

REFORMS IN INDIAN TEACHERS' EDUCATION CURRICULUM: EXAMINING A TWO-YEAR B.Ed. CURRICULUM IN RELATION TO TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES AND COMMITMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at examining the two-year B.Ed. teacher education programme curriculum under implementation since 2015/16 in Andhra Pradesh State, India for its responsiveness in addressing the competencies and commitments expected of teachers. In doing so, qualitative research design with document analysis method was employed by the researchers to analyze the cases theme by theme. The themes were formulated based on the ten competency areas and the five commitment areas identified by NCTE. The findings show that the entire ten competency (contextual, conceptual, curricular and content, transactional, other educational activities, teaching and learning materials, evaluation, management, parental contact and cooperation, and community contact and cooperation) as well as the five commitment (to learners, society, profession, achieve excellence, basic human values) areas were well integrated and addressed in the contents of the courses included in the curriculum. Contrary to this, the study also revealed the areas that require further improvements to produce diversity responsive teachers who can effectively and efficiently function in a heterogeneous and complex learning and teaching

environments. Thus, issues of diversity responsive competencies and commitments are required to be integrated in the curriculum. Moreover, working effectively on the inculcation of medium of instruction in to the curriculum was also considered important in enhancing the communicative skills of the student teachers.

Keywords: Teacher education, curriculum, competency and commitment

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Providing quality education requires producing qualified and competent teachers who can undertake the teaching learning process in an ethically and professionally sound manner. In this regards, up-to-date and demand-driven teacher education programme is mandatory to produce teachers that can work

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effectively and efficiently in an ever-changing environment [1, 2, 3, and 4].

To this effect, Indian teacher education programme and its curricula have been and are under reform processes from its inception to the present. As [5 and 6] mentioned, the major efforts made so far on the nature and transformation teacher education since post independence period in Indian. Reference [7] also summarized the reform processes undertaken and impacted teacher education (between 1964 and 2012) and concluded that teacher education was under frequent reform processes that were targeted towards having quality teacher education programme.

To make the reform processes fruitful, scholarly researches that help in paving the reforms that most fit the purposes are required. To this effect, the present researchers decided to examine the two-year B.Ed. curriculum under implementation in Andhra Pradesh State, India since 2015/16 for its responsiveness in addressing teachers' competencies and commitments. In doing so, concepts of curriculum in general and two-year B.Ed. teacher education curriculum in particular, competencies and commitments expected of teachers were presented briefly as follows.

Curriculum is conceptualized by scholars in various ways. For instance, curriculum can be defined as prescriptive, descriptive, or both. In its prescriptive sense, curriculum is what ought to happen, and it is a plan, an intended program, or some kind of expert opinion about what needs to take place in the course of study [8]. The descriptive definitions of curriculum go beyond the prescriptive terms as they force thought about the curriculum "not merely in terms of how things ought to be . . . but how things are in real classrooms" [8, p. 5]. Reference [9] defined curriculum in its descriptive form as the reconstruction of knowledge and experiences that enables the learner to grow in exercising intelligent control of subsequent knowledge and experience. Curriculum in this study is conceived as both prescriptive and descriptive as the document we are referring to is serving both purposes. It is a document with 109 pages having syllabi and used to guide a Two-Year Bachelor's Degree in Education (B.Ed.) being under implementation in Andhra Pradesh State, India since 2015/16.

Competency is a composite skills, behaviour or knowledge that can be demonstrated by the learner and desired from explicit conceptualization of the desired outcomes of learning so as to make possible the

assessment of student learning through direct observation of student behaviour [10]. For [11], competence is the attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) which enable an individual or group to perform a role or set of tasks to an appropriate level or grade of quality or achievement (i.e. an appropriate standard) and thus make the individual or group competent in that role. References [12 and 13] conceptualized it as any single knowledge, skill or professional expertise a teacher possesses and the possession of which is believed to be relevant to the successful practice of teaching. In [15 and 16] teachers' competence was described as state of having demonstrating suitable or sufficient knowledge, skills, abilities or aptitudes and experiences in the satisfactory execution of teaching.

