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Spotlight Needed on Training Teachers in India

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(The editorial is based on the article “Spotlight needed on training teachers in India” which appeared in Livemint for 20th February 2019. In this article, we will discuss the shortcomings in teachers education and concerns arising out of it.)

As discussions on India’s persistently low-learning outcomes gain momentum once again in light of Pratham’s Annual Status Of Education Report, it is time to turn our attention to solutions.

Researches show that, among school-related factors, teachers play the most critical role in student achievement. Economist Eric Hanushek finds that a child taught by a good teacher gains 1.5 grade-level equivalents, while a child taught by a bad teacher only gets half an academic year’s worth.

The World Development Report On Education (2018) states that “teacher skills and motivation both matter” and that individually-targeted, continued training is crucial to achieving learning improvements through teachers.

Concerns

- Unfortunately, **teachers in India, especially those in the government school system, are largely seen as a governance problem**, with the focus on getting them into the classroom rather than developing their skills and motivation.
- A National Council of Educational Research and Training study finds there is no systematic incorporation of teacher feedback into designing training, and little variation or consideration of local issues.
- **The outcome of such training is limited** and there is no measure of whether this is translated into classroom practice.
- **Eventually, such factors have significant multiplier effects in how they de-professionalize the larger teaching profession and drive down a teacher’s “internal responsibility”**—the sense of duty to the job, shaped by the environment in which the teacher operates.

- There is a range of skills and mindset gaps. Nearly 45% of teachers indicated that existing training was inadequate. About 70% indicated that they needed support or wanted courses in mathematics, English, and the sciences.
- **Significant behavioral gaps are also there. Nearly half the teachers believe that not all children could achieve excellent educational outcomes because of their socioeconomic backgrounds.** Only 25% incorporate activity-based learning and 33% use storytelling or role-play in their pedagogic approach, either because these weren't priorities or because they did not have time.
- **Current training is unable to cover tough spots and follows a one-size-fits-all approach.** Ideally, such a platform will democratize both access to and creation of content by teachers—already, teachers have been trained and have then designed their own material for Diksha's energized textbook project that places QR codes in textbooks, linked to a range of additional content on the portal.

Problems of Teacher Education

- **Problem to Monitor of Teacher-Education Institutions:** The National Council for teacher- education (NCTE) is a regulatory body which controls the functioning of these institutions and prevents them from becoming Commercial (money making) institutions, but because the country is so diverse with innumerable institutions, it sometimes gets difficult to monitor all the institutions.
- Some unscrupulous **institutions have become simply money making centre and produce certified but incompetent teachers.**
- **Deficiencies in Selection Procedure:** Lack of proper selection procedure of teachers is leading to the selection of incompetent teachers.
- **Lack of Regulations in Demand and Supply:** There is a considerable lag between the demand and supply of teachers. The State Education Department has no data on the basis of which they may work out for the desired intake for their institutions. This has created the problems of unemployment and underemployment and creates student unrest.
- **Deficient in Facilities for student -teacher:** Teacher education is the cornerstone of education even then it is treated as step-son of education in India. About 20 percent of the teacher education institutions are being run in rented buildings without any facility. An experimental school or laboratory, library, and other equipment are necessary for a good teacher education department. There are no separate hostel facilities are available for the student.
- **Lack of Facilities for Professional Development:** Most of the programmes are being conducted in a routine and unimaginative manner.
- Problems of Practice teaching is the most important part of this programme but in spite of all kinds of elaborate arrangements regarding practice in teaching, student teachers are non-serious to the task of teaching, deficient in sense of duty irresponsible, aimless, indifferent to children, lacking innovative measure in teaching

which are great obstacles in the development of pedagogical skills.

- **The problem of Supervision of Teaching:** The supervisory organizations for practice teaching aims at bringing improvement in the instructional activity of the student teachers by using various techniques and practical skills in teaching and help them to develop confidence in facing the classroom situations. It aims at guiding in planning their lessons, learning to organize contents, formulating suitable gestures and developing other related skills. At present, the lesson plans are checked superficially and no discussion is made by the subject method specialist.
- **Poor Academic Background of Student-Teachers:** Most of the candidates does not have the requisite motivation and academic background for a well-deserved entry in the teaching profession.
- **Quality Concern of course:** Quality in education relates to the quality of the work undertaken by a teacher, which has a significant effect upon his or her pupils. Teacher education has not come up to the requisite standards. Teachers are not able to think critically and solve the issues related to teaching methods, content, organizations etc. more knowledge of theoretical principles is emphasized and teachers are not able to use these principles in actual classroom situations.
- **Lack of Subject Knowledge:** The teacher training programme does not emphasize the knowledge of the basic subject. The whole teaching practice remains indifferent with regard to the subject knowledge of the student teacher.

Suggestions

- **Teacher education institutions should be put under the strict control** of this regulatory body (NCTE) for the selection of teacher, students, and provisions of good infrastructure etc.
- **Working of Teacher education institutions should be examined** from time to time and strict action should be taken if they fail to come up to the expected level. Privatization of teacher education should be regulated.
- **Affiliation condition should be made strict.** There should be a planning unit in each State Education Department. T
- The function of this unit should be to regulate the demand and supply of teachers at various levels of schools. This unit can also be given the responsibility of projecting future requirements of teachers in various categories.
- **The quality of the teacher education programme should be upgraded.** Teacher education programme should be raised to a university level and that the duration of the programme should be appropriately enhanced.
- Better incentives for teachers, investments in teacher capacity through stronger training programmes and fundamentally addressing the issues at stake in the teaching-learning process.

Way Forward

- Though Government has established the DIKSHA portal it has some gaps and that should be addressed soon.
 - As India is going to participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment in 2021, there is much to learn from Singapore, which consistently ranks at the top of the assessment, due in large part to its focus on developing its teachers.
 - **The lesson for India is clear: teachers are important. This importance doesn't stem from their exalted mythical status, but from their role as professionals and critical levers in defining the quality of education, children receive.**
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