

# Quality Indicators in Teacher Education Programmes

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**Abstract:** The quality of basic education provided to our children is largely influenced by the quality of our teachers in the schools. As no nation can afford to provide poor quality education, it is necessary that we build a strong system of quality teacher education - on which depends the quality of the teacher and ultimately the Nation's education. The political and socio-economic conditions set insurmountable dilemmas for quality assurance systems. Education in general and teacher education particularly, is deliberate enterprise aiming to provide good quality service to its customers in order to enable them to contribute significantly for development of the nation. This quality service is essential in the modern context of globalization. Quality in teacher education is the area of focal interest of the present study. Conceptual framework of quality has been discussed in details. Various quality indicators in the field of teacher education have been identified and few major among them have been explained elaborately.

**Keywords:** Quality, Teacher education, Indicators

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher education plays vital role in reforming and strengthening the education system of any country. The purpose of teacher education is to produce teachers who have competencies in various fields. The role of teachers is no longer confined in teaching by imparting knowledge only, they need to be thorough professionals, fully equipped with high academic standard, pedagogical skills, ethical and moral values etc (Singh, 2008). In fact, they have to play a multi-tasking role in the context of various challenges emerging in the field of contemporary society. In this connection, the role of teacher education has also increased many folds. It has special roles to prepare future teachers who are socially responsible and conversant with unique features of cultural heritage and various socio-cultural ethos, have high commitment and the ability to lead society and nations shaping young minds of the learners. Unfortunately the programs of teacher education are alleged to be static and stagnant. In spite of many innovations in this area abroad, situation in India is not up to the mark. Here teacher educators repeat and experiment their own training, which they received earlier upon their students. N.P.E. (1986) and the subsequent program of actions have realized that the program of teacher education in various stages requires a thorough reconstruction in its input, process and out put in order to make the system quality oriented. The international Commission on Education for 21st century has also recognized necessity of reshaping this program in order to enhance its quality in various aspects. Though recently there is quantitative expansion, many things are yet to be done to ensure its quality. 'Quality' is highly debatable theme. It is the goal of an eternal quest through the corridor of human history, the driving force for the entire human endeavor. According to oxford English dictionary the notion of 'quality' includes all the essential attributes of an individual or object indicating its value and acceptability to the other. The British Standards Institution defines 'quality' as the totality of features of characteristics of a product or service that bear upon its ability to satisfy the stated or the implied needs. In the modern context of globalization, the term quality emphasizes on meeting customer expectations. Customer can be external or internal. External customers are the recipients of an output, but are not part of the organization supplying it; whereas internal customers are the recipients of another person's or department's output within an organization (Bayer, 1997). In the field of education- students, faculty members, administrative staff, management etc. are the internal customers; and the community, government etc. are the external customers. Stake holders include both internal and external customers, to whom quality is ultimately meaningful. Assurance of quality and standards of higher education is now widely recognized as a fundamental pre-requisite criterion. In fact quality in education is a matter of global quest. In order to succeed in this and to attend global standards in local settings, it is necessary for Indian educational institutions to improve and sustain the quality. Quality in the present era has proved to be a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of any service (Singh, 2008). In fact, quality, now a days, has become a key word of any system due to emergence of the issues liberalization, privatization, and globalization; where everybody has got the scope to show his/her own wealth. To ensure quality in education (as well as in teacher education particularly), is a massive challenge since it deals with the most sensitive creation of earth i.e. the human resources (Rogers, 1995). Industrial products are finished goods. Nothing can be done once they are finished. One can look for a better quality only in next time. Therefore, the concept of quality in industry has an objective basis and is less critical. But in education (including teacher education also), there is no such finished product. Human resources, whom it deals with, are always on the way 'to be'; they continue to learn and evolve (Rogers, 1995). Education in general, facilitates this continuous evolution of an individual. Therefore, the quality criterion in this context is multi-dimensional, more subjective, and critical, as well. Teacher education is responsible for producing quality teachers, where identification of quality norms and the process of their operationalization is extremely complex. In the context of teacher education, quality refers to pursuit of excellence, consistency of fairness, satisfaction of client needs, and appropriate identification, utilization of various resources and also further generation of resources leading to achievement of institutional goals.

## Quality Indicators

In the field of teacher education, the major quality indicators namely- curriculum design; curriculum transaction; evaluation system; research and development; infrastructure and learning resources; student support and progression; organization and management etc. have been identified by researchers. Special emphasis is also given on internship program, though it is considered under the broad category of curriculum. Few among these indicators are explained in details in the following sections.

### **1. Curriculum Design**

Curriculum in teacher education consists of two major components – theory and the practicum. Though teacher education is mostly a skill based program but conceptual understanding of those skill oriented activities might be a major concern of a teacher (teacher trainee). Therefore theory and practicum should have a justified proportion in the curriculum. Historical, Philosophical, Psychological, and Sociological aspects of education are four essential theoretical components. In addition, various contemporary issues and challenges emerging in the field of modern education should also be included there (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The various concepts should be incorporated following the integrated approach in order to facilitate a comprehensive learning of the students. Various socio-cultural ethos and traditional features of Indian society, along with the discussion on different aspects of modern pedagogical developments might also be included. Particularly, the present status of teacher education in the context of liberalization, globalization, privatization, WTO-outsourcing will have to be considered essential also. ). Simulated lesson, field survey, case studies, community outreach activities etc. should be included in practicum. Teacher education program in India should be designed also with due concern to Indian traditional value system, as well. The curriculum of teacher education at all stages has to emphasize this traditional identity. The influence of different racial, religious, social, linguistic and regional groups in developing India's composite culture and nationhood need to be clearly discussed in this program of teacher education.