Reference [17] defined commitment in teaching profession, as the feeling of dedication among the individuals or a group towards their profession and involves two essential components namely *pride in one's being in the teaching profession* and a *strong desire for professional development*. Reference [14], described commitment as total organismic direction involving the conscious mind and the whole direction which is gradually achieved by the individual through unconscious tendencies. Commitment is a state of attachment that defines the relationship between an actor (an individual, a group or organization) and an entity (commitment target). Commitment is a process in which one decides among the alternatives of which he or she is aware, or has alternatives selected by others [2].

1.2. Statement of the problem

It is apparent that teacher education programme and its curricula need extensive and intensive scholarly researches that can show its pros and cons. So far, tremendous efforts have been made by various scholars in this regards though still gaps that need further investigations are abundant [2 and 17]. For instance, [6] discussed specifically the changes visualized by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), NCTE Regulations 2009 and 2014, and Right to Education Act 2009 and its implication in the field of teacher education.

Notwithstanding the efforts made so far by various scholars, the researchers believed that it is indispensable to examine the current two-year B.Ed.

teacher education curriculum for its responsiveness in addressing the competences and commitments expected of teachers as curriculum has a crucial role in the process of producing competent and committed teachers that are capable enough in executing the responsibilities entrusted to them. Thus, the competences and commitments to be addressed by the curriculum were taken as the theoretical framework and the details of each of the competence and commitment areas were presented as follows.

Reference [2] identified the following ten inter related categories of competencies expected from the teachers and presented by [17] as follows:

- ❖ **Contextual competencies** require dealing with developments of education in society (example, solving problems of wastage and stagnation, diversities in society, developing cohesive society and issues like urbanization and value inculcation). It involves not only educational but also the social and cultural systems.
- ❖ **Conceptual competencies** include various concepts of education and learning that are related to psychological, sociological and neuro-physiological aspects. Hence, knowledge about stages of child development, right perspective toward education and implications of education are important aspects.
- ❖ **Curricular and content competencies** include joyful activities, media intervention, individual learning and provision of enriched environment for learning. It could be related to dealing with specific stages of education such as primary, upper primary or secondary education.
- ❖ **Transactional competencies** include planning of action and evaluation, inclusion of activities like storytelling, singing etc in teaching and learning process. This could also be regarded in its general, subject or stage wise dimensions.
- ❖ **Competencies related to other educational activity** include human values, celebration of national events and community life activities.
- ❖ **Competencies to develop teaching and learning materials** involves preparation,

selection and use of appropriate and up-to-date teaching and learning materials that include using innovative educational technologies and locally available resources.

- ❖ **Evaluation competencies** include the preparation, selection and use of various assessment and evaluation aspects.
- ❖ **Management competencies** include skills of classroom management and role and responsibilities of teacher.
- ❖ **Competencies related to working with parents** include role of parents and requirement of their cooperation in teaching learning process.
- ❖ **Competencies related to working with community and other agencies** include the knowledge about importance of community in the holistic development of students.

Commitment of the teachers also needs important consideration as it affects teachers' effectiveness. The major commitment areas identified by [2 and 17] include the followings:

- ❖ **Commitment to the learner:** children need teacher who understand them and their needs with sensitivity. They need to be looked after by teachers who understand their instincts, learning needs and tendencies along with their capacities and abilities. By taking up the profession of teaching, the teacher is pledged to progress and development of learners
- ❖ **Commitments to the society:** The school and community have symbolic relation between them. Teachers need to orient community towards the importance of education as a lifelong process and also motivate them to take it in that perspective. Teachers need to have deep concerns and commitments towards the community.
- ❖ **Commitment to the profession:** Teachers are entrusted by the community to shoulder the responsibility of shaping the present generation for the future through the process of teaching and learning. Committed professionals should adopt various innovative method of teaching taking into

consideration how best to learn and bring about the effective learning. This can happen only when teachers themselves show commitment to the profession to improve both guided as well as self-directed learning.

