



Teacher Education through ODL: Policy Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

Education is a strong weapon through which we can change our world. This is Education which assists us to get our desired objectives set up by us due to our needs. Progressive development is our fundamental characteristics. Education guides us on a progressive and developmental ways. Thus, we can understand the importance of Education for our lives.

India is enshrined as 'Vishva Guru' due to its perennial humane identity of Education and its profounder the Teachers give us all eternal pleasure. But this scenario becomes topsy-turvy after we got independence. There was only about 12% literacy in our country just after the independence. This was a challenging condition accepting which we made a provision as Article-45 in Indian Constitution through which we made target to achieve the universal literacy by 1960.

Although a number of Commissions and Committees coming on front to reshape the futuristic Education of teachers in India but it fail to respond to the vulnerable system. Recently a number of agencies have been created to tap all the evils of TE system through conventional mode as well as through ODL. But the country is unable to reap out the best. Neither TEIs nor the education recipient at different levels come across the silver living of quality education in India. In 1993, Parekh Committee and in 1994 Lyngdoh Committee was organized to provide guidelines and evaluate the B.Ed. Distance Education Programme. Das Committee (1994) and Takwale Committee (1995) were also constituted to reevaluate to Distance B.Ed. Programme. These committees always try to maintain the quality of teachers. NCTE Norms and Regulation 2014 tries to maintain this. For maintaining the quality of teachers policy initiatives are always need to criticize.

Keywords: Education, EFA, Teacher Education, ODL

“Education is the most powerful weapon by which we can change this world.”

— **Nelson Mandela**

Education is the key to establishing gender equality, to eradicating poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, to preventing deaths and illness, and to fostering peace, and in a knowledge economy, education is like a currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global affluence. Education is a speculation and one of the most critical investments we can make. Education is a strong weapon through which we can change our world. This is Education which assists us to get our desired objectives set up by us due to our needs. Progressive development is our fundamental characteristics. Education guides us on a progressive and developmental ways. Thus we can understand the importance of Education for our lives.

Universalization of elementary education is the stated goal of the global community. In 1990, the global community pledged at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien (Thailand) to attain universal primary education (UPE) and greatly diminish illiteracy by 2000. In 2000, when these goals were not consummate, it again pledged to attain UPE, this time at the World Education Forum in Dakar (Senegal) with aintention date of 2015.

The UNO’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of providing universal primary education to all (EFA) and eliminating gender inequities has propelled many nations and multi-governmental organizations to enhance educational expenditure. UNO also declared Education for All decade (2005-2015). But many countries failed to achieve these goals, particularly the 2015 target date that was set when the goals were adopted in 2000. Till 2015 about 57 million primary-aged children are out of school almost half of them in conflict-affected poor countries even those students who do go to school finish without basic literacy and numeracy skills. It is estimated that 250 million children can’t read, write or count well. Now SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) have been set up by UNO for 2015 – 2030 and a new concept of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) has come in existence. We can achieve SDGs only and only with the help of Education.

The world still needs more and better teachers. According to the UNESCO denying children an opportunity to put even a first step on the education ladder puts them on a course for a lifetime of disadvantage. Even where there are enough teachers, too many of them are unqualified or undertrained. In 2001, it was reported that about half of the teachers in developing countries are unqualified in terms of their own country’s formal standards for teachers’ education. So many teachers have little more than secondary education themselves. Teaching methods are often old fashioned with too much focus on rote learning. Many countries want to change teachers’ jobs as their host societies are changing - comprehensive education, education for democracy, education for the information age and political transformation. All make new demands on the teaching force.

Teachers have an important role to play in making education relevant to the needs of the emerging modern society. Only progressive, capable and emancipated teachers can meet the aspirations of society by providing eminence education to learners. This is possible only if teachers are well trained through

effective teacher education programs. The standard of teacher education programs determines the quality of training provided to teachers. The maintenance of standards and quality in teacher education programs has become trickier in view of the demand for training from large number of teachers. This demand can't be fulfilled by formal teacher training institutes, but can be met through distance education. However, worries about the quality of teacher education programs through distance mode persist.

Teacher preparation program is a rigorous and skill oriented program. It focuses more on institutional based training to address many unambiguous problems to cater different needs of children. Open and distance learning (ODL) system has proven its importance in basic distance learning. ODL system emerged as a potential system through integration of various technologies. According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics half of the world's countries need to enlarge their strength or number of teachers appreciably if they are to enroll all primary school age children by 2015 (UNESCO, 2009). This creates noticeable pressure on the teacher preparation system globally. To meet up the goal of UPE, a global total of around 10 million teachers should be required between 2007 and 2015 (UNESCO, 2009). It adds salt to the wound when we come to be familiar with that the UPE goals are not likely to be achieved by 2015 with its current rate of progress. An estimated around 299 million school age children will be omitted primary or secondary school in 2015, of these, an estimated around 114 million will be missing primary school (Cohen, Bloom & Malin, 2007). These data advocate that providing education of high quality to every child will require time, resources, and colossal efforts. These all hurdles in global education circumstances creating a demand for open and distance learning (ODL) to build up a way and lead this opportunity. Teacher education is likely to have a dual relationship with schools, at once influencing them and reacting to them. Short periods of teaching practice will take the student teachers in the school and may take the staff of teachers' training institution into schools as well. Where schools are responsible for mentoring trainee teachers they become directly occupied in teacher education. While this involvement may diminish the likelihood of divergence between teachers' training institution and school it has also been criticized as deteriorating an opportunity of changing school culture through exterior influence (Perraton, 2003).

