European Journal of Business & Social Sciences
Available at https://ejbss.org/

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 6
June 2019

Growth of Teacher Education in J&K: A Modern Perspective of its Trends and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Education is the key for development of any nation and it depends on the quality of teachers. Knowledge, dedication, quality, professional commitment and motivation of teachers are the factors responsible for quality education and learner achievement. Producing such teachers is a major challenge for governments across the globe today. With the ever increasing amount of knowledge today, teacher's job has been more challenging in the light of new pedagogical and psychological theories, philosophy, sociology and globalization. Well planned and imaginative Teacher education programmes are required today. Teacher education programme has to be critiqued, studied, reformed, rethought and reoriented today. Quality and excellence in the education sector is one of the major initiatives of the Government of J&K. To achieve the outcome of enhanced quality at all levels of education, Govt. of J&K has been focusing its attention on quality and excellence in all levels of education. The present paper traces out the expansion of Teacher Education in Jammu and Kashmir. It also highlights the various issues and challenges faced by Teacher education. The Study put forth suggestions to overcome various challenges faced by Teacher education. The present paper is analytical in nature. Relevant books, articles and various research papers have been used. Data and information have been collected from concerned sources as per the need of the study. Interpretive approach has been followed in this study.

Keyword: *Expansion, Teacher Education, Issues, Challenge*

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is well known that teachers have a pivotal role in the development of an inclusive education system. Highly motivated, qualified and trained teachers are important factor for ensuring meaningful access to education. [1]Teacher education is the process for the development of proficiency and competence of teachers which in turn enable and empower them for meeting the requirements and challenges of the profession in present times. Goods Dictionary of Education explains-Teacher education means all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. W.H. Kilpatrick specified teacher training by stating that "Training is given to animals and circus performers, while education is to human beings". Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teacher Education = Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional skills. Clinton stated in his Call for Action for American Education in the 21st Century (1996) that, "Every community should have a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom. We have enormous opportunity for ensuring teacher quality well into the 21st century if we recruit promising people into teaching and give them the highest quality preparation and training". [2]

This indicates the importance of preparing good teachers. A good teacher education system is a major requirement of any nation for its progress. Teacher quality is the most important factor of school education. UNESCO-ILO stated that "Teacher quality is an important consideration in student achievement, and although defined differently by different people, it continues to be a central concern of those responsible for teacher education. Quality teachers are products of quality teacher education programs, policies and practices."[3]Recently Universalization of Elementary Education and implementation of RTE coupled with sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have produced a huge requirement of teachers and to meet this new challenge, our country should be able to supply good teachers in large numbers. Today new

ISSN: 2235-767X
Volume 07 Issue 6
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innovations and experiments are being tried out inside as well as outside the classroom that includes project based learning, development of thinking skills, and discovery learning approaches. Many teachers are not perfectly familiar in implementing the concepts of new curriculum and many are not equipped to properly implement the curriculum. So it is necessary to define the professional qualifications and skills needed for a good teacher and inculcate them within prospective teachers. [4]These qualities which make good teachers were summarized by Arthur, et al, in a survey on UK teachers as fairness, creativity, and a love of learning, humor, perseverance and leadership as the six most important character strengths for good teachers, along with kindness and honesty. In this line and to improve quality of teachers, certain nations have developed teaching standards. For example-Australia, developed standards for teachers in 2010 and finalized 3 domains of teaching and seven standards mentioned in Education Services Australia (2011), which are given below: [3]

Professional Knowledge: (Domain 1)

1. Know students and how they learn;
2. Know the content and how to teach it;

Professional Practice: (Domain 2)

3 Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments
5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

Professional Engagement: (Domain 3)

6. Engage in professional learning
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents and the community

Teacher education is the means for inculcating these professional qualities within future teachers.

