

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE: INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Quality is essentially the product of adequate investment of capital, talent and hard work. Quality is not a destination; it is a continuous journey. With globalization and the nation moving towards implementation of the provisions of GATS, our education sector has no other way than to adopt the mantra of quality for its survival. The momentous developments and rapid advances in the field of education and training of teachers and the revolutionary changes in the modes of imparting and receiving instructions pose multitudes of challenges for the teacher educators and institutions. A teacher in an information society and technological age must have commitment to the learner, commitment to the society, commitment to the profession, commitment to achieve excellence and commitment to basic human values. The paper is qualitative in nature and the Researchers have made an extensive study of the related articles, journals and books only to explore how excellence can be achieved in teacher education.

Key Words: Excellence, teacher education, quality.

INTRODUCTION

Quality and excellence are the keywords today. There is an overwhelming concern about the quality of education especially in the developing countries like India. Kothari Commission (1964-66) unequivocally held that the quality, competence and character of teachers to be the most significant factors, influencing the quality of education and its contribution to national development. Quality of school education is doubtless the direct consequence and the outcome of the quality of teachers and the teachers' education system. Twenty-first centuries has witnessed phenomenal explosion of knowledge and application of information and communication technology. Besides, new concepts like liberalization, privatization and globalization have added new dimensions to education. A teacher in an information society and technological age must have commitment to the learner,

commitment to the society, commitment to the profession, commitment to achieve excellence and commitment to basic human values (NCTE 1998). Therefore, quality improvement and excellence of teacher education programme is now considered a sine qua non for quality education. At present there is persistent strong demand for the search for quality and excellence in teacher education programmes which can infuse in future teachers a set of desired competencies, values and sense of commitment and willingness to perform.

Quality is essentially the product of adequate investment of capital, talent and hard work. Quality is not a destination; it is a continuous journey. With globalization and the nation moving towards implementation of the provisions of GATS, our education sector has no other way than to adopt the mantra of quality for its survival. Unless quality is brought into our education sector, it is going to suffer a major setback in the present race of competition. Nation has to keep on upgrading the quality of teacher education on a continuing basis. Over the last number of years, Govt. of India has made significant steps forward to develop and promote excellence in teacher education. Apex national bodies like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) joining hands to give a new deal to teacher education is a welcome development to evolve more appropriate models of teacher education comparable with the best practiced elsewhere in the world.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION (NCTE)

The momentous developments and rapid advances in the field of education and training of teachers and the revolutionary changes in the modes of imparting and receiving instructions pose multitudes of challenges for the teacher educators and institutions. Resistance to move with time and technology from various quarters and the lack of systematic awareness of the national and global challenges have created a lot of imbalance on facilities, standards and quality of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), just as in any other sectors of education. The Indian Parliament appreciated the role of quality teacher education in providing quality teachers for quality school education and passed NCTE Act 1993 for setting up of the NCTE as a statutory body.

The Act has given to the Council statutory powers for framing regulations required for planned and coordinated development of teacher education system throughout the Country for the regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards and issues connected with the professional role of teachers. But, the responsibility of regulating quality of teacher education through norms and standards came to the NCTE when teacher education system had already seen its mushroom growth. Since the inception of the NCTE, regulations have been framed from time to time for carrying out the functions assigned to it in the Act. It has brought forth

Curriculum Frame work for Quality Teacher Education in 1998, the Secondary Teacher Education Programme the first set of norms and standards in 1995, second in 1998 and the third in August 2001, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) in 2009 and recently Recognition Norms and Procedures Regulation 2014. These regulations broadly cover qualifications for appointment of teachers for different stages of school education, the norms and standards for professional development of teachers and teacher educators through teacher education programmes, procedure for grant of recognition to institutions by the Regional Committees for conducting these programmes through face-to-face and distance education modes, fixation of fees etc.

The professional profiles of teachers are based on the tasks to be performed by them. The curriculum of professional programme is a road map available to TEIs for transforming students, having the required entry qualifications into the teachers as per the profile. The norms and standards lay down the guidelines for setting up an institution with the minimum facilities required for transacting the curriculum effectively. The NCFTE (2009) promises to translate the vision into reality and prepare humanistic and reflective teachers that has the potential to develop more professional teachers and improve the quality of education.

In operational terms NCTE recognition process ensures that an institution, which wants to start programme in teacher education; possess the essential physical and instructional infrastructure for developing skills and competencies through effective transaction of the curriculum of that programme. Broadly, the regulations lay down the admission eligibility, calendar of instructional activities to be arranged during the course, qualifications of teachers for the course and the instructional facilities such as the classrooms, laboratories, library, hardware and software required for using online and offline learning resources etc.