We advertise India as 'Vishva Guru' perhaps due to its educational objectives (which are for human being welfare), quality teachers (Guru Drona etc.) and competency to lead to the world towards real truthfulness. When we called India as 'Vishva Guru' we feel proud and it seems that the status of education in India was always shining. If we go back and analyse our educational history we find that there was a long duration when Education was generally for classes not for masses. And after independence we find a very-very shameful situation in the field of education in India. There was only about 12% literacy rate in our country just after the independence, i.e. the masses was illiterate. This was a challenging condition accepting which we made a provision as article 45 in Indian Constitution through which we made target to achieve 100% literacy till 1960.

To achieve above target there was a great need of teachers and just after the Independence there were countable TEIs. There we needed an alternate to train the teachers and for the better implementation we needed policy initiatives. Distance Learning (now ODL) was only initiative for fulfilling our requirements.

Teacher education program through non-conventional mode in Indian context is more than five decade old. First attempt was made by Delhi University for distance education in 1962. Education Commission (1964-66) gave emphasis to train the teachers through distance learning. The Education commission (1964-66) recommended opening complementary channels for reimbursement the backlog of untrained teacher through Summer courses, Vacation courses, Part time courses and Correspondence courses. During the sixties another channel, i.e. correspondence course was introduced. The correspondence-cum-contact approach was measured appropriate especially for teachers of the secondary school stage. In order to institutionalize this mode of teacher training, the Central Institute of Education (CIE), then a constituent of NCERT, started in 1966 a B.Ed. program through the correspondence-cum-contact mode. Though these five institutions, i.e. the Central Institute of Education (CIE) and the four Regional Colleges of Education(now Regional Institute of Education) have since given up the program, their involvement along with their academic credibility were instrumental in making program of secondary school teacher education through the correspondence mode more widespread. NPE 1968 also underline the need for distance learning to train the teachers. Other factor that gave impetus to correspondence courses was the three delegations of experts sent by the University Grants Commission to the erstwhile USSR (now Russia) during 1967-69, to study the system of correspondence courses and suggest the fittingness of this channel for India. These delegations made affirmative recommendations and included 'teacher training' as one of the areas in which courses through correspondence mode could be offered to begin with. During the seventies and later such courses leading to a B.Ed. degree have been instituted by many universities. Later on IGNOU and other universities started distance teacher education program. IGNOU tries developing primary teachers' knowledge and skills in child guidance. This case describes a program in child guidance for primary teachers, parents and social workers. Using printed text, audio and video materials it provides a practically-oriented non-specialist program which is not otherwise available. The numbers of students have been relatively small (less than a thousand per year). The program is regarded by the providers (NCERT and IGNOU) as a good one, with high quality curriculum, assignment design and printed materials (purchased by those outside the program too). It has been able to take advantage of its location in a large distance teaching university and the services and resources that this can offer. The providers see the program as serving a useful social purpose and meeting needs otherwise neglected. However, they are also concerned at the relatively small numbers enrolling (less than a thousand each year) and low completion rates. Between 1993 and 2001 a total of 6,546 students enrolled for the program (an average of about 700 students a year). Of the 5,659 students enrolling between 1993 and 2000, 887 (15.7 per cent) have successfully completed it. One reason for this appears to be the heavy study demands of the program which is constrained by the assessment requirements of a credited course. The question of whether or not a course of this kind should be examined and accredited has been debated by the providers. Other reasons identified include weaknesses in the learner support provided, a need for simpler language in the study materials and speedier feedback to students on their written work, and the heavy workload involved. No evaluation has been done of the impact of the program on teachers' work in schools. The program has attracted more women than men: 68 per cent female and 32 per cent male for students enrolling 1999-2001; 15 per cent of students come from Deprived Sections of Society (according to the Government's

classification; 50 per cent of places in educational institutions are reserved for Deprived Sections as affirmative action). NPE 1986 also gave more emphasis on distance learning. According to the NPE 1986 Teacher Education is a continuous process. Therefore in-service teacher education is needed to be given more emphasis. Further it says that all in-service education programs can't be organized in face-to-face modality, especially in view of the numbers involved. So, distance in-service education materials will be prepared and extended with the help of broadcasting agencies. SCERTs and DIETs will be responsible for this. Thus distance centers increased rapidly and enrolled a lot of to be teachers. The result was that quantity increase but quality fall down. This was the time for critique our policies.

In January 1989, a committee for Teacher Education Program (TEP) through Distance Education mode was appointed by NCTE under the Chairmanship of Prof. M.B. Buch to review the present status of B.Ed. (Correspondence) courses. The committee recommended that the duration of program should be 24 months. There should be three weeks internship and twelve weeks contact programs for tutorials. Financing should be as for regular programs, i.e. source of finance should be public funds. In other words we can say that it is government accountability to run TEP Correspondence Courses properly.

