NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

EMERGING PARADIGMS OF TEACHER EDUCATION

25TH AND 26TH MARCH, 2013

<u>TEACHER EDUCATION :IS IT ON THE THRESHOLD OF CHANGE?</u>

--B.Valli Pillai

INTRODUCTION

In this changing world one thing we all wish is to change is the way our young generation is shaping up. A major responsibility of nurturing and moulding of future generation is given to teachers. The teachers are in turn moulded in teacher education institutions. Therefore there is a strong link between the teacher education and school education. It is said that 'Teacher education and school education have a symbiotic relationship (NCTE, 2009)'.

There are a number of activities that taken place in the teacher education institutions which are designed to bring out the ability of sound teaching amongst the student teachers who will later become school teachers. It is believed that student-teacher who have skill base, sufficient knowledge base and open and forward looking attitude is endowed with the ability to transact that to the young generation. Are they being trained in the ability to shape the future generation in teacher education institutions? Is it corresponding with what is stated in as 'a teacher education curriculum framework needs to be in consonance with the curriculum framework for school education, and a teacher needs to be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context (NCTE,2009)'? Or are the recommendation and suggestions of various educational commissions really taken up by educational institutions? Teacher education faces 'criticisms of the lack of attention to other outcomes such as preparing teachers for diverse populations, teaching students to participate in a democratic society, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students, and working to make schools more caring and just (Cochran-smith,2009)'.

The training of teachers and managing of teacher education institutions is creating concern as reflected in the statement of National Knowledge Commission 'both pre-service and in-service

training of school teachers is extremely inadequate and also poorly managed in most states. Pre-service training needs to be improved and differently regulated in both public and private institutions' (NKC, 2007).

Teaching is a noble profession and idealistic in nature. The idea of service and sacrifice is inherent in the job of teachers. 'Teaching and teacher education are inescapably political and ideological activities and that they inherently have to do with ideas, ideals, power and access to learning and life opportunities (Cochran-Smith, et. al., 2009). Do student teachers indulge in leveraging the opportunities for children seeking better future? Do they follow or realize the huge responsibility given to them?

The profession of teaching is not one of the most sought after profession. '…there is a general decline in morale among school teachers, especially those in primary schools, and consequently it is no longer seen as an attractive profession for qualified young people (NKC,2007).

Teacher education has not only symbiotic relation with school education but cyclic relation with schools.

The following figure gives a representative cyclic relation. From the figure we can say that students who underwent study in 1980s become teachers of students studying in 2010s. But are the teachers who taught in 2010s are much different from one who teaches in 1980s?
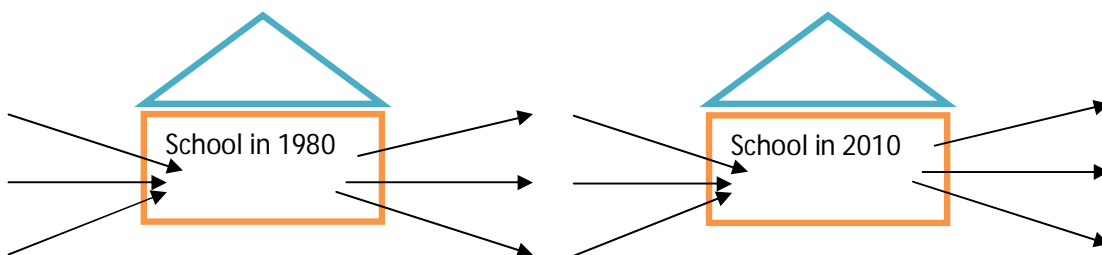
The logic is what we give to a system will come back to us. And a system that fulfills the needs of students is likely to flourish than one that will undermine the development of individuals. For example there are instances in Gujarat where Guajarati medium schools are closing down – students do not see a future in learning things in Guajarati, the time and energy spent in the twelve years of schooling is not yielding result. Ideally a regional medium school should not

have been allowed to wither away so. But why does it happen so? Is urgent steps taken to stop this downward spiral? Right to Education Act makes States responsible for educating its populace. But there are instances where schools not willing to enroll students from poorer strata. Even when there is options for well to do parents to enroll their wards in good schools there parents who opt for 'unschooling' or home schooling. We don't know when this trend will catch up and when it may become a norm than being an exception.

Teacher education which was envisaged to bring in society's equitable and excellent change is now been dictated by society's changes. It leads us to disbelieve that 'all teaching and all professional education, including teacher education, are value-laden and ideological rather than neutral and apolitical (Cochran-smith et al.,2009)'.

CONCERNS ABOUT TEACHER EDUCATION

The NCF 2005 has described the current concerns of teacher education as follows:

- Curriculum, syllabi and textbooks are never critically examined by the student teacher
- Do not recognize the centrality of language in the curriculum
- Provide little scope for student teachers to reflect on their experiences
- Redundancy of repeated 'practice' of isolated lessons
- Inability of student teachers in understanding links between learning theories and models and teaching methods
- student teachers do not examine their own biases and beliefs
- theory courses do not have clear articulation with practical work and ground realities
- The evaluation is too information-oriented, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehensiveness.