NCTE norms and standards ensure the necessary conditions required for transaction of the programme', but whether a recognised institution is effectively transacting the programme can be best assessed by the potential employers of the products of that institution and the examining body of that course. The employers would look for the competencies and skills, which the professional programme is expected to develop and the examining body ensures through a system of assessment the level of attainment of the curricular objectives. One of the reliable indicators of the quality of pre-service TEI is that of the acceptance of its products by the school system, as it would employ only those students of that institution as teachers who meet its requirements. Thus, the quality of performance of its alumni establishes the reputation of TEL It may be appreciated that the NCTE determines the norms and standards for a programme by consulting experts and the existing institutions running that programme. It has evolved a system of self appraisal by its recognized institutions. Feedback received from the institutions through their annual Self Appraisal Reports (SARs) reveals the ground realities of implementation of

the conditions of recognition and is used as input for making the norms and standards for raising the quality of the programme realistically.

NAAC AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Teaching being a profession and teacher being a professional, the system of assessment and accreditation of teacher education institutions by an independent body such as NAAC is being made an effective instrument for raising quality of teacher education programmes and for enabling institutions in using their physical and instructional infrastructure optimally and professionally. For achieving these professional objectives an MOU was signed on 16th August 2002 by the NCTE and the NAAC. Recently it was renewed and signed on 14th August 2014. As follow up activities to the MOU, the NCTE and the NAAC have developed a manual for self-assessment of TEI, constituted a steering group for planning and monitoring assessment and accreditation of TEI and, planned the 'Self-appraisal and Accreditation of TEIs as a Development-oriented Process'. The twin process of assessment and accreditation are inseparable as well as intertwined. Assessment comes first because its outcome is the basis of accreditation. Self-appraisal has tremendous contribution in promoting objectivity, self-analysis, reflection and professionalism in TEIs.

The methodology of accreditation includes three stage processes for assessment and accreditation (1) preparation of the SAR by the TEI for submission to NAAC, (2) validation of the SAR by peers visiting the institution and, (3) the final decision of NAAC based on the SAR and the recommendations of the team of peers.

The first and the most important step in the process of assessment and accreditation is the preparation of the SAR by the institution along the guidelines formulated jointly by NAAC-NCTE. The SAR consists of an institutional profile and a self-analysis based on six criteria. It is an internal exercise by the institution, which is expected to be carried out with honest introspection. It aims at providing an opportunity for the institution to measure its effectiveness and efficiency, and to identify areas of its strengths and weaknesses. TEIs who really understand themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, potentials and limitations - are likely to be more successful in carrying out its educational mission than the ones without such self-awareness. Self-appraisal is thus envisaged as the backbone of the process of assessment and accreditation. It is through the SAR that one understands the institution. Since self-appraisal informs and orients the peer team during the visit to the institution, hence the institution needs to present the factual details of all the aspects of its functioning, viz., the inputs, processes and the product generated, in a meaningful way.

On receiving the SAR from the TEI, the accreditation agency decides on the panel of peers and informs the

institution. If the institution has any reservation against any of the members, it can record its objection, without suggesting alternatives. Choosing from among the other panel members, NAAC constitutes the peer team. Before the commencement of the visit, the peer team meets to discuss their observations based on the SAR. Notes are compared and a list of strengths, weaknesses and areas for further probing are identified. During the visit to the institution the peer team looks for evidences for validation of the SAR. The peers interact with the various constituents of the institution and also check documentary evidence to understand the functioning of the institution. At the end of the visit, based on the SAR and the evidences gathered the peer team makes a collective judgment on the accreditation status of the institution. A copy of the descriptive report is handed over to the head of the institution. The grading of the institution by the peer team and the descriptive report are placed before the Executive Committee of NAAC. The Executive Committee reviews the report and takes a decision about the grade of the institution valid for a period of five years.

Units of assessment for TEIs include customized self-appraisal format and guidelines for self-analysis of TEIs jointly developed by NAAC and NCTE which elicit the various inputs and processes that characterize quality teacher education. Units of accreditation are (a) University departments of Education with UG and PG courses, (I-) Colleges of teacher education (affiliated and autonomous) and, (c) Institutions other than (a) and (b) above, but offering a teacher education programme. Joint Criteria for assessment are (1) curriculum design and planning, (2) curriculum transaction and evaluation, (3) research, development and extension, (4) infrastructure and learning resources, (5) student support and progression (6) organisation and management.

JUSTICE VERMA COMMISSION (JVC) REPORT 2012

Skewed supply-demand and proliferation of commercialization in teacher education have led the market forces to determine the fate of teacher education in 2011, which further led to anarchy in this sector. As a result the Supreme Court of India decided to set a commission to review the teacher education and NCTE under the chairmanship of former Chief Justice of India Sri J. S. Verma in 2012. JVC Report delivered numerous recommendations in order to regain the minimum standards in teacher educations, worth to mention are as below (NCTE, 2013):

Suggested Measures for Improvement of Pre-Service Teacher Education

- Government should increase investment in Eastern and North Eastern states to meet the increasing demand of teacher education.
- Institutionalizing the transparent procedure of pre-entry testing of the candidates of pre-school teacher

education programmes.

