

# **Teacher Education – Introduction, Meaning, Its Nature, Need, Scope and Vision**

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## **Introduction**

An educational institution performs a significant function of providing learning experiences to lead their students from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about this transformation are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education, —The teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

## **MEANING AND NATURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION :**

**Meaning of Teacher Education :** It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation. The National Council for Teacher Education has defined teacher education as – A programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein.

According to *Goods Dictionary of Education*, 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.

In 1906-1956, the program of teacher preparation was called teacher training. It prepared teachers as mechanics or technicians. It had narrower goals with its focus being only on skill training. The perspective of teacher education was therefore very narrow and its scope was limited. As W.H. Kilpatrick put it, —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** } leads to Holistic development

- Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.
- Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage.
- Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all life long learning skills. An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge, attitude and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development.

### **Nature of Teacher Education :**

1) Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other. According to the International Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher education (1987), —Teacher education can be considered in three phases : Pre-service, Induction and In-service. The three phases are considered as parts of a continuous process.

2) Teacher education is based on the theory that —Teachers are made, not born|| in contrary to the assumption, —Teachers are born, not made.|| Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills that are called —tricks of the trade.

3) Teacher education is broad and comprehensive. Besides preservice and in-service programmes for teachers, it is meant to be involved in various community programmes and

extension activities, viz adult education and non-formal education programmes, literacy and development activities of the society.

4) It is ever-evolving and dynamic. In order to prepare teachers who are competent to face the challenges of the dynamic society, Teacher education has to keep abreast of recent developments and trends.

5) The crux of the entire process of teacher education lies in its curriculum, design, structure, organization and transaction modes, as well as the extent of its appropriateness.

6) As in other professional education programmes the teacher education curriculum has a knowledge base which is sensitive to the needs of field applications and comprises meaningful, conceptual blending of theoretical understanding available in several cognate disciplines.

7) Teacher education has become differentiated into stage-specific programmes. This suggests that the knowledge base is adequately specialized and diversified across stages, which should be utilized for developing effective processes of preparing entrant teachers for the functions which a teacher is expected to perform at each stage.

8) It is a system that involves an interdependence of its Inputs, Processes and Outputs.

**Need of teacher education :** The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observes, “The quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher.” In his Call for Action for American Education in the 21st Century in 1996, Clinton indicated 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”.

The need for teacher education is felt due to the following reasons;

1) It is common knowledge that the academic and professional standards of teachers constitute a critical component of the essential learning conditions for achieving the educational goals of a nation. The focus of teacher preparation had to shift from training to education if it had to make a positive influence on the quality of curriculum transaction in classrooms and thereby pupil learning and the larger social transformation. The aspects that need greater emphasis are;

the length of academic preparation, the level and quality of subject matter knowledge, the repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers possess to meet the needs of diverse learning situations, the degree of commitment to the profession, sensitivity to contemporary issues and problems and the level of motivation. This is not possible if teacher preparation focused only on training. Holistic teacher building is necessary and therefore teacher education needed more emphasis than mere training.

2) Educating all children well depends not only on ensuring that teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their work, but also that they take responsibility for seeing that all children reach high levels of learning and that they act accordingly.

3) People come to teacher education with beliefs, values, commitments, personalities and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling which affect who they are as teachers and what they are able to learn in teacher education and in teaching. Helping teacher candidates examine critically their beliefs and values as they relate to teaching, learning and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education (Fieman-Nemser, 2001).

4) The National Academy of Education Committee's Report (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005) wrote that : —On a daily basis, teachers confront complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgement and that can involve high stakes outcomes for students' future. To make good decisions, teachers must be aware of the many ways in which student learning can unfold in the context of development, learning differences, language and cultural influences, and individual temperaments, interests and approaches to learning. In addition to foundational knowledge about the areas of learning and performance listed in the above quotation, teachers need to know how to take the steps necessary to gather additional information that will allow them to make more grounded judgements about what is going on and what strategies may be helpful. More importantly, teachers need to keep what is best for the student at the centre of their decision making.

5) Teacher education like any other educational intervention, can only work on those professional commitments or dispositions that are susceptible to modification. While we can't remake someone's personality, we can reshape attitudes towards the other and develop a professional rather than a personal role orientation towards teaching as a practice.

6) The Ministry of Education document —Challenge of Education : A Policy Perspective (1985) has mentioned, —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 implemented by teachers as much through their personal example as through teaching learning processes. India has reached the threshold of the development of new technologies which are likely to revolutionise the classroom teaching. Unless capable and committed are teachers in service, the education system cannot become a suitable and potential instrument of national development. The teacher is required to acquire adequate knowledge, skills, interests and attitudes towards the teaching profession. The teacher's work has become more complicated and technical in view of the new theories of psychology, philosophy, sociology, modern media and materials. The teacher can be made proficient with well planned, imaginative pre-service and in-service training programmes.

**Scope of Teacher Education :** The scope of teacher education can be understood in the following ways; Teacher education at different levels of education Triangular basis of teacher education Aspects of teacher education.

