

UNFOLDING GROUND REALITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR INNOVATIONS IN TEACHER EDUCATION



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Abstract:It is expected from educational institutions to provide opportunities to students not just to complete a course successfully but to empower them to be successful in their life to come. A teacher's success depends upon the nature and innovations in the training programme. In theory, teachers are reflective practitioners- professionals who are 'domain experts' in both subject content as well as the 'how' of teaching. Their role as professionals allows them to adapt to the needs of the classroom as they teach, innovating with teaching practice, pedagogical approaches, the design of teaching-learning material and similar such issues which collectively determine the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The NCF-2005, conceptualizes a very different role for the teacher i.e. someone who has agency and professional capacity for exercising autonomy. The kind of teacher that the NCF demands needs to be given time and resources to study and reflect on her or his own practice and on the world surrounding the schools. To compete as a successful teacher in the 21st century a teacher must adopt these skills so that they don't lag behind the pace of the changing world. However, there are several constraints as well. The present paper focuses upon the above mentioned aspects effectively and suggests some measures for its improvement.

Keywords:Technology, Communication Revolution, Socio-Economic Reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION:

Greek philosopher Heraclites of Ephesus (C 535-475 BC) once said: 'Nothing is constant in the world but change..'. Modern education has changed the concept of teaching from teachers' centered to learners' centered. Similarly, teacher centered lecture based instruction is changing to students centered interactive learning. Teachers', thus, has to perform the role of facilitator for the active learning by the pupils. Knowledge is generated in an environment where interaction between teachers, students and the content takes place in interactive ways. Researches around the world also suggests that we remember 20% what we hear, 30% what we see, 50% what we see and hear and 90% what we see, hear and do. The traditional methods of instruction seems to be less effective in front of technological usage in teaching-learning processes which increases productivity and facilitates instruction and learning up to deeper level. It has an edge upon traditional method in providing opportunities to engage students in active participation, exploration and research.

Today, there is an abundance of techno-resources. It offers great scope for teachers and students to work in innovative and interesting ways. However, the applicability of these resources depends upon the teachers and all those teacher educators who prepare teachers for future. The teacher of today rarely utilizes technology in making children's understanding. There may be several reasons for this state of affairs. One of the major reasons for this is the concept of education itself which has shifted towards examination system. Teachers teach today the basic skills and facts for securing good marks in the examination by memorizing them. What has not been done by the teachers is making child to be curious, visually literate, dealing with complexities and using technology tools for producing high quality products. Marks has been taken synonymically for intelligence and understanding in the present day teaching. Securing good marks in the examination which is often based on the cramming of the text book limits the opportunity for teachers in utilizing innovative practices in teaching and learning processes for better and highest levels of learning. In the early classes we find children to be very inquisitive and they ask several questions as well. However, by the time they reach in eighth standard they hardly raise questions and become receptive. This shows the dominance of text books which is utilized not as a source but as the only valid source of knowledge. This is also because of the pressure of passing examination with good marks. In this scenario, even the child starts believing that knowledge is what is acquired in the classrooms and comes out of textbooks and her/his own experience has very little value in learning. In spite of all these the inquisitive nature of children never dies and they keep thinking and exploring the things according to their interests.

Children of today are very advance with regard to technology. Contrary to it are our teachers who are hardly technology savvy. There is a major paradigm shift in the instructional methods with the change of time. To be competitive in the period of globalization it is important to change our traditional methods so as to meet the challenges posed by the global markets. To meet these demands, a teacher must supplement or replace traditional methods of instruction with innovative educational experiences. Technology must be used as a tool to facilitates these methods where as schools must implement technology in the learning environment. It is hard to believe in the technological era that understanding of children can not be increased deeply on any topic. Technology has even taken the place of writing board in the classroom what we usually call black board. However, one thing that has almost static is our teacher education programme where quite a less progress has been made technologically with regard to teaching in the classroom environment.

The old practice of making files of different types by the pupil teachers during their training programme which may not have relevance in the practical life in 21st century still persists. The pupil teachers make several files irrespective of knowing practical importance of it in the same age old traditional methods. Various files have become obsolete with the changing time but they are being carried in teacher education programme as legacy. There is a need to change these files with technological use to suit the present day needs as it will be cost effective as well. It is very important as we are preparing teachers for the 21st century.

UGC model curriculum for education (2001) acknowledges that newer technologies such as internet, telematics, World Wide Web, e-mail, e-commerce etc are impacting education. Therefore, in order to be relevant and as a potent means of socio-economic reconstruction, education must be responsive to these changes and challenges. There are several other research and communication tools available on the internet such as directories, search engines, ask the experts, net snippets online conferencing, video conferencing, e- conferencing, internet forum, news groups, blogs, wikipedia, discussion board, chat rooms, e-journal, digital libraries etc which can be utilized in teaching and learning processes. Technology develops higher order thinking skills by involving children work in a collaborative group, solving problems and applying process of problems solving in the development of solution. It is needless to say that creative and critical thinking as well as problem solving skills enhances academic and social skills. In the post

modern era where technology is accessible to almost every one and where students are more technology savvy, we must acknowledge that technology should be used as a means and not as an end from the point of view of teaching and learning processes. The teacher education programme should be responsive to the spirit of the time and the needs of society and its future aspiration. It is necessary, therefore, for the teacher education programme to articulate effectively the concerns and commitment of education as a social reconstruction. It must address seriously the functionality and excellence at a national and international level so that the concept could be translated in to percepts, theories into practice, and philosophy into praxis.