❖ **Commitment to the attaining excellence for professional actions:** teachers who continue their search for becoming better human beings and better teachers are followed in their footsteps by the learners. They get all the respect from them and at the same time acquire higher levels of excellence and proficiency.

❖ **Commitment to basic values:** every community expects the teachers to follow a value based approach in their personal life so as to become role models for the future generation.

1.3. Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the two-year B.Ed. curriculum of secondary teacher education programme, under implementation since 2015/16 in Andhra Pradesh State, India, for its responsiveness in addressing the competences and commitments expected of teachers.

Specifically, the study was designed to:

- Examine the extent to which the ten teachers' competency areas are addressed in the two-year B.Ed. curriculum of teacher education programme under implementation
- Investigate the extent to which the five commitment aspects to be demonstrated by teachers are embedded in the curriculum of teacher education programme stated above.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Qualitative research design followed by document analysis method was employed for this particular study. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are analyzed and interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around the topic of the research [18]. Document analysis incorporates categorizing contents into themes (competencies and commitments related in this case) and analyzing them accordingly.

The two-year B.Ed. secondary teacher education curriculum with 109 pages having syllabi (being under implementation in Andhra Pradesh State, India since 2015/16) was the focus of this study. It comprised three broad curricular areas: *perspectives in education, curriculum* and *pedagogic studies*, and *engagement with the field*. Under each category, several courses were listed with detailed syllabi and a total of 21 courses were in the curriculum. Of these, the contents of 19 courses of a two-year B.Ed. teacher education curriculum were analyzed for their responsiveness in addressing the competencies and commitments the teachers are expected to demonstrate.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the results obtained from the contents of the curriculum were presented and discussed as per the ten competencies and five commitment areas expected of teachers.

3.1. The two-year B.Ed. curriculum and teachers' competencies

It is expected that the knowledge, skills and values systems necessary in developing the required competencies have to be inculcated in a curriculum so as to help the student teachers internalize them during the course and demonstrate them practically in the field of work. Hence, the contents of the curriculum were examined systematically for its responsiveness in addressing the ten competency areas mentioned earlier under section 1.2 as follows.

A. Contextual competencies

This competency requires dealing with developments of education in society (example: solving problems of wastage and stagnation, diversities in society, developing cohesive society and issues like urbanization and value inculcation). It involves not only educational but also the social and cultural systems.

In this regard, all the courses included in the two-year B.Ed. curriculum were evaluated at better status in addressing contextual competences though the level of focus varies. For instance, the course *philosophical foundations of education, perspectives in child development, sociological foundations of education, understanding the self* have immense contents that are important in equipping the student teachers with contextual competency. In addition, courses such as *leaning and teaching, contemporary India and education, gender, school and society, inclusive*

education, environmental education, pedagogy related courses have also contents that can help the student teachers in getting the necessary contextual competence. The *practical attachments, internships and practicum activities* the student teachers are engaging in have also huge topics that can lead to this competency component.

However, courses and contents related to *diversity responsive curriculum and instruction (pedagogy) and multicultural education* are also considered important in equipping the student teachers with the necessary diversity responsive competencies. They help the student teachers in understanding the contexts and enable them to function effectively in such heterogeneous society though they did not get much attention by this curriculum. Therefore, more attention is needed in this regard and future revisions to be made on this curriculum should consider this.

B. Conceptual competencies

It includes various concepts of education and learning that are related to psychological, sociological and neuro-physiological aspects. Hence, knowledge about stages of child development, right perspective toward education and implications of education are important aspects. In this regard, courses such as *perspectives in child development, sociological and philosophical foundations of education, learning and teaching* are among important components addressed in this curriculum. Courses of *inclusive education, gender, school and society as well as contemporary India and education* have also contributions in equipping the student teachers with required competencies. Hence, the conceptual component of teachers' competencies is well integrated in this two-year B.Ed. curriculum.

