



ROLE OF SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME IN ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES AMONG BUDDING TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT :

Teacher Education programme is at the crossroads today as the quality of teachers is dwindling which in turn affects the whole education sector of our nation. No nation can neglect the teacher. Education as it has far reaching consequences in the overall development of a nation. Teacher education programme was conducted in isolation away from the actual teaching-learning situations in the past. Extensive research was done through various committees for revamping the teacher education programme. Teaching profession is based on a systematized body of knowledge and has distinctive. NCTE has drafted a curriculum framework for two-year B.Ed programme. This curriculum framework is quite comprehensive comprising both theory and rigorous field engagement with the child, school and community. All the courses have in-built field based units of study and projects. Teacher educators are required to transact this course through a variety of approaches such as case studies, group presentations, projects, discussions on reflective journals, observations of children, and interactions with community in multiple socio cultural environments. This curriculum framework has emphasised on enhancing professional competencies among BEd students through activities. This curriculum framework has suggested activities for each course so that student-teacher may get actively involved in teaching learning and reflect on their experiences. In this way, the student-teacher will apply constructivist approach and contribute in construction of knowledge instead of mere note memorisation of content; the student-teacher will be able to understand the learner, text books & children's literature, assessment in a holistic manner in the existing socioeconomic, political context. They will be able to understand that teaching is not confined to just delivering a forty(40) minute lecture but broadly to work for the holistic development of child and make him/her a critical and creative thinker.

The present paper deals with the important components of teacher education, both theory and practical. It sheds light on one of the major components of teacher education programme, i.e., school internship, its present position and its prospects in moulding an aspirant teacher to excel in the teaching profession.



KEYWORDS : *Teacher Education, School Internship, Profession, Competencies, NCTE.*

INTRODUCTION

National council for Teacher Education (NCTE) through its curriculum framework: Two-year B-Ed. programme (2014) has divided the B. Ed. curriculum into 11 courses which comprises theory and projects plus 4 EPC (Enhancing professional competencies) courses and one internship program. These courses are spread over

two year duration. NCTE has suggested various course-wise activities in a very comprehensive way. These activities if planned in a proper way and implemented properly can help in enhancing professional competencies among budding teachers.

Teaching profession is based on a systematized body of knowledge and has distinctive problems of practice. These problems arise out of the need of educational policy, curriculum construction and the strategies of teaching and learning. This requires specialized knowledge in the area concerned in relation to its historic development, its psychological relationship, its philosophical presuppositions and implication and social contexts. The professional preparation of teachers also requires that the teacher should have a good mastery over subject matter knowledge. If the teacher does not know his subject matter well, his foundational study will not carry him further. He will not be able to teach with confidence and will not be able to develop enthusiasm for knowledge of the subject matter among his students. Professional preparation also requires that he should be able to present the subject matter before the students according to their age group and interests. To produce teachers with the needed qualifications, special efforts must be devoted to making the teacher education programme both practical and adaptable to various situations. An instructional model was given by Taher A Razik in his proposal to UNESCO (1970) on teacher training and curriculum development for developing countries. According to Razik, the purpose of teacher training programme is to generate effective instructional managers, i.e., people who know how to promote learning among pupils. This is the first objective and the next step is to determine how to achieve it.

This requires four interrelated steps:

1. Specify the desired pupil outcomes.
2. Specify the ways each outcome can be realized.
3. Specify the competencies needed by teachers to provide the conditions for the realization of the outcomes.
4. Specify the ways the necessary teacher competencies can be developed."

Apart from this the teacher may need non-instructional competencies to perform effectively.

For example, teachers have to deal with pupils and parents, may have to work with the community or with the research teams. The content of the teacher education programme has to be derived from the combination of instructional and non-instructional competencies. Besides, the teacher education programme must be flexible as the student teacher constantly interacts with the programme. There should also be room for special lectures, films, real life settings, laboratory simulations and micro teaching experiences as they are all part of the current educational practice.