### **2. Curriculum Transaction**

Not only curricular development, major emphasis should also be given on effective transaction of curriculum in teacher education program. Presently, responsibility of the curriculum transaction is laid on the teacher educators who by and large use lecture method for this purpose. The teacher educators should emphasize on self and independent study of the trainees, group learning and group discussion methods, peer group tutoring, learning through field trips and excursion, problem solving and preparation of projects (Singh, 2008). They should learn to prepare tests and evaluation tools. Learning by community participation and observation, workshops and seminar mode of teaching, teaching through radio counseling and teleconferencing technique etc. may also be practiced. Preparation of various self-learning packages using technology for the teacher trainees should also be encouraged. In case of teaching the laboratory practical, emphasis even now-a-days is being laid on mere experimentation only, what is usually practiced by school learners. But the underlying spirit of conducting experimentations in laboratory by a school student and a teacher trainee should not be identical. In addition, in view of multicultural nature of Indian society- teacher education program, in Indian context, should address diverse issues related to cultural lives of students in India. In this regard, the need of transacting curriculum through a multicultural mode is effective. Trainee teachers should be provided various cultural materials, and also the opportunity to understand and appreciate other cultures, and information about the characteristics and learning styles of various groups and individuals.

### **3. Evaluation**

Evaluation of student teachers at this stage need to be comprehensive and continuous (Ahmand, 2008). Due importance should be given to the opinions of supervisors and school teachers who will maintain the record of the progress of student teachers. The capacity to organize thoughts and express them coherently, taking notes from reading materials and using teaching aids and ICT carefully at the appropriate moment need to be the major concerns of evaluation. Latest evaluation techniques as peer group evaluation of trainee teachers, self-assessment, evaluation in terms of teacher educators' opinion using rating scale etc. may be introduced. Formative as well as summative mode of evaluation both are essential. The semester-end examination should be accompanied by continuous evaluation also, on the basis of which feedback may be provided to the students. Continuous evaluation should be practiced throughout the entire course of the academic program. Evaluation should be made on the basis of grades and not on marks. Emphasis should be given on the internal examination, rather external one.

### **4. Research in teacher education**

During the last five decades a large number of researches, surveys, etc. have been conducted in teacher education. Characteristics of effective teaching, curriculum evaluation, organizational climate and its impact on teachers' performance, the criterion for admission of prospective teachers and administration of education/teacher education have found to catch the attention of researchers. But planned and purposive approach has been found to be neglected. In a few universities only, teacher educators conducting/supervising researches in various areas of education/teacher education are found. There is the need for recasting the whole program/curriculum of research methodology and use of statistics in it. Therefore it is important to establish proper linkage of teacher educators among themselves and also with various stakeholders working in this field in order to develop a coherent understanding of various related issues and concerns. This will help in identifying suitable research problems, avoids duplication in research and enhances the possibility that all aspects and variables involved are being attended to properly. Thus it is important to have long term plans for research, a proper networking and collaboration among the teacher education institutions, availability of resources in terms of grants as well as effective guidance from expert research guide etc. may result in a quality outcome.

## 5. Internship

Internship program Internship program is the core component of teacher education. There are wide variations in this program from institutions to institution. There are wide variations in this program from institutions to institution. Not only that, there is a common practice to consider this program in the form of mere teaching practical- by delivering lectures only on the method subjects. Exhaustive rating of practice teaching lessons (involving the essential skills) should be encouraged employing standardized tools and techniques. Besides teaching only the trainee teachers should also be acquainted with various other activities performed by teachers as maintaining records, organizing and assisting various co-curricular activities, student counseling, parent contacting, organizing examinations in order to acquire a holistic experience of a true internee.

### Conclusion

Over the years much data has been collected on the indicators for administrative purposes. Unfortunately it has neither been used for the purpose of quality improvement nor has been rigorously assessed for various dimensions of data quality such as accuracy, reliability and reproducibility. It is therefore essential that a formal process of acting on results be in place. Consideration of these recommended indicators by the institutions with a serious intention for quality improvement might result in good practices resulting in improved Teacher Quality. Although the recommended indicators represents a good set of measures, it is important to recognize that these indicators will require considerable refinement over time and lot of contextualizing. In a way these indicators are the beginning of the benchmarking process - an identification of the aspects and processes to be addressed. On self -assessment by the institutions, these would highlight the perceived strengths and weaknesses. External assessors can use this indicators and the good practice s in evaluating the institutions and the assessment agencies to develop a good practice database and establish benchmarks. The use of these indicators by the external assessors will make the assessment more context free and objective. It is envisaged that a provision of unblended data with public access will enable the performance of teacher education institutions to be opened up to greater public scrutiny and enhance accountability. In terms of future it is the user's view that will be a critical driver behind any upgrades and further conceptual development. A fairly strong association between teacher training and teacher effectiveness and learning efficiency, and adverse effects on the learner appear to be especially common after transitions. Quality of the teacher educators, participatory role of practice teaching school staff in the skill development process, and use of a core set of data in transition from one type of teaching to another are some of the areas on which we would like to work in future.

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