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QUALITY RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teaching, like other professions, has a developing knowledge base that serves to guide practitioners. Knowledge generated by research is an important component to ensure its quality in various aspects indicating the importance of research in teacher education. Without generating quality outcomes- results of these researches fail to be incorporated in the existing program for its improvement and up gradation in view of various emerging social aspirations. Therefore 'research in teacher education' always implies a quality research. Quality research in teacher education has also been selected as the area of focal interest of the present study. Various objectives of quality research program formulated by NCTE have been identified. The study has also investigated an overall trend of existing research in view of a brief review of the related literature. Few major priority areas of research in this field drawing attention of researchers have also been identified, where there is scope of further researches. Major problems of existing research in this field have been diagnosed. Problems namely arbitrariness, lack of resources, over emphasis of some selected area neglecting the other etc. have been pointed out along with their causes. As an effective solution, the study has identified various measures, particularly the strong network among various stakeholders working in the field of teacher education has been emphasized on. Importance of action research program in the field of teacher education has also been recognized.

Keywords: Teacher education, Quality research, Research trends, Priority areas, Quality up gradation.

INTRODUCTION

Modern society is gradually becoming more and more critical; various multidimensional problems are emerging in it- solutions of which can only ensure sustainability and future prosperity of the society (Boyer, 1997).

In this context, responsibility of teachers also increases many fold. Their role no longer remains confined in imparting knowledge alone; they need to be thorough professional; fully equipped with high academic standard; with various pedagogical and practical skills; and also with different ethical and moral values (Yadav et.al., 2011). All these should also be major concerns of a teacher education program. This program has to play special roles in preparing socially responsible teachers of high values and morality, conversant with the unique features of our age-old socio-cultural heritage, as well as with various new technologies emerging in the field of education (Mukhopadhyay, 2013).

Teachers' education programs abroad, have incorporated various modifications in view of these new issues and challenges; but Indian teacher education program remains almost static and stagnant, even to day (Mukhopadhyay, 2013). The existing teacher education model in India is inherited from British system of education and therefore fails to keep pace time incorporating the necessary modifications in concept oriented theory and application oriented practicum (NCTE, 2004). N.P.E (1986) and subsequent programs of action (1990, 1992) also have recognized the necessity of modification in Indian teacher education program in various stages namely input-process or output in order to make the system quality oriented.

In fact, quality, now a days, has become a key word of any system due to emergence of the issues liberalization, privatization, and globalization; where everybody has got the scope to show his/her own wealth. Quality in teacher education refers to pursuit of excellence, consistency of fairness, satisfaction of client needs, and appropriate identification, utilization of various resources and also further generation of resources leading to achievement of institutional goals (Arya, P.P., 2006).

To ensure quality in education (as well as in teacher education particularly), is a massive challenge since it deals with the most sensitive creation of earth i.e. the human resources (Rogers, 1995). Industrial products are finished goods. Nothing can be done once they are finished. One can look for a better quality only in next



time. Therefore, the concept of quality in industry has an objective basis and is less critical. But in education (including teacher education also), there is no such finished product. Human resources, which it deals with, are always on the way 'to be'; they continue to learn and evolve (Rogers, 1995). Education in general, facilitates this continuous evolution of an individual. Therefore, the quality criterion in this context is multi-dimensional, more subjective, and critical, as well. Teacher education is responsible for producing quality teachers, where identification of quality norms and the process of their operationalization is extremely complex (Singh, 2008), and requires extensive research work to investigate impact of any need based modification.

Questions arise in this regard-

- i. What are the objectives of quality research in teacher education?
- ii. What are different areas of research in teacher education? Which among them are well practiced and which call for immediate attention for further study?
- iii. What is the present status of research in teacher education?
- iv. Is there any necessity to adopt suitable measures for its quality up gradation?

Present study aims at finding answers of these questions which are discussed step by step in the following sections.

OBJECTIVES OF QUALITY RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

NCTE has recommended a number of objectives of research in teacher education to ensure the quality outcome. Few major among these objectives are as follows:

- a. To empower teachers to realize constitutional goals
- b. To provide quality education to students
- c. To promote the desire for lifelong learning among teachers and students
- d. To empower teachers to evaluate curriculum and various teaching-learning materials
- e. To develop innovative practices in various fields like planning of curriculum, its transaction, evaluation and necessary revision
- f. To devise means for community based learning and to ensure community cooperation
- g. To develop new methodologies of teaching encouraging students' construction of knowledge
- h. To develop need based pedagogy
- i. To accelerate the process of all round development of learners etc.

