

THE NEW 2-YEAR B.ED. PROGRAMME: ENSURING EQUITY OR WIDENING GAPS

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Abstract— The long-awaited overhaul of the B.Ed. Programme in India, finally saw the light of day in the introduction of the Two-Year B.Ed. Curriculum in 2015. Along with the increase in duration of the course, came the change in the Philosophical and Psychological foundations of the whole process of teaching and learning. This has put unprecedented pressure and demands across the spectrum of stakeholders in the preparation of prospective teachers. The impact of such a change, without a well-thought-out planning and implementation appears to be having a reverse effect on the much-desired objectives of ensuring quality, access, and equity, across the School system, as well as Teacher Education. This paper attempts to analyse the issue of widening gaps that are being caused in Schools and Teacher Education Institutions, by the enhanced duration, and the foundational changes brought about in the B.Ed. Curriculum, particularly in states like Nagaland, where the percentage of professionally qualified teachers in schools is still very low.

Keywords— *Teacher Education, Two-Year B.Ed., Gap, Equity, Access, Quality.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher Education in India has been plagued with multifarious problems, which has, in turn, affected the quality of education in schools in particular, and higher education, in general. The synergistic relationship that exists between teacher education and school education can hardly be over-emphasised, and the same has been particularly underscored in the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009, which has noted that developments in school education and teacher education mutually substantiate and support the qualitative improvement of all levels of education.

The philosophy and approach to the education of teachers has remained unchanged for many decades, in which certain beliefs and practices of teacher preparation have become established. Teacher educators are themselves, by-and-large, products of this established system. Since classroom practice (in schools) is closely linked to the manner in which teachers learn to engage in teaching-learning as a psychological, social and intellectual activity, no substantial changes in classroom practice have been affected in our schools for the past many decades. The National Council for Teacher Education (Recognition Norms and Procedures) Regulations, 2014, has now brought about the long-awaited overhaul in Teacher Education in India, which, it is hoped, will finally affect qualitative improvement in education,

especially at the school level. This change has not only been structural and operational, but philosophical and psychological as well, which is a major divergence from the many attempts at improving Teacher Education system of the country in the past.

The New Regulations have been developed on the foundations of the NCFTE 2009, and the Recommendations of The Justice Verma Committee (a high-powered commission appointed by the Supreme Court of India to address the problem of Teacher Education in the country), 2012. These documents had emphatically stressed on integrating the knowledge about learners and the knowledge of the subject with the knowledge of the socio-cultural context and philosophical basis of teaching and learning, in order to develop a sound pedagogical foundation. The New Two-Year B.Ed. Curriculum, accordingly, seeks to develop such competency among student teachers, so as to affect the much-needed quality improvement in school education.

It is also to be borne in mind that recent policy initiatives in education, (SSA, RMSA) have sought to improve access and equity, while also enhancing quality at all levels of school education in the country. While the challenge of enhancing quality, while also improving access and equity is herculean, this paper attempts to analyse the concerns of quality, access and equity in relation to the Two-Year B.Ed. programme implemented under the Nagaland University, the Central University to which all B.Ed. College of the state are affiliated, and its cascading effects on the same issues at the school level.

II. EQUITY AND ACCESS TO B.ED. PROGRAMME:

- 1.1. The state has only two (2) Government managed Secondary Teacher Education Institutions (STEIs), while the remaining six (6) are under Private Management. The total intake capacity of the two State-run STEIs is currently at one hundred (100) only, the capacities having been reduced to half, following the adoption of the NCTE Regulations, 2014. Given the large backlog of professionally unqualified teachers in the school system (about 50%), the number of State-run STEIs is dismally low. The issue becomes even more serious with the New Regulations, which has made acquiring a B.Ed. degree through the Distance mode, practically impossible.
- 1.2. The New Regulations (2014) have put additional requirements, including human resources and infrastructure on the existing STEIs. Given the short notice within which these requirements were to be met, financially constrained states like Nagaland have failed to

meet the time-frame targets and as such, the intake capacity of the institutions may be forced to be curbed, further adding to the increasing backlog of professionally unqualified teachers.

- 1.3. The two Government STEIs, are located in Kohima, the Capital town, and Mokochung, a comparatively easily accessible town of the state, leaving many of the far-flung districts without convenient access to a STEI. It is also to be noted that the remaining Private STEIs are also established only in Kohima and Dimapur, making access to even the higher-cost Private STEIs, quite challenging for aspirants from the far-flung districts. The problem is further aggravated due the vast disparity in fees between the Government and Private run institutions, with the introduction of the New 2-year B.Ed. programme.
- 1.4. A Curriculum Review at any level is supported by sufficient Orientation aimed at preparing teachers for effective implementation of the same. The Teacher Education Programmes have undergone a total overhaul, in which the very philosophy underlying teacher education has been radically changed. However, the review and subsequent introduction of the Two-Year B.Ed. Curriculum has not been followed up with the necessary orientation required by teacher educators who are themselves products of the old philosophy and traditions. In the absence of any professional support to provide a clear perspective to the New Curriculum, it remains to be seen how far it can deliver the goods it has set out to achieve. This may leave Teacher Education in the state far behind that of other states where such professional support is available.

III. IMPACT ON QUALITY, EQUITY AND ACCESS AT SCHOOL LEVEL:

- 2.1. The New Curriculum advocates an 'elitist' philosophy, in that learner-centred Constructive practices call for teaching-learning environments that are only available in very limited and select situations. While the outcomes of the new programme may have highly positive outcomes under ideal school conditions, it is difficult to comprehend how the same may be expected in the over-riding majority of schools plagued with problems of over-enrolment, poor infrastructure, teacher shortage or absenteeism. Thus, while the progress of advantaged schools may be accelerated, others may not reap the benefits, thereby widening gaps.
- 2.2. A change in the approach and philosophy of teacher education calls for a corresponding change at the school level. The approaches to teaching-learning-evaluation as envisaged in the New B.Ed. curriculum do not fit into the existing nature and structure of school curriculum in the state. As such, the viability of effective transfer of what is learnt at the teacher preparation level to the school situation appears to be seriously limited.
- 2.3. With the increased cost in the B.Ed. programme due to the enhanced duration, and extremely limited access to

Government run STEIs, many selected applicants for the programme are unable to meet the cost of the programme, thereby opting out of it. This could impact the supply of professionally qualified teachers to the school system, particularly the 743 (UDISE PLUS, 2020-21) private managed schools, which cater to 278271 students, as against 1975 government managed schools that cater to only 171747 students. Thus, on the whole, more students in the school system stand to be deprived of professionally qualified teachers.

- 2.4. The increasing shortage of qualified teachers could further affect the financially weaker schools and private schools situated in the rural and far-flung districts. This may further widen the quality gap between urban and rural schools.

IV. CONCLUSION

The revision in the Regulations as well as Curriculum of Teacher Education programmes has no doubt been a long-desired need. However, while the changes are welcome, necessary ground-work for a smooth and meaningful and effective transition needs to be taken up. Further, corresponding changes to meet the changed requirements need to be made at all levels of education. In the absence of this, a mere overhauling of Teacher Education alone may only widen the gaps that exist at present, rather than ensure Equity, Access and Quality.

V. REFERENCES

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