2. Expansion of teacher education in J&K

Jammu & Kashmir State is the northern most part of the India with population more than one crore as per Census figures and covers the area of approximately 2,22,236 sq. Kms. The state is divided into three regions namely- Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh and further subdivided into 22 districts for administration and carrying out developmental programmes. The State of J & K

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Volume 07 Issue 6
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has its own Constitution besides the Constitution of India and enjoys special status under article 370. Topography of the State comes in the way of developing adequate infrastructure and is further compounded by terrorism and militancy, which have taken a heavy toll of life and public property besides throwing normal life out of gear. Education could not escape from this tragedy as most of the educational institutions in rural areas in the valley were destroyed and loss of schooling hours immensely affected the learning outcomes. As per Economic Survey 2006-07, the State of J&K lags far behind in social sector i.e. education, public health, sanitation, and social welfare. Per capita income comes out at Rs.17,174 per annum as against the national average of Rs.25,907. J&K figures among the last four most illiterate and educationally backward state. It is fact that no system of education can rise above the level of its teachers. Good teachers are invaluable assets for nation building and this fact has been recognized and highlighted in the National Policy of Education (1986). This emphatically calls for a drastic and urgent revision in the existing policies and practices regarding recruitment, training and retention of teachers based on well tried out programme of innovation, experimentation and research. Therefore, teacher education is in urgent need of reorganization so as to ensure the highest quality and standard. The system of teacher preparation or training in J&K has come under sharp criticism at the hand of both experts and public at large. Critics have termed our system of teacher preparation as “obsolete”, “bookish”, “ill concerned”, impractical”, “ill planned”, “uninspiring” and ”mushroom growth”. It affected adversely: (a) the quality of faculty and the head, (b) access and use of learning resources (library and ICT), (c) teaching and evaluation methodology, and (d) professional development. It also suffers from ‘adhocism’, ‘politicization’, ‘groupism’, “and half hearted efforts at developing teacher competencies among prospective teacher’’. The casual implementation of pre-service programme for student teacher could not produce good teachers. It is divorced from realities of the school and suffers from lack of financial support. These institutions, therefore, are need to be revamped to produce professionally trained teachers, fully equipped with both high academic standards, pedagogical practical skill, ethical and moral values. In the back drop of the past, quality in teacher education has always been given top priority by the rulers of J&K state. In order to improve the quality of teaching and to leaven student’s learning activities with conscious efforts and perseverance,

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these rulers laid much emphasis on frequent revision of pedagogic learning contents and on periodic seminars and group discussions. The outstanding teachers were given certificates and cash awards. They also provided substantial grants and scholarships for training of teachers at the local normal schools and the college at Large. As a result, the number of certificated teachers increased every year but the proportion of untrained teachers still remained large, especially in the Kashmir province.

In 1939, the Saiydian Committee Report recommended that teacher training schools should be properly staffed & equipped and a scheme of Refresher courses for all categories of teachers should be started to acquaint teachers with new thought and trends in education. As a result, sufficient funds were allocated for Up gradation of labs, library and building of teacher training school. Refresher courses were started for enhancing competency of teachers.

In 1948 Govt. College of Education was established at Srinagar. It is a premier and historic institution which started its work as Teacher Training School in 1937 and thereafter was promoted to the status of College of Education in 1948. It has been rendering the services of training and educating the pupil teachers- B.Ed. and M.Ed. (In-service and pre-service). MHRD team visited the institute in April, 2013 and recommended the up-gradation of College to Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE) in the Joint Review Mission Report. The Higher Education Department, Govt. of J&K issued orders for up-gradation of the college in August 2016 vide Govt. Order No: HE/UP-grad/COES/CSS2013/78 dated:04/03/2016. The college is presently also running the M.A Education course by working as “School of Education” in Cluster University under RUSA. In 1950, the Kazimi Committee Report observed that untrained and unqualified teachers could not produce the best results. Moreover, teacher education institutions were not equipped with infrastructure such as building, labs, and library and the teaching staff deployed was also not qualified and trained. The committee recommended that no untrained teachers should be recruited to the department and that qualified and trained teachers should invariably be posted in the teacher training schools to improve the quality of teacher education in the State of J & K. The Committee also recommended the scraping of Basic Education Course, Junior Vernacular, and Senior Vernacular (BEC, JV& SV) and the institution of a uniform training to be called certificate in Teaching (CT). Most of the recommendations of

ISSN: 2235-767X
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the committee were implemented to raise the standard of teacher education.[16] After independence, Sheik Abdullah, the then Prime minister of J & K State took initiative to improve the quality of teacher education. Teacher pay scales were revised on the basis of qualification and training. Scholarships and incentives were provided to the teachers undergoing teacher training courses outside the state. By the end of the year 1956 two full fledged teachers training colleges each in J & K were set up. The concept of multipurpose school was initiated in the country in the year1952-53 and J & K was the first state to accept that proposal and in consequence there of three multipurpose schools were started in the first instance state. Teachers were also gradually trained to cater to the needs of the new courses of studies.