DIFFERENT AREAS OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND SOME MAJOR TRENDS: A BRIEF REVIEW

Teacher education has emerged as an important area of educational research. The study of Mukhopadhyay (2007) has consolidated the review of a no. of related works [by Das and Jangira:1983, Joshi : 1997, Lulla and Singh : 1974, Mehrotra : 1979, and, Singh and Malhotra :1991 etc.] and identified the broad categories under which these are undergone. Few studies were found to classify the research on teacher education into six areas, namely selection criterion, abilities and qualities of the teacher, pre-service and in-service training of teachers, teachers' work load, job satisfaction and difficulties experienced by teachers, and personality variables of teachers. Mehrotra (1979, in Mukhopadhyay: 2007) classified the researches in a different way; the variables were clustered under contextual, input, process and output categories. Few investigations were also found to adopt a system model of classifying the variables under context – presage – process – product categories. It was also found to categorise the studies from three points of view – nature, methodology of research and a system approach to teacher education. Studies were also found to be classified in presage – process – output model. Investigations on student- teacher characteristics, institutional characteristics, classroom context etc. belong into the 'context' category. The presage studies cover those related to teacher



educator characteristics. Formative experience of teacher educators, their motivation, various cognitive and personality factors, teaching skills belong into this (Singh, 2008). The process studies consist of variables on classroom transactions and mediating process including the variables like teacher behavior in classroom and supervisory roles. The product studies are on the outcome of teacher education – including both the immediate, as well as long run.

NCTE has recommended certain broad areas in which further research on teacher education may be conducted. Few among these are as follows:

- a. Man power planning in teacher education
- b. Investigation of impact of various newly introduced techniques in the field of educational evaluation e.g. continuous internal assessment, semester credit system, grading system etc.
- c. Comparative study on integrated versus disciplinary approach in teaching
- d. Comparison of traditionalism and modernity and investigating the probable way of their proper fusion in teacher education program.
- e. Investigation of role of various apex bodies in the field of teacher education.
- f. Various models of teaching and their classroom application
- g. Indigenous methods of teaching
- h. Historical and philosophical perspective of different subject disciplines
- i. Impact of knowledge economy on teacher education in the context of globalization
- j. Educational planning, finance, and budgeting etc.

PRESENT STATUS OF RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION

During the last five decades a large number of researches, surveys, etc. have been conducted in teacher education. Characteristics of effective teaching, Curriculum evaluation, organizational climate and its impact on teachers' performance, the criterion for admission of prospective teachers and administration of education/teacher education have found to catch the attention of researchers. But planned and purposive approach has been found to be neglected. In a few universities only, teacher educators conducting/supervising researches in various areas of education/teacher education are found (Ahmand, 2008). Though most of the researches conducted have been found to be ill-conceived, not connected with real problems of teacher education, and even done in extremely haphazard ways. Systematic approach and continuity are found to be lacking (Singh, 1990). Researchers working in this field often viewed teacher education in relation to some isolated concepts. Researches were found mostly skewed toward quantitative analysis only. Modern qualitative approach, which are becoming more popular in advanced countries, are not being used much in India (Singh, 2008). Researches do not have even much credibility among its intended clients, teacher educators and administrators working in this field. The courses of research methodology are weak. Researchers over emphasize certain areas and neglect others (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). Various subjects are taught as a compulsory component of teacher education curriculum, but with the exception of psychology and sociology of education, methods of study/research in most of the other fields do not attract the attention of teachers. Anthropology, history, philosophy, management, financing, planning and comparative education etc. are those extremely neglected areas (NCTE, 2004).

There is the need for recasting the whole program/curriculum of research methodology and use of statistics in it. Statistical jargons are used without understanding their meaning and relevance. Foreign tools are used mostly without due concern to its applicability in our context (Dahiya, 2001). Many of the researches in this particular field even are found to serve neither the utilitarian purpose nor do they cater the need of academic excellence. Research reports are not going through critical peer-group scrutiny. Review has become mostly a casual and non serious exercise (Yadavetal, 2011). Researchers are found giving more emphasis only to the ultimate finding neglecting the conceptual framework of the study. Research papers usually are found to be prepared from PhD theses already submitted in universities. Therefore these research papers are found to be



mere replica of the original thesis. Once the thesis is submitted, authors are not taking adequate care to update it before presenting or publishing further papers with reference to the same thesis (Khanka, 2002).

Not only this, some specific problems also are found particularly in case of the Indian studies. Most of the research studies published in the Indian educational research journals on teacher education was not available in websites. Bibliographic citations in Indian educational (including teacher education also) research journals revealed that Indian references in the allied studies found a little space and most of the citations or the references had been found from advanced foreign countries (Kapoor, 2009). Validity of these foreign references in Indian context has the scope of further verification.