However, teacher education in India represents a discipline that has chosen to live in the past instead of moving ahead and changing with times. Excessive emphasis on theory should shift and make room for greater focus on professional competencies that can prove workable in classrooms of today and of tomorrow. The theory papers in teacher education must synthesize human knowledge with technologies to give it a meaning and functionality with regard to the understanding by the students.

There are several constraints for the effectiveness of the teacher education programme. Most of the teacher educators are not trained in utilization of technologies in the classroom context. Secondly, many teacher educators have not even taught in the schools so they develop a hypothetical conception regarding the actual functionality of the classroom and children's interaction with teachers. This does not provide them with actual experience of the classroom which ultimately diminishes the actuality of the teacher education programme. In the post modern era technologies are changing at a rapid pace. Lack of interest and orientation towards technology by the teachers on the one hand and technology savvy children of today on the other create hurdles in getting meaningful and interesting teaching learning process. Accreditation granted to the teacher education institute without having proper infrastructural facilities with regard to technology room pave another problem in producing effective teacher. Missing of innovative ideas for use of technology in teaching learning processes, lack of interest by teachers, phobia in utilization, non exploration of fresh information with regard to particular topics and moulding it in teaching and learning process, lack of devotion and utilization of text books as the only valid source of knowledge by the teachers add to the problem. This in turn makes teaching less effective as well as boring to the students and they remain passive receptor rather than active learner.

The problem no only lies in the use of technology in teaching-learning processes but the orientation of teachers also lack in the core teaching skills. Though, teachers during training programme learn it in theory but many of the core teaching skills are not practiced by them so that teachers can utilize it effectively in the classroom. Once the core teaching skills are learnt effectively it will be easy to integrate it with technology for effective teaching. Basic computer skills should also be made compulsory for teachers so that it can be utilize browsing new information and utilization in the classroom. Demonstrating the utilization of different technological use by teacher educators will help the pre service teachers to understand clearly how effectively technology can be integrated in teaching to make teaching –learning effective, forceful and interesting. Therefore, teacher educator must present a lesson based on the use of technology in front of the trainee teachers.

It is however, unfortunate that in a period of communication revolution, the nature of teacher education has remained more or less the same and is receptive to change. The irrelevant file making should be replaced by technological files which could be meaningful with the changing time. In the age of technological change there is a need to bring innovative practices in the teacher education so that the dissemination of information to the children should reach them effectively and concepts can change into percepts and understanding of children should be widened. There is a need that children should come out of bookish knowledge and develop thinking independently and innovatively. There is a profound gap between the knowledge and skills acquired in the school and those required in today's world and in the technology infused work place. The technology that has become necessary in our daily life is still outside in the school environment. It provides students with the opportunity via e-mail or discussion forums to ask questions and also collaborate with students in the understanding of the course contents. It can be used as a tool to enhance student's educational experience by creating variety of methods to meet special needs, teach students how to manage information and allow for opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills. It is important for the educational system to make parallel changes in order to fulfill its objectives in preparing students for world beyond the classrooms. There is a need that the teacher educators as well as teachers keep burning their desire of learning and become acceptor and not receptor of the change in order to keep pace with the changing time.

SUGGESTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATIONS:

Teacher educators must acquire skills for utilization of technology in the pedagogical discourse as the applicability of technology in the teacher education will prepare skilled teachers for future.

There is a major paradigm shift in the instructional methods with the change of time. It is important to change the traditional methods so as to meet the challenges posed by the global markets.

Utilization of technology must be promoted by schools and the teacher education should incorporate utilization and implementation of technology in the learning environment.

The old practice of making manual files does not suit the present day demand of school education. It must be changed with technological file that is of relevance in the practical life in 21st century still persists.

Teacher educators as well as pupil teachers should be having programme where they should learn to utilize communication tools available on the internet such as directories, search engines, ask the experts, net snippets online conferencing, video conferencing, e- conferencing, internet forum, news groups, blogs, wikipedia, discussion board, chat rooms, e-journal, digital libraries etc which can be utilized in teaching and learning processes.

The teacher education programme must address seriously utilization, functionality and excellence of technology at a national and international level so that the concept could be translated in to percepts, theories into practice, and philosophy into praxis.

There should be examination reform so that marks should not be taken synonymically for intelligence and understanding in the present day teaching.

The theory papers in teacher education must synthesize human knowledge with technologies to give it a meaning and functionality with regard to the understanding by the students.

Teacher educators must acquaint themselves with the actual functionality of the classroom and children's interaction with teachers in school in present day scenario. Only then they may produce better teachers having actual experience of the classroom of schools today

Affiliation granted to the teacher education institute without having proper infrastructural facilities with regard to technology room pave another problem in producing effective teacher. Affiliation rules must consider these dimensions before granting affiliation to institution.

It is important for the educational system to make parallel changes in order to fulfill its objectives in preparing students for world beyond the classrooms.

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