Teacher Education at different levels of Education : Teacher education reaches teachers at all levels of education, namely Preprimary, Primary, Elementary, Secondary, Higher Secondary and the Tertiary. The needs and requirements of students and education vary at each level. Hence level and stage-specific teacher preparation is essential. Teacher education also helps in the development of teaching skills in teachers of professional institutions. The teachers in professional institutions have only the theoretical and practical knowledge of their respective subjects. They require specialized teacher training inputs to deal with students entering their professions. Teacher education also reaches special education and physical education. Thus where there are teachers, there would be teacher education. The knowledge base is adequately specialized and diversified across stages, in order to develop effective processes of preparing entrant teachers for the functions which a teacher is expected to perform at each stage.

Triangular Basis of Teacher education : Construction of the relevant knowledge base for each stage of education requires a high degree of academic and intellectual understanding of matter related to teacher education at each stage. This involves selection of theoretical knowledge from disciplines cognate to education, namely, psychology, sociology and philosophy, and converting it into forms suitable for teacher education.

Teacher education derives its content from the disciplines of Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology. These disciplines provide the base for better understanding and application of Teacher education. The Philosophical basis provides insights to the student teachers about the

implications of- the various schools of philosophy, ancient and modern philosophical thoughts, educational thoughts of philosophical thinkers on education and its various aspects such as curriculum construction and discipline.

The Sociological basis helps the student teachers to understand the role of society and its dynamics in the educational system of a nation and the world at large. It encompasses the ideals that influence national and international scenes.

The Psychological basis helps the student teachers develop insights into students' psychological make-up. This enables the student teachers to understand their self, their students and the learning situations such that they are able to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences to their students.

**Aspects of Teacher Education :** Teacher education is concerned with the aspects such as, who (Teacher Educator), whom (Student teacher), what (Content) and how (Teaching Strategy). Teacher education is dependent upon the quality of teacher educators. The quality of pedagogical inputs in teacher education programmes and their effective utilization for the purpose of preparing prospective teachers depend largely on the professional competence of teacher educators and the ways in which it is utilized for strengthening the teacher education programme. Teacher education, thus, first deals with the preparation of effective teacher educators. Teacher education reaches out to the student teachers by providing the relevant knowledge, attitude and skills to function effectively in their teaching profession. It serves to equip the student teachers with the conceptual and theoretical framework within which they can understand the intricacies of the profession. It aims at creating the necessary attitude in student teachers towards the stakeholders of the profession, so that they approach the challenges posed by the environment in a very positive manner. It empowers the student teachers with the skills (teaching and soft skills) that would enable them to carry on the functions in the most efficient and 9 effective manner. Teacher education therefore pays attention to its content matter.

**Objectives : Vision of teacher education :** Teacher education has to become more sensitive to the emerging demands from the school system. For this, it has to prepare teachers for a dual role of; Encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching learning situations who enables learners (students) to discover their talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens; and, An active member of the group of persons who make

conscious effort to contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum to maintain its relevance to the changing societal needs and personal needs of learners, keeping in view the experiences gained in the past and the concerns and imperatives that have emerged in the light of changing national development goals and educational priorities. These expectations suggest that teacher operates in a larger context and its dynamics as well as concerns impinge upon her functioning. That is to say, teacher has to be responsive and sensitive to the social contexts of education, the various disparities in the background of learners as well as in the macro national and global contexts, national concerns for achieving the goals of equity, parity, social justice as also excellence. To be able to realize such expectations, TE has to comprise such features as would enable the student teachers to Care for children, and who love to be with them; Understand children within social, cultural and political contexts; View learning as a search for meaning out of personal experience; Understand the way learning occurs, possible ways of creating conducive conditions for learning, differences among students in respect of the kind, pace and styles of learning. 10 View knowledge generation as a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. Be receptive and constantly learning. View learning as a search for meaning out of personal experience, and knowledge generation as a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. View knowledge not as an external reality embedded in textbooks, but as constructed in the shared context of teachinglearning and personal experience. Own responsibility towards society, and work to build a better world. Appreciate the potential of productive work and hands-on experience as a pedagogic medium both inside and outside the classroom. Analyze the curricular framework, policy implications and texts. Have a sound knowledge base and basic proficiency in language. The objectives of teacher education would therefore be to, Provide opportunities to observe and engage with children, communicate with and relate to children Provide opportunities for self-learning, reflection, assimilation and articulation of new ideas; developing capacities for self directed learning and the ability to think, be self-critical and to work in groups. Provide opportunities for understanding self and others (including one's beliefs, assumptions and emotions); developing the ability for self analysis, self-evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation. Provide opportunities to enhance understanding, knowledge and examine disciplinary knowledge and social realities, relate subject matter with the social milieu and develop critical thinking. Provide opportunities to develop professional skills in pedagogy, observation, documentation, analysis, drama, craft, story-telling and reflective inquiry.