C. Curricular and content competencies

Such competencies include joyful activities, media intervention, individual learning and provision of enriched environment for learning. It could be related to specific stages of education such as primary, upper primary or secondary education. In this case, it was evaluated that all the courses included in the curriculum have their own inputs though few of them could be taken as a lead contributors. *Art education, inclusive education, gender, school and society, Contemporary India and education, ICT for enhancing teaching and learning* are among the courses that deals with issues related to this component of teachers'

competencies. The *practical attachment courses and activities* entrusted in this curriculum have also contributions in this regards.

Nevertheless, it would have been more important if course related to *medium of instructions* is inculcated in the curriculum so that student teachers will be equipped with communicative skills.

D. Transactional competencies

It includes planning of action and evaluation, inclusion of activities like storytelling, singing etc in teaching and learning process. This could also be regarded in its general, subject or stage wise dimensions. The *pedagogical and learning assessment* courses were considered most important for the student teachers to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge, skills and value systems that lead to this competency as most of the contents are focusing on these issues. In addition, the *practical attachments, learning and teaching, classroom management, leadership and action research* as well as *art education* are also considered important in addressing competencies related to transaction.

E. Competencies related to other educational activities

This competency involves human values, celebration of national events and community life activities. Contents from the courses of *Art education, inclusive education, gender, school and society, Contemporary India and education, value education, learning and teaching* are among the constituents that are taken as ingredients inculcated in the curriculum to enhance teachers' competences in this regards. However, it would have been more important if courses from *diversity and multicultural education perspectives* are included as these aspects are lacking in the current curriculum.

F. Competencies to develop teaching and learning materials

It involves preparation, selection and use of appropriate and up-to-date teaching and learning materials that include using innovative educational technologies and locally available resources. *Pedagogy, ICT and art education* courses included in the curriculum were considered important here as these courses in one way or another deals with these competency aspects. Specially, contents focusing on teaching and learning materials in all subjects of

pedagogy are the most relevant in bringing those qualities.

G. Evaluation Competencies

This is about the preparation, selection and use of appropriate assessment and evaluation tools to measure learner's performances and pass informed decisions. In this case, *learning assessment* and *all pedagogic courses* have immense effect in equipping the student teachers with these qualities. In addition the *practical attachments* and *practicum activities* also help the student teachers as it exposes them to these competencies.

H. Management Competencies

The organization of classrooms, school and community activities are required here. In this case, courses that are related to *classroom management, leadership and action research, learning and teaching* and other *pedagogic courses* have profound ingredients. Moreover, *understanding the self, gender, school and society, and the practical attachments* related to these aspects are also considered important.

I. Competencies related to parental contact and cooperation

This covers activities of Parents Teacher Association (PTA) and understanding the role of parents and requirement of their cooperation in teaching learning process. Courses of *gender, school and society, Contemporary India and education, sociological foundations of education, inclusive education, learning and teaching* are among the appropriate ones in this case. In addition, the *practicum and internship activities* could also have immense contributions.

J. Competencies related to community contact and cooperation

This involves activities of mutual interest for institutions and community development. Hence, courses of *environmental education, gender, school and society, Contemporary India and education, sociological foundations of education, inclusive education, learning and teaching* are among the appropriate ones in this regards. In addition, the *practicum and internship activities* could also have immense contributions.

In general, all these teachers competencies are first to be developed during the pre-service training with help

of these curriculum constituents and then updated and strengthened further through in-service trainings. In this regard, the curriculum under discussion has integrated all these teachers' competencies in a sufficient manner though the areas of diversity responsive pedagogies and multicultural education needs improvement as they help the student teachers to become effective and efficient practitioners in heterogeneous society.

3.2. The two-year B.Ed. curriculum and teachers' commitments

As an integral part of the teacher education curriculum, five commitment areas were also identified by NCTE to be demonstrated by the teachers in their professional careers. The following few paragraphs will focus on that.

