, societies and communities as the engines of quality, with teacher quality identified a primary focus. The rapid changes in society led to teachers facing new and complex issues, resulting in changes in the area

of teacher education. Advances in technology have also posed an issue for future educators. Many educators have focused on ways to incorporate technology into the classroom. Television, computers, radio, and other forms of mass media are being utilized in an educational context, often in an attempt to involve the student actively in their own education. Hence, many teacher education programs now include courses both in technology operation and how to use technology for education purposes. With the coming on of distance learning utilizing mobile technologies and the internet understanding of technology or we can say e-learning has become crucial for new teachers in order to keep up with the knowledge and interests of their students in these delivery systems. The emergence of a networked knowledge economy presents both opportunities and challenges for teacher education Considering these changes in the socio economic and political system of the nation, revisions in the existing teacher education programme appears to be the immediate need of the hour.

Conclusion: Revisions and experimentations in the existing B.Ed. programme was felt needed and required immediate implementation. However, it's too early to reach to any conclusions about the impact of the programme, as it has only been a few months that the revised programme is in practice. Various curriculum frameworks have time and again pointed out that teacher education programme have direct impact on education system of any country. Therefore, pedagogical revisions and addition of new courses in the existing programme would certainly result in revolution in the education system. It may be concluded that changes in teacher education programme was indeed required at the ideological as well as practical level. The new course should focus around critical pedagogy and realize the agency in every individual learner so that the true meaning of education may be realized. The new course should produce sensitive and innovative teachers trained in their profession of guiding children in building new knowledge. There is a need of effective campaigning of the new and prolonged programme which can attract quality students to pursue teaching as their profession. It is important to highlight that the new course should be implemented efficiently by all the stake holders involved. Though, critics point to the rundown nature of education and the public has accepted that it is because the teachers shirk work and are the problem. This decline in the status of academics has enabled the politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen to intervene even though they neither understand the ground realities nor accept their own role in running the system down. Therefore, it is expected that all those who have stake in the system of education should contribute in their specific and significant ways. In brief, if talent is to be nurtured, the revised Two Year B. Ed. Programme must overhaul the entire education system based on the ground realities and a holistic perspective. For this, diverse academic voices need to be heard rather than only of those at the top and who have actually been creating the problem and whose agenda may not be real reform.

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