In 1972, Bhagwan Sahay Committee Report observed that one of the weakest areas in the state was that of the training of teachers. The percentage of trained teachers was low as 63% in primary school, 78% in middle school & 89% in secondary schools and the duration of training for primary and middle school teachers was only one year as against the needed two years. There was hardly any provision for in- service education. The teacher training schools did not have adequate status and high quality staff. They were also not properly provided with building, land, labs, libraries, hostels and equipments. The committee recommended that:

-Infrastructure i.e. buildings, labs, library, hostels should be provided at teacher training schools and college level.

-Qualified & trained teachers should be posted in teacher Education schools and colleges.

-Teacher in college of education should have a master degree in education (M. Ed.)

-Model school at district level should be attached with teacher education school or college for practice of teaching.[17]

The First College of education in the private sector was sanctioned by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir in the year 1980-81 at Model Institute of Education and Research, Jammu to meet the burgeoning demand as well as to provide quality education. The first attempt was made in 1973 to restructure the curriculum and the document on teacher education was prepared. The objective of the teacher education programme in this document was to have change in the content and the design as also the restructuring of teacher education programmes. In fact the

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recommendations which were made through this document could not be translated effectively, meaningfully and purposefully by the state.

As a follow up of 1986 Policy, a number of programmes were initiated to improve the quality of teacher education in J & K State. These include establishment of District Institute of Education (DIET) and Institutes of Advanced study (IASE) in Education. Substantial financial support was provided in upgrading of existing buildings, labs, library, hostels etc. Qualified trained and experienced teachers were deployed in teacher education institutions. Various programmes for teacher capacity building were initiated. Innovative good practices in teacher educational institutions were introduced.

Restructuring of teacher training curriculum was carried out. More emphasis was laid on practice of teaching. In fact, much emphasis was laid on expansion of teacher education in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and little effort was made in the direction of improving the quality of teacher education. In 1990, the report submitted by NCTE Review Committee chaired by late Prof. Buch corroborates with prevailing teacher education scenario in J&K that leaving aside a few universities, department and colleges of Education that can be counted on finger tips, a large majority of teacher education colleges are effectively run for less than three months a year. Practice teaching is a ploy. Guides rules the scene, learning from text books is unknown entity. As in all other colleges, a large majority of faculty reproduce what they had learnt as students, At present(2018), there are 148 B.Ed. colleges in the state where except two, the rest are private colleges with intake capacity of more than 44 thousand as against three colleges of education in the year 1981 with intake capacity of less than three hundred.

3. CHALLENGES OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Great expansion of teacher education institutions during the last decade reflects the teacher education scenario of today. Increase in the number of schools and enrolment as a result of countrywide primary education programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalization of Elementary Education, has resulted in increased demands for the teachers. This produced a great demand and increase of teacher education institutions but the quality parameters were ignored in the process. As result, poor quality, lack of responsibility and lack of desired qualities and dedication is seen among the

ISSN: 2235-767X
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newly produced pupil teachers. Some of the major challenges of the teacher education system in Jammu and Kashmir are enlisted below-

3.1. Poor Integration of skills

Certain skills as life skills, techno-pedagogic skills, emotional skills, human developmental skills and spiritual skills need to be integrated in the teacher education programmes. There should be simultaneous focus on the creative thinking, critical thinking and self and social management skills. The present teacher education system of country fails to integrate these skills within learners. [7]

3.2. Inappropriate methods of teaching

In India teacher educators are neutral towards adopting innovative methods and experimentation in their teaching. Their acquaintance with modern class-room technologies and effective ICT techniques is poor.

3.3. Poor motivation and academic background of pupil teachers

Most of candidates joining the teaching profession do not come here by choice; instead they come here by chance, when there is no other option. They do not have the requisite level of motivation and an academic background for the noble profession of teaching.

3.4. A mismatch in demand and supply

Teacher education has become supply driven, instead of demand driven. The state education departments have no plans and accurate data for proper management of their institutions. There is a considerable gap between the demand and supply of teachers. This has created the problems of unemployment and underemployment.