A. Commitment to the learners

This involves teachers' capability of understanding the learners and their needs with sensitivity as they need to be looked after by teachers who understand their instincts, learning needs and tendencies along with their capacities and abilities. By taking up the profession of teaching, the teacher is pledged to progress all round developments of learners. Therefore, courses related to *perspectives in child development, philosophical, sociological and psychological foundations of education, inclusive education, contemporary India and education, pedagogic and assessment as well as practical and internship activities* are integrated well in the curriculum and they can play great role in helping the student teachers internalize this commitment aspect. In addition, it would have more impacts if courses related to *multicultural education and diversity responsive pedagogies* are included in the curriculum though they are not entertained well at this moment.

B. Commitment to the society

It includes teachers' awareness and concerns about impact of teachers' work on the advancement levels of families, communities and nations as a whole. Teachers need to orient community towards the importance of education as a lifelong process and also motivate them to take it in that perspective. Teachers need to have deep concerns and commitments towards the community. *Sociological and philosophical foundations of educations, art educations, gender, school and society, inclusive education and contemporary India and education and environmental*

education are among the important course helping students teachers. Other *practical attachments* and *internships* can also enhance this commitment.

C. Commitment to the profession

This is the internal acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of the teaching profession without any circumstances. Thus, teachers are entrusted by the community to shoulder the responsibility of shaping the present generation for the future through the process of teaching and learning. Committed professionals should adopt various innovative method of teaching taking into consideration how best to learn and bring about the effective learning. This can happen only when teachers themselves show commitment to the profession to improve both guided as well as self-directed learning. In doing so, courses such as: *understanding the self, all the pedagogical, philosophical and sociological foundation, inclusive education, learning and teaching, contemporary India and education, gender, school and the society and practical attachments* courses are important.

D. Commitment to achieve excellence

This is about the cares and concerns the teachers have in doing everything in the classroom, schools and community in the best possible manner and the do it well attitude and spirit. Teachers with this quality get all the respect from students and at the same time acquire higher levels of excellence and proficiency. In this regards, all the courses and the attachments included in the curriculum in one way or another help the teachers to get necessary inputs during their study. Hence, it is important to strengthen the existing courses by inculcating up to date *diversity responsive curriculum and instruction as well as medium of instruction* courses.

E. Commitment to basic human values

This aspect includes being a role model, practices of professional values such as impartiality, objectivity, intellectual honesty, national loyalty etc with consistency. Here, courses related to *contemporary India and education, gender, school and society, inclusive education, philosophical foundations, understanding the self, learning and teaching theories and principles, professional code of ethics, practical attachments* are important ingredients inculcated in the present curriculum with the hope to equip student teachers with such qualities. Moreover, courses focusing on *multicultural education and diversity* are

also playing considerable roles in shaping the attitudes of teachers and their actual practices though it is lacking in the present curriculum. Hence, attentions have to be given to these aspects as well as teachers are expected to work in highly diversified and complex environments.

In general, the two-year B.Ed. curriculum under implementation is at a better status in addressing the commitments expected of teachers though still there are areas that needs further improvements.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Efforts have been made to examine the two-year B.Ed. curriculum under implementation in Andhra Pradesh State, India for its responsiveness in addressing issues related to teachers' competencies and commitments. The analysis was made theme by theme as per the ten competency and five commitment areas identified by NCTE. Hence, from the results presented and discussed above, it is possible to conclude that all the ten competency areas are well integrated in the contents of the courses included in the curriculum. In the same vein, the five commitment areas stipulated are also well addressed in the constituents of this curriculum. However, still further improvements are required to produce *diversity responsive teachers* who can effectively and efficiently function in a heterogeneous and complex learning and teaching environments. In addition, it is important to inculcate aspects of the medium of instruction in to curriculum as it can benefit the student teachers in improving their communicative skills.

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