- Teacher education must become a part of higher education with enhancing duration of D.Ed., B.Ed., M.Ed. and four year integrated programme.
- Multi and inter-disciplinary approaches to be started in teacher education.
- Teacher education programmes should be redesigned according to NCFTE 2009.
- TEIs should have a dedicated school attached as a pedagogical laboratory for teachers and students.
- Establish a national body for continual reflection and analysis of entire teacher education programme.
- First professional degree/diploma programme should be ordered only through face-to-face mode whereas other modes of education may be used for continuous professional development activities in teacher education.
- The institutional capacity should be increased for the preparation of teacher education along with starting two year M.Ed. programme.
- A broad-based qualification of teacher educators needs to be developed by NCTE.
- Faculty development programmes must be institutionalized through UGC-Academic Staff College.
- Research orientation needs immediate attention in teacher education and establishing Inter University Centre in Teacher Education for promoting research culture.

Suggested Measures for Improvement of In-Service Teacher Education

- An expert group to develop a policy framework for in-service teacher education is required in consultation with national and state level institutions.
- In-Service teacher education institution DIETS, SCERTs, BRCS, CRCs etc. need to be strengthened for elementary teacher education.
- Continuous professional development programmes for secondary school teachers in arrangement with CTEs, IASEs and University Departments of Education.

Teacher Performance and Audit through a Framework for Assessment of Teacher Performance: NCTE should strengthen the Regulatory Functions by:

- Reviewing the existing norms and standards for existing
- Various teacher education programmes keeping in keeping mind the new curriculum framework guidelines
- Formulating appropriate regulation to implement JVC recommendation and a new framework for inspection in order to maintain overall quality.

- Establishing a Teacher Education Assessment and Accreditation Centre (TEAAC).
- Setting up an institutional platform with state govt., universities, UGC and other relevant bodies for decision making on quality and standards in teacher education.
- Transparency in regulations and inspections along with a Special Vigilance Cell in NCTE.
- Tenure of Chairpersons and Vice Chairperson of NCTE should be of 5 years and age limit should be maximum 65.
- Developing guidelines (by Central government) regarding manner of appointment of members of the Council, which further will appoint the regional committee members.
- Empowering the Council to issue directions to Empowering
- Regional committees also to revise orders of regional committees when required.
- Appointing a task force to undertake organizational restructuring of NCTE.

ADOPTING BROADER VISION OF EXCELLENCE

Colleges and universities have a long-standing tradition of quality in academics and scholarship. In this respect, higher education is the gold standard—the model to which other sectors look for excellence. But, increasingly today there are competing views as to what constitutes excellence in higher education. At least three quite different points of view are evident.

(i) *Resource/reputational perspective*, which emphasizes the importance of institutional and disciplinary ratings and rankings, faculty accomplishments and credentials, available financial and material resources, student ranks and test scores, levels of research, and donor funding.

(ii) *Client-centered model* focuses on the student experience, the quality of educational practice, program and faculty availability, tuition levels, access, alumni and employer views, and most especially student satisfaction with programs, services, and facilities.

(iii) *Strategic investment model* focuses on return on investment, cost-benefit analysis, control of expenditures, regulation and compliance, and productivity measures including admission yield, retention, time to degree, and expenditure per student. The first model tends to be the preferred model of faculty and has been traditionally important for external reviews, including accreditations, although this pattern is changing. Students, parents, alumni, and employers often emphasize the client-centered model. Government officials, boards, and trustees are generally drawn to the perspective of the strategic investment model. University administrators struggle to reconcile these approaches, recognizing the implications of all three (Volkwein 2006).

Each perspective has value, and they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, it seems likely that the most successful institutions, departments, and programs will find ways to embrace all three. Certainly, it makes sense to aspire to high standards in student, faculty, programmatic, departmental/disciplinary, and institutional ranking; in our relations with our constituencies; and also in the strategic use of resources and return on investment. To be successful in pursuing these goals, we need to formulate and adopt a broader, more inclusive understanding of excellence—one that leads us to aspire to excellence in all that we do (Ruben 2004).