Discussion therefore reveals that, there needs thorough qualitative improvement of research in the field of teacher education. The present scenario of research in this field is extremely poor. A number of glaring problems faced by the researchers working in this field have been identified by experts. Arbitrariness in research in the allied field is one among such major problems (Dave, 2007). Arbitrariness in research means lack of meaningful relation among studies. Any research should be based on previous research for its assumptions, hypotheses and theoretical background. Only then will there be hierarchical growth in the discipline. Therefore it is important to establish proper linkage among studies to develop a coherent understanding of the phenomenon after a certain number of studies. This avoids duplication in research and enhances the possibility that all aspects and variables involved are attended to properly. Instead of paradigmatic set of hypotheses getting tested, individual hypotheses are tested. As a result the growth of knowledge is slow or zero (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). Thus it is important to have long term plans for research. Improper networking and collaboration among the teacher education institutions has been identified as the main cause leading to this arbitrariness (Singh, 2008).

In addition to this, (i) lacking of minimum abilities of researchers for conducting research namely improper understanding of contextual framework of the problem to investigate, skills of scientific inquiry, and inability to select the appropriate research design to analyze and interpret data; (ii) Lacking of resources and facilities in the form of available research grants, necessary advice and guidance from experts for proper planning and design of study to the researchers etc. have also been identified as the probable causes (Yadav et al. 2011).

FEW SUGGESTIONS TO ENSURE QUALITY OUTCOME

Teacher education is an important field for research since the quality of teacher education is frequently being questioned (Singh, 2008). But the above mentioned discussion has identified a number of existing limitations to result in quality research outcome. Following suggestions may be the necessary remedy in this regard.

Isolation of various institutions of teacher education from one another and also from various other stakeholders namely schools and different apex agencies in local, state or national levels monitoring the outcome and funding research has been identified as one of the major problems to produce quality (Singh, 1990). Therefore to achieve the goal of quality output, appropriate networking of these stakeholders is needed. Interactive sessions with policy makers, regulatory bodies, management and faculty members of schools and teacher education institutions should be organized to identify various issues and problems faced by the stakeholders (Yadav et al. 2011) – which need thorough investigation through extensive research.

Rigorous research training of scholars on various aspects of research methodology, strengthening true multi-disciplinary perspective including various social, educational, pedagogical and professional concepts, paradigms and theories etc. may also be encouraged. Critical peer review system should be employed as the means to evaluate the research reports and to provide effective feedback subsequently (Mukhopadhyay, 2007).

High quality research can also be promoted by creating an effective research climate in our University Departments of Education, National Institutions and Institutions of teacher Education. Capacity building of researchers, enhancement of their commitment, credibility, and motivation towards educational research on one hand and maintaining organizational research culture and policy planning on the other hand can produce good quality of the research (Dave, 2007).



Various regulatory authorities should make substantial funding available for promoting the long term capacity of the research community through investment in the research infra structures, data development, information sharing, and access (Khanka, 2002).

In traditional researches, a researcher is mostly concerned with finding out facts, suggesting new ways of dealing with problems aiming to open new frontiers of knowledge, and to wait for a long time to find a solution. In such researches, researchers need not take necessary actions on the findings of their own. Their suggestions are mostly for the others to act. These researches are driven by academic urge or researchers, are characterized by perfection, accuracy; hence at the same time are time consuming, as well, in most of the cases (Best and Kahn, 1986). But, innovative reconstructions, in the field of teaching-learning in institution, in most of the times result in conflicting situations. It requires urgent and immediate solutions by some on-spot experimentations (NCERT, 2003). In these situations, teachers have to act upon their own findings or suggestions resulting in improvement of their professional situation. Research and action, both together should play major roles in these studies- where exhaustive and time consuming treatments of traditional educational researches are not so effective. Under these circumstances, action research plays major roles (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) which are concerned with a real problem faced by a practitioner followed by the subsequent steps for its systematic investigation leading to solution of the problem (Charles and Ward, 2007); which the practitioner may put in action to improve the quality of his/her professional practice. It is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situation in which the practices are carried out (Charles and Ward, 2007). These researches in the field of teacher education should be encouraged in addition to the traditional researches. A number of universities have introduced this action research as a compulsory component of teacher education program. These short-term studies need to be conducted not only by trainee teachers, but also by the teacher educators. Findings of these small scale researches may be useful to identify the real and need based problems- which may be acted upon accordingly through formal extensive research study.

CONCLUSION

The discussion reveals that in spite of gradually increasing need of research in teacher education in the present social context where a teacher is expected to perform a multi-tasking role, the existing scenario of research is very disappointing. The repetitive, ill-conceived, and haphazardly conducted researches fail to produce any tangible results. Absence of clear educational perspective; sound conceptual framework as the basis of work; improper understanding of different aspects of research methodology; inability of research to influence educational policies, and practices; lack of proper networking among different stakeholders working in this field, lack of critical peer review system etc. are the major causes. Researchers working in this field of teacher education and various other stakeholders hence need to work together in order to- share emerging research findings, develop innovative research methodologies, formulate more effective research policies and to implement those in reality through effective plan of action. Trainee teachers, as well as the teacher educators should be motivated to undergo small-scale and short run- action researches to ensure action oriented improvement of professional situation and also research oriented creation of knowledge.

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