The Importance of School Internship Programme

Internship is a new experience in teaching profession though it has been in practice in other professions. In India, Regional Colleges of Education have done pioneering work in this. Internship is considered as an important method in which the gap between the student teacher and the actual school setting is reduced. Here the trainees get ample opportunities to observe and participate in the entire work of the school, the professional activities of the teacher both in and outside of the classroom. A productive and fruitful internship is possible only when there is co-operation between the schools and the training institutions. It should be a joint responsibility of the school, the training institute and the State Departments. The Department of Education should recognise the selected schools for school internship as co-operating schools and allocate additional funds for maintenance and equipment. The internship programme may be productive if the foundations phase and laboratory phase are successfully completed by the student teacher. When we consider the tremendous changes that has come in the field of education, the meaning of education itself has become more complex. It includes the bringing forth of all the individual potentialities in a child. Accordingly, the challenges faced by the training institutions also have become complex. Teachers are to impart education for life to their pupils. Extensive researches were undertaken to revamp the teacher

education curriculum in order to cater to the present day challenges. One of the major challenges was to equip the student teachers to transmit the values needed for the Indian society. They should learn the art of teaching but should not lag behind in bringing desirable changes in the attitudes of children. Suggestions for improvement are numerous. Much debate has been generated regarding the respective place of theory and practice in the training of teachers. Many innovations in teaching practice like micro-teaching have been researched upon. It may also be pointed out that over emphasis on developing skills at the cost of foundations phase will be self-defeating. Teachers should acquire all the needed skills for imparting instruction, but should also have the basic understanding as to what these skills are used for. Unfortunately in the process of acquiring skills, student teachers and the colleges neglect the vital aspect as to the type of citizens we would like to build for our nation. In most cases, a student teacher after successful completion of the programme enters the teaching profession and for him all theories he learnt remain as theories because they are not relevant to the practical situations in many of our Indian schools. The over-crowded and ill-equipped schools with inadequate teaching staff, large classrooms with heavy loaded syllabi with focus on written examination do not permit the student teacher to implement the methods and techniques he had learnt during the course of his training. Indian schools do not allow the adoption of methods established in an altogether different atmosphere. This shows that there is room for evolution of newer methods and techniques that are suitable for Indian school situations.

NCTE was successful in bringing forth the framework for the new B.Ed. curriculum, which is a two year course, based on the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2010. The following are the important dimensions of the new approach to teacher education as given in the Framework by NCTE.

- ❖ Reflective practice to be the central aim of teacher education.
- ❖ Student teachers should be provided opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas.
- ❖ Developing capacities for self-directed learning and ability to think, be critical and working groups.
- ❖ Providing opportunities for student-teachers to observe and engage with children,
- ❖ Communicate with and relate to children.

The main problem of the colleges of teacher education is with respect to the implementation are

Most of the colleges lack adequately qualified staff to implement these changes. Adequate funds are also not provided for the implementation of these changes. Coupled with this are the inertia and resistance of staff to deviate from the traditional modes followed by the colleges of teacher education. It is important to mention here that a large number of colleges of teacher education do not have experimental schools attached to them. They are at the mercies of secondary schools which may or may not offer them any co-operation or facilities. The report on 'Quality Indicators for Teacher Education' by Commonwealth of Learning, Canada and National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bangalore, India, given in February 2006 considers 'school experience programme' as one of the quality indicator in teacher education programme. Indicator 20 states that – 'The school based experiences are comprehensive and include experiences in performing various functions of a teacher. There exists clarity about the multifarious roles and functions of a teacher. The student teacher is provided with opportunities to perform and practice them in accordance with their relative importance.' A teacher has to perform various roles and functions in a school apart from teaching. A quality teacher education programme provides experiences for a student teacher to learn how to perform them. Teaching skills practice is an inseparable component of teacher education. The practice and experience inputs are followed by feedback, reflection and follow-up. There exists an arrangement for feedback from the supervisor and peers, reflection by the student teacher and follow-up with respect to practice and experience inputs.

B.Ed- Two Year Curriculum- Activities related to School Internship Course3

This is a core course and draws its theoretical frames from psychology, philosophy, sociology, and language Learning. It offers a site for prospective teachers to reflect on and critique notions of learning and teaching that they have formed from their own experience, and to move beyond them (Olson & Bruner, 1996). Learning encompasses many dimensions: Knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, attitudes and habits. Student-teacher will understand theories of learning as conceptualised currently within psychology and cognitive science (Mukunda, 2009). (Piaget, 1997; Vygotsky, 1997). Learning will emphasise on centrality of curiosity, interest, active engagement and inquiry at all levels. Student-teacher will engage theoretically and through observation with the notion of learning as construction of knowledge (NCERT, 2005; Philips, 1995).