3.5. Poor budget allocation

Less budgetary allocation is a main reason which in turn makes suffer the institutions for equipments, facilities, arrangement of co-curricular activities and sometime contractual appointment of the staff shortage. It directly affects the quality of outcome.

3.6. Lack of feedback system

A perfect feedback system from institutions, staff, faculty and stakeholders regarding courses and implementation is required at every stage of change and planning. Recently 2 year curriculum of B. Ed. is started by NCTE countrywide, which was recommended time and again

ISSN: 2235-767X
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in various policy papers and reports. Surprisingly even before completion of the first batch and outcome of results, NCTE has invited suggestions about the duration of course as 1 year or 2 year, which may be a probable rollback. A good planning coupled with proper feedback is required for these types of steps.

3.7. Insufficient co-curricular activities

In present courses mostly the focus is on completing the syllabus and no place is there for well planned co curricular activities like NCC, NSS, educational visits etc., particularly in private institutions. [8, 9]

4. SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES

4.1. Timely updating of curriculum

Curriculum of teacher education programme should be revised from time to time according to changing needs and latest developments of the society, profession and globalized world.

4.2. Development and enrichment of life skills

Teacher education programmes should enable the teachers to develop life skills among pupil teachers. Life skills are essential for personal development and growth of learners. These skills enable man to deal with the life's difficulties and adversities more effectively. These skills include (a) Thinking Skills (b) Self Awareness, Problem Solving, Creative Thinking, Decision making and Critical thinking (b) Social Skills – Interpersonal relations, effective communication and empathy (c) Emotional Skills – Stress Management. [10]

4.3. Developing competency of teachers

Enough to incorporate the usage of science and technology and ICT in educational activities as well as for effective learning and to apply it in teacher educations institution. [11]

4.4. Quality Internship of appropriate duration

The internship of appropriate duration is a must in teacher education and it should be objective, reliable and valid and of proper time.

4.5. Provision of demonstration schools

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It will be in the fitness of things if at the time of setting up a teacher education department, a demonstration school is made an integral part of it and a definite norm should be followed for certain facilities such as laboratories, libraries and other important audio-visual equipment.

4.6. Correspondence courses for working teachers- for working teachers

In teacher education institutes, Correspondence courses should be arranged, with a variety of options like peace education and a rigorous manner of assessment. Presently NCERT offer course in peace education, educational management and NUEPA in school management in a mixed mode.

4.7. Strengthening and Library facilities

Libraries are needed to be enriched with complete and comprehensive reference section equipped with e- journals, online subscriptions with a wide range of digital library facilities. [13]

5. CONCLUSION

Strategies for developing high quality teachers vary from one nation to another. Efforts get boosted when a nation assures entry of talented individuals to teaching profession.[3] Quality teachers are the key factor for sustainable global development and their training, recruitment, retention, status and working conditions are among global priorities today. In fact, teachers are the single most influential and powerful force for equity, access and quality in education. There is a shortage of well trained teachers worldwide. The development of education system depends on the Nations planners, administrators, educationist and the teachers. Teacher performance is the most crucial input in the field of education. Whatever policies may be laid down, in the ultimate analysis these have to be interpreted and implemented by teachers, as much through their personal example as through the teaching-learning processes. We are on the threshold of the development of new technologies likely to revolutionize teaching in classrooms. Nowadays, we face a paradox of having better books and research but progressively more indifferent teachers. Teacher education has been greatly influenced over the years by developments in the field of education as well as those in the society at large.

Although a range of committees and policy documents have made many suggestions and recommendations for urgent reform in teacher education in J&K during recent decades, but the

ISSN: 2235-767X
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majority of these proposals have yet to be implemented. As demand for teachers has increased in recent years and led to an explosion in the number of Teacher Education Institutions and courses at various levels, this has not been coupled with a reform in infrastructure, faculty expertise, learning resources or quality at policy and practical levels. To fill this gap we have to do a lot and the central government, statutory bodies like NCTE, UGC, NCERT, NUEPA, Institutes of Advance Studies in Education (IASEs) of the Universities, Central Universities, premier institutions of education and policy planners with other stakeholders have to play a major role in this process of reform.

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