In 1992, the Central Advisory Board of Education Committee on Distance Education was appointed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of Shri G. Ram Reddy. The committee recommended that the teachers' training program should promote qualities and values. The committee advocated that first degree in teacher education should not be given through correspondence courses.

The Program of Action (POA) 1992 considered distance mode mainly for in-service training programs and recommended to encourage this mode. According to National advisory committee on Learning Without Burden 1992 (Yashpal Committee) pre-service teacher education program being professional course has to be a rigorous, thorough and intensive program; therefore B.Ed. degree courses by correspondence be derecognized. Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi committee (1993) examined this report and suggested that an expert committee of UGC has found valuable B.Ed. correspondence course for women and for people from rural areas.

In 1993, Parekh Committee was constituted by UGC to provide guidelines for B.Ed. program through correspondence. The committee recommended that universities running B.Ed. correspondence course should not admit more than 250 students in a year. Minimum qualification for admission should be graduation with 60% marks (5% relaxation for SC/ST) or a master's degree with a minimum of five years teaching experience in a recognized school should be required.

In 1994, Lyngdoh Committee was organized by UGC to evaluate the B.Ed. Distance Education Program. The committee suggested that the duration of B.Ed. program through distance education should be of 14 months including Personal Contact Programs and teaching practice. For admission graduation with 2 years teaching experiences should be must and preference should be given to teachers serving in rural areas.

Das Committee (1994) recommended that pre-service teacher education for the first degree/diploma should be only through face-to-face mode. The committee suggested that no further admissions should be

made to courses of teacher education other than regular face-to-face institutional program of minimum of one academic year's duration from the academic session 1995-96 onwards. Regarding part-time face-to-face program of teacher education and in-service teacher education program committee said that it may be continued.

Takwale Committee (1995) was also constituted to reevaluate to Distance B.Ed. Program. The committee suggested that the duration for B.Ed. Distance Education should be for 24 months and no university should admit more than 500 candidates in a given academic year and also for this course only regular teachers serving in recognized schools having minimum three years teaching experiences should be admitted only.

An expert committee appointed by the NCTE under the chairmanship of Prof. R.C. Das (1995) felt that if part time face-to-face institutional program are equivalent to face-to-face full time institutional program in their total period of instruction, program and academic workforce support and other infrastructure as per National Council for Teacher Education norms, then the National Council for Teacher Education may think their identification after obtaining complete information from these institutions. The institutions of correspondence courses and now their improved forms such as Distance Education represent steps for making teacher education more receptive to field needs. However, recent trends towards developing Open and Distance Learning System represent efforts to explore more varied and effective modes for curriculum transaction of teacher education program. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) now recognizes Open & Distance Learning as a viable mode of imparting teacher education program.

These committees always try to maintain the quality of teachers. By 1996, the number had increased to twenty-four. The way correspondence courses have expanded and have been implemented leaves much to be most wanted. They have assumed the status of an 'alternative' channel, deviating from the original supplementary role of reaching out to those who cannot be accommodated in usual training institutions. On the one hand, they have drawn in large numbers, and on the other, they have come in for a lot of criticism for vitiating the quality of teacher education and making it commercialized. However, a further trend that seems to have emerged during the last two decades is in terms of modes of curriculum transaction. If clearance of backlog untrained teachers and provision of teacher education program for certain special groups represent fields/specific needs, the institutions of correspondence courses, and now their improved forms such as distance education program represent steps for making teacher education more responsive to field needs. Recent trends towards developing open and distance learning systems represent efforts to search more diverse and effective modes for curriculum transaction as well as imparting teacher education program effectively. And thus it is always needed to maintain the quality of teachers because it is said that no people can arise above their status of teachers. It has been further suggested that a critical mass in the faculty of education as recommended by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) is considered necessary to ensure professional inputs and quality maintenance. Due significance to practical components of the program i.e. practice teaching, school based and community based practices is given.

The NCFTE 1998 underlined the need for Distance Education due to EFA but gave emphasis on quality teachers' training program. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2009/2010) also found that open and distance learning as a powerful mechanism for providing professional support to the teacher, mainly with a view to overcoming the barriers of physical distance. Further the NCTE Norms and Regulations, 2014 for teacher education through Open and Distance Learning have added new scope to the context of teacher education through ODL. In this document D.El.Ed. and B.Ed. can done by ODL system. These two programs are basically for in-service teachers'.

In the field of Teacher Education quality assurance is always a burning issue. Maintaining the quality of teachers policy initiatives are always needed to criticize. If we review the above mentioned policies and recommendations we can find that the main issue related to TEPs was quality issue. But sure in India we needed a lot of trained teachers for the effective implementation of RTE act and to acquire the goal of UEE. We think for USE (Universalization of Secondary Education) we have sufficient pool of trained B.Ed. peoples. So, ODL should be only for in-service program. From ODL we must assist to pre-service TEPs.

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