Reflection on learning will therefore have the following broad components:

- Understanding learning: socio-cultural and cognitive processes
- Understanding the learner
- Learning in and out of school

Activities :

- ✓ The student-teacher will investigate the differences and connections between learning in school and learning outside school (Rampal, 2003; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacassa, & Goldsmith, 1995).
- ✓ Student-teacher will find out what powerful learning in a classroom can be. They will also be able to develop analytical tools to understand that learning.
- ✓ Student teacher will analyse teaching as a profession, reflect on their beliefs and practices
- ✓ Student-teacher will visit schools and other field sites to analyse a variety of records of learning and teaching.

Course5

This course will enable student-teachers to reflect on the nature and role of disciplinary knowledge in the school curriculum, the paradigm shift in the nature of discipline, with some discussion on the history of the teaching of subject areas in schools (Montuschi, 2003; Porter, Porter & Ross, 2003). School education is based on certain disciplinary areas like Language, Maths, Social Sciences and Sciences etc. Disciplines and school subjects are products of history and geography-they emerged in particular social, political and intellectual contexts, especially over the last two centuries, and have been constantly redefined and reformulated (Goodson & Marsh, 2005).

Activities

- Student-teacher may be given an assignment on 'theory of content'-how the content was selected, framed in the syllabus, and how it can be transformed so that learners construct their own knowledge through it.
- Student-teacher will complete a project by investigating the role of experience of children, their community, their natural curiosities or even the methods of study of the subject on the development of content for the subject.
- A project on examination of text books, curriculum and syllabus from learner point of view and need of including practical knowledge, community knowledge, intuitive or tacit knowledge etc.
- A project on-how can school subject address issues of social reconstruction.

Internship tasks

- ✓ Student-teacher will prepare units and lessons through thematic approach in a holistic manner.
- ✓ Student-teacher will identify the concepts which the children bring to the classroom from their environment and experience, given their diverse backgrounds and interests. They will investigate-how learning takes place among children in particular contexts and the scaffolding a teacher and peers can provide.
- ✓ Student-teacher will critically examine teaching-learning process that incorporate enquiry, discovery, conceptual development, activity based learning etc. within the classroom.

Practicum Course work as given by NCFTE 2010

Student teachers need to get hands-on experience of designing assessment methods that are qualitative in nature and assess children's developing capacities to think and solve problems rather than to recall. Tasks of formulating different type of questions, studying their impact in terms of learner performance and learning grasp in the classroom could be undertaken consistently. Systematic recording of learner's errors, examining them in the light of empirical research and attempts at leading learners towards newer ways of thinking need to be closely recorded and discussed with faculty.

School Internship or Practice Teaching

It is common knowledge that practice teaching which constitutes the most functional part of the teacher preparation has suffered severe neglect and dilution in quality. The common complaint is that theory dominates the curriculum and practice teaching continues to suffer from inadequacies of different kinds such as:

- ✚ It follows a mechanical routine – observation, micro teaching, teaching practice and examination
- ✚ Operates with rigid lesson plan formats
- ✚ Inadequate mentoring and supervision
- ✚ Exhibits no original thinking
- ✚ Lacks variety and context specificity in teaching.

The major drawbacks of the current model of teaching practice are:

- ❖ Current practices in teacher education takes the school curriculum as 'given' and train teachers to adjust to the needs of the existing school system through fastidious planning of lessons in standard formats, fulfilling the ritual of delivering the required number of lessons.
- ❖ Repeated 'practice' in the teaching of a specified number of isolated lessons is considered a sufficient condition for professional development.
- ❖ There is no opportunity for teachers to examine their own biases and beliefs and reflect on their own experiences as part of classroom discourse and enquiry.
- ❖ Theory courses have no clear articulation with practical work and ground realities.
- ❖ The evaluation protocol is too theoretical, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehensiveness.