Excellence, of any institution, system or a process is consumer driven and consumer focused. The first step in our quest for excellence is to decide who the consumers are and what their needs are (consumer perspective). Students are the most obvious and primary consumers of a TEL. Others such as employers, community, organizations and governments are also stakeholders and their demands as well as expectations are important to an institution to identify programs and contents. Competence of the teacher, intellectual skills, emotional skills, maturity, skill in handling students individually and in groups, motivation, aspirations, attitudes and ability to learn values and behavior are some of the inputs that a teacher brings to the learning process. Policies and procedures for recruitment and selection of teachers have to be carefully implemented. Designing a system or institution for excellence necessitates maximizing value for consumer, which is possible through a sound understanding of the dynamics of consumer satisfaction and adopting strategies for using the voice of the consumer for redesigning, revamping and innovating services. In TEIs the immediate consumer are the student teachers, therefore ascertaining what the student teachers expect from the system of teacher education and whether the system meets their expectations is another step in the journey towards excellence.

The NAAC and NCTE are complimentary to one another to evolve suitable appraisal system norms and mechanisms for enforcing accountability of recognized TEIs. Teacher's accountability involves moral as well as professional accountability. At the beginning of teacher education programme a workshop on ethics and accountability of teacher should be organized for student teachers. Teacher need to look at teaching as a mission and not simply as a vocation thereby enhancing effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. Accountability and accreditation in teacher education is justified because presently there is no standard or criteria for institutions desirous of seeking and pursuing excellence to compare themselves with their peers.

PROMOTION OF EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Research in our universities must become comparable to the best in the world. It should also incubate business enterprise making use of R&D carried out in HEIs and churn out several business ventures. Important

initiatives leading to excellence in research are (Kumar, 2014):

- Provide more rigorous training to students in
- Research methodology and the art of academic writing in comprehensive ways integrating modern technology and relevance.
- Provide more rigorous training to faculty in the form of faculty development programmes on the packaging of one's research paper as per the specifications of journal.
- Reward excellence, rather than mediocrity among the faculty. Rewarding excellence has a positive correlation with faculty research publication.
- Provide faculty who have an inclination and aptitude for research with research associates to take care of some of their classes to strengthen research works.
- Place accountability on each head of school or director of excellence, with fixed research and publication targets.
- Tap the power of international networks and collaborations.
- Organize collaborations among universities to transform them into research-driven hubs.

INTERNATIONAL TREND

Higher education has long been committed to excellence. However, critics often point out that the pace of change and improvement in colleges and universities is slow—and more episodic than continuous (Spellings 2006). Within higher education, proposed innovations and improvements become the topic of protracted discussion about potential shortcomings, as one alternative model or approach after another is introduced, debated, and discarded.

Current accreditation standards and practices give increasing attention to measurement and outcomes and focus less on intentions and inputs. Underpinning this shift is an expanded focus on the received experience of students as distinct from institutional intentions, structures, expertise, and plans of faculty and staff (Ruben 2007). Greater emphasis is also being given to assessing the effectiveness of the institution or program, holistically, as an organization. Moreover, accrediting processes are focusing more on student learning and the "value added" by the teaching/learning experience (and for residential colleges and universities, the living experience) provided by the institution.

There is widespread agreement on the purposes of quality assurance in teacher education, but differences in the extent to which processes are prescribed. In the US, there is a strong expectation that providers have

developed their own rationale, but in the UK there is an apparent indifference to rationale and methods, with an emphasis rather on clarity and rigour. Whereas in the US, influenced strongly by the NCATE guidelines, the provider's own conceptual framework for the provision is seen as a core element of quality, in other countries, particularly the UK, the regulatory framework and official discourse is almost silent on the subject (Bills et al, 2008).

WORLD RANKING

Global rankings help in providing valuable information to the institution teachers and policy makers for taking appropriate steps for quality improvement; information to the prospective students about the quality of institutions across the countries; opting good university; and stimulating competition which ultimately would lead to excellence. The motive behind this transformation is to actualize the economic potential of higher education as a service export sector. President of India emphasized "high ranking of the Indian institutions can also significantly improve the prospects of good placements for graduating students and provide a benchmark for continuous quality development. High ranking could develop India attract the best faculty from across the world" (Decan Herald, 2014).

Ranking agencies uses different criteria; look on such parameters would certainly give an insight to promote excellence. Times Higher Education (THE) uses teaching- the learning environment (30%), research- volume, income and reputation (30%), citation- research influence (30%), industry income-innovation (2.5%) and international outlook- staff, students and research (2.5%). Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings uses academic reputation (40%), employer reputation (10%), student to faculty ratio (20%), citations per faculty (20%), international faculty ratio and international student ratio (each 5%). Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) uses quality of education- alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals (10%), quality of education- staff of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals and highly cited researchers in twenty one broad subject categories (each 20%), research output as papers published and paper indexed (each 20%) and, 10% for per capita academic performance (University News, 2014).

To conclude, Indian higher education is growing very fast with great efforts but at it *is* not making much impact at global level. Quality has become paramount feature in education and promotion of excellence is urgently required. Rather than resting on the laurels of our past excellence represented by world-renowned institutions such as *Takshila* and *Nalanda*, we should move ahead as global leader by embracing and rewarding excellence in higher education.

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