Some of the major concerns discussed in the National Knowledge Commission proposal on Recommendation on school education are : - mechanisms for improving and maintaining quality; pedagogy, curriculum and examinations; organizational and management issues; motivation and training of teachers; and ensuring access for educationally backward categories.(NKC,2007). It also states that the norms for secondary schools should include not only provision for specialized subject teachers but also for science labs, counseling (NKC, 2007).

METHODS TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS

In order to address these concerns many suggestion have been given apex bodies dealing with education NCERT's 'Position paper on systemic reforms in school education' enlists the following steps to overcome the hurdle that are faced in bringing about improvement

- Teachers should have the freedom to innovate, and to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities relevant to the needs, capabilities and concerns of the community.
- The methods of recruiting teachers will be reorganized to ensure merit, objectivity and conformity with spatial and functional requirements.
- The pay and service conditions of teachers have to be commensurate with their social and professional responsibilities and with the need to attract talent to the profession.
- Efforts will be made to reach the desirable objective of uniform emoluments, service conditions and grievance-removal mechanisms for teachers throughout the country.
- Guidelines will be formulated to ensure objectivity in the posting and transfers of teachers.
- Systems for teachers' evaluation – open, participative and data based – will be created and reasonable opportunities of promotion to higher grades provided.
- Norms of accountability will be laid down with incentives for good performance and disincentives for nonperformance (NCERT,2006)

THE CHANGE THAT NEED TO BE CREATED

A university-based teacher education can be strengthened by emphasizing three design principles:

(1) teacher education should be guided by empirical evidence of teacher quality and pupil learning . It can be gathered by evidences that show that teacher

- Accepts and demonstrates responsibility for creating a classroom culture that supports the learning of every student.
- Creates an environment of mutual respect, rapport, and fairness.

- Understands and uses key concepts, underlying themes, relationships, and different perspectives related to the content area.

- Uses knowledge of student development to make learning experiences in the content area meaningful and accessible for every student

- Relates ideas and information within and across content areas.

- Understands and uses instructional strategies that are appropriate to the content area

- Provides evidence of student learning to students, families, and staff.

- Implements strategies supporting student and national goals.

- Uses student performance data as a guide for decision-making.

(2) teacher education programs should take full advantage of the arts and sciences faculty and of all the resources of the university;

- Studies have found that training using interactive video technology led to improved conceptual understanding of pedagogical issues for a large number of geographically dispersed teachers (Maheshwari & Raina, 1998 in UNICEF,2000).

(3) teacher education should be viewed as a university-taught, clinical practice profession that continues through the early years of teaching. (Cochran-Smith, et. al., 2009).

- This suggests that teaching is as much a scholarly work as any other discipline in universities (Ginsberg et al, 2011). An act of teaching is to be seen in wholistic manner. It can evolve into clinical practice profession if it involves having a vision and its outcome through the process of design and enactment. 'Teacher need to maintain an account of some or all of the full act of teaching – vision, design, enactment, outcomes and analysis – in a manner susceptible to critical review by the teacher's professional peers and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community.'

- From this point of view the teacher training course should not be seen in terms of a finite period of time, but as a process by which the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom can be regularly improved, in a context that fosters an attitude of lifelong learning. Therefore there should be a mechanism for feedback and subsequent interaction

between teachers and the training institutes, especially for pedagogical techniques that are new or require more continuous innovation from the teacher.(NKC,2007)

- But it also involves teachers' interpretive frameworks--what they believe, how they think about their work and its larger connections, what they consider to be reasonable expectations for various learners, what they regard as the purposes of education, and how they collaborate with others to continue to learn from and about teaching over the course of the professional lifespan. (Cochran-smith et al.,2009)

CONCLUSION

Is it possible to visualize change in any area? Does change comes with fanfare or do we realize the change after it has occurred? How can we change perception of teacher – of himself and that of others? We find that changes envisioned for teacher education is sometimes just at a technical level –focusing on teacher's competency in meeting the outcomes, sometimes at the contextual level where we try to bring in alternative practices or validation of the principles guiding teaching learning but it needs to move to philosophical level where it needs to address moral, ethical and socio political issues and take a disciplined inquiry into its own functioning. Only then we can say that teacher education is at the threshold of change.

REFERENCES

Sarah M. Ginsberg And Jeffrey L. Bernstein, 'Growing The Scholarship Of Teaching And Learning Through Institutional Culture Change' Journal Of The Scholarship Of Teaching And Learning, Vol. 11, No. 1, January 2011

Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Emilie Mitescu, Karen Shakman, 'Just Measures: Social Justice As A Teacher Education Outcome' March 2009

Government of India , National Knowledge Commission ,February 2007, Dharma Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-21
Retrieved from
www.knowledgecommission.gov.in

NCERT,Position paper on 'Systemic Reforms For Curriculum Change'

UNICEF Jeanette Colby, Miske Witt and Associates, '**Defining Quality in Education'** United Nations Children's Fund United Nations Plaza, New York,2000

Vrinda Datta. * Measurement and REGULATION OF QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMES. In Scaling Heights: A Strategy for the Improvement of Quality in Early Childhood Education, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation. Chennai, 2010
Retrieved from www.aeced.org/.../Measurement_And_Regulation_Of_**Quality**%20.d...

Y.P. Aggarwal and R.S. Thakur 'Concepts and Terms in Educational Planning A Guidebook Operations Research and Systems Management Unit National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110016 (2003)

National Council for Teacher Education National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education New Delh i2009