It is obvious that in imparting professional rigour to the preparation of teachers, the practice of Teaching and associated rigorous theoretical study play a crucial part. It is the effectiveness with which the multiple components of field learning – getting to know the school, observing children, observing teaching and learning in real classroom contexts, practise teaching, developing capacities to think with educational theories and applying concepts in concrete teaching-learning situations, managing classroom learning, evaluating learners and providing feedback, learning to work with colleagues, reflecting on one's own professional practice – are drawn upon to provide appropriate learning experiences for the student teacher that is critical to the education of teachers.

It can be seen that any attempt towards reform of current practices and design of innovative approaches in practice teaching should begin with an understanding of the place of teaching practice in the overall scheme of things. The practice of teaching constitutes the hub of the multiple and varied activities comprising the total programme of teacher education. It is interconnected with theoretical study, field work and practicum and a wide range of institutional experiences involving school students, teachers, student teachers and mentor teacher educators. In a way, it acts both as the evaluation tool for effective teacher education as well as its critical quality indicator.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY NCFTE

NCFTE considers 'School Internship' as sustained engagement with schools, as a partnership model, teaching and participating in school activities, recording observation of learners, analysis and reflection on teaching, developing and maintaining teaching-learning resources, developing unit plans and maintaining reflective journals. It envisages 4 days of teaching for a period of 12-20 weeks, including an initial one week of classroom observations; case studies, classroom research, development of learning resources.

A sustained contact through internship would help teachers to choose, design, organize and conduct meaningful classroom activities, critically reflect upon their own practice through observations, record keeping and analysis and develop strategies for evaluating student's learning for feedback into curriculum and pedagogic practice. The school would benefit from such an alliance in terms of witnessing possibilities of unconventional pedagogies. In this process of internship, teacher trainee develops new materials for teaching-learning which can become valuable resource for the regular teachers of the school.

The internship needs to be worked as a partnership model with the school rather than a continuation of the current model of practice during which the trainees merely use the school for their own 'formal degree requirements. 'The school internship programme provides the platform for the interns to give expression to their learning while planning and reflecting on their own practice.

The Sustainable Model of School Internship Programme

A teacher has multifaceted roles to perform to be an effective teacher. He should be a manager of classroom instruction and should also act as a learning facilitator. To actively manage these roles, the teacher requires competencies and resources. A teacher may face certain difficulties in the roles and tasks he is supposed to carry out. It may be a specific problem in a particular situation of the student teacher or context-specific problems related to students' motivation, learning, behaviour etc. The teacher should develop innovative strategies and practices to solve his day-to-day problems. For overall development of children, a teacher should provide the child varied educational and aesthetic experiences. He is also supposed to act as a counsellor to parents and the community for the betterment of children.

Keeping in view of the different roles a teacher has to perform, the school internship programme should include the following factors for a sustainable model:

- ✓ Observation of demonstration lessons by teacher educators and peers followed by discussions.
- ✓ Screening of videos of exemplary teaching sessions by experts followed by discussions.
- ✓ One week of actual classroom observation in the cooperating school. Trainees should observe the teaching of reputed and experienced teachers.
- ✓ Classroom teaching of 15-20 weeks in varied contexts such as teaching in large size classes, multi grade classes, rural and urban schools and mixed ability classes.
- ✓ Participation in all school activities – school assemblies, co-curricular activities including various competitions, language club activities, PTA meetings, guidance and counselling sessions for students and parents etc.
- ✓ Innovating teaching-learning materials where traditional methods fails.
- ✓ Besides these, the student teachers should be well versed in various skills like black board writing skills, use of A/V aids, and use of ICT etc.

CONCLUSION

The teacher preparation is the joint responsibility of the teacher education institutions and the practising schools. Workshops should be arranged to the school staff for the proper implementation and success of school internship. Therefore, the Student-teacher will identify the 'barriers to learning and participation, and help the schools move towards positive practices. Student-teachers will be required to introspect about their teaching from time to time.

The school teachers should act as mentors to practising teachers. Training should also be done in proper evaluation of the trainee in both instructional and non-instructional activities. Self-assessment and peer evaluation is also important in the success of the programme.

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