

Primary Teacher's Training Curriculum Lacks Inter-Subject Balance

Prof. Md. Riazul Islam

At present 95.0% of government primary school teachers are trained and for others percentage is very low. But there is a general complain that for most of our primary schools teaching is not effective. Even after being processed through in-service training teachers are prone to use dogmatic method of teaching and lack professionalization. A few studies show that the expected competencies are not properly mastered with only little improvement in social and intellectual behavior of the children. The teachers are failing in delivering proper teaching behaviour and children are assessed through recall type examinations. Real situation is, our present system of teacher training is not free from shortcomings.

Low Entry Requirement And Short Duration Of The Course

Entry requirement to pre-service training is successful 10 years of schooling for girls and for boys it is 12 years of schooling. It means that a 15 (+) girl and 17 (+) boy can enter into a primary teacher training institute for pre-service education. When compared to some developed system of the world it appears to be ridiculous. By this little education their knowledge and skill base is highly limited and by age they themselves are children who go for learning child education. With this shaky background they only go for one academic year's training.

This one year of training is very tough for the trainee boys and girls. The course is heavy having both theoretical and practical works. The course of similar to that of consecutive type of B.Ed course of the country with only bias to primary. Naturally, the trainees learn recall type knowledge and mechanical skills of doing things without any infusion of motivation and professionalization. Even in India it requires 12 years of schooling and 2 years of training for becoming a primary school teacher which is 13 years of schooling with 3 years of training in Sri Lanka.

For our country entry requirement can be made same for both women and men and the course duration should be extended appropriately.

Trainers Are Not Specifically Trained On Primary Pedagogy

The minimum qualification of the PTI's trainers is first degree along with one year B.Ed training. But in Bangladesh no Teachers' Training College trains teacher in primary pedagogy. So, the trainers trained from those colleges lack knowledge and skill of basic primary pedagogy centring child development and practical child study. Through training they pass with motivation to teach at the secondary level. They join PTI's for job when they are trained in National Academy for Primary Education, Mymensingh (NAPE) through in-service training.

However, it would have been better if a few teachers training

colleges offered courses with specialization in primary education. They should prepare teacher for PTIs. (To be concluded)

Curriculum Lacks Inter-Subject Balance

C-in-Ed curriculum has both width and depth, meant for very young trainees. It has its strengths as primary pedagogy curriculum. However, within a few subjects there are lack of balance. For instance, the subject of "Child Psychology, Teaching Method and Evaluation" carries 100 marks in all and it comprises 5 objectives. For these 5 objectives 32 learning outcomes, 32 topics and 5 practical works have been identified. On the other hand "Bangla" carrying 100 marks aspires 14 objectives. For these objectives 30 learning outcomes, 30 topics and 25 practical works have been identified. So, keeping relationship with marks inter subject balance relating to objectives, learning outcomes, topics and practical work needs to be maintained.

Curriculum Should Cover Sensitivity And Inter-Cultural Education

Though apparently Bangladesh is a mono-cultural country, practically it is not. In addition to religious differences there are number of ethnic groups speaking different mother tongue forming sub-cultures of their own characteristics. Religion, gender, class, disadvantaged group and ethnicity are the population characteristics which needs to be taken into account in primary teacher's education. Teachers should not have different expectations for different group of children but take each group characteristic as unique for development. Each also has its identity and developmental characteristics. It has pedagogic implications. Teacher should know how to help every group and every child to develop in a most excellent way. But our teacher's training programme is mostly sensitivity and culture neutral by tradition. This is good to exercise impartiality professionally and lay good general foundation of school climate. At the same time, the teacher should be "difference sensitive" and must acquire related professional knowledge and skill to help all the children in terms of differences and characteristics. Teacher will even be able to help in learning from each other inter-culturally.

However, it is expected that teachers' education curriculum developer of Bangladesh will attend to this area too.

In-service Training of Primary School Teachers

In Bangladesh primary education setup, Assistant Thana Education Officer (ATEO) is responsible for one cluster of schools (25-30 schools) which is divided into 4-5 sub-clusters and they are mainly responsible for the in-service training of teachers. In-service training of educational personnel excluding primary teachers is the responsibility of NAPE.

An ATEO is in charge of 25-30 schools constituting a cluster

within a thana (Unit police area). A cluster is again divided into 4-5 sub-clusters, each having 4-5 schools with around 30 teachers in it. With its approved schedule, ATEO organizes training for each of the sub-cluster. As a pre-service trainer, his load is not very much. Routinely he can and organizes training of teachers every month. In-service training covers current problems and issues and also new innovations. As trainer, he is not a loaded person. There are, at present about 2000 ATEO's are working throughout Bangladesh.

Professional Preparation Of ATEO's

Among the ATEO's, there are two categories. One who is promoted to the post from among the school heads and the other is directly recruited young man/woman having higher degrees like Bachelor/Master. Promotee school heads form a small percentage whereas bulk is directly recruited. For the directly recruited ATEO's pre-service training is not mandatory for higher qualification. Thus, ATEO's on joining the job go for in-service training (even without having pre-service training) at NAPE for job preparation. Since most of ATEO's do not have pre-service training they cannot benefit much by the in-service training. Naturally it is difficult for them to change their traditional beliefs relating to child education. It is even difficult for them to understand pedagogic significance of educational problems and issues.

However, government allows the non-trained ATEO's in small number to go for pre-service training. It needs to be speeded up and pre-service training should be made compulsory for the supervisory personnel.

Effectiveness Of ATEO's Position As Trainer

Though job title is contradictory, ATEO's are considered to be instructional/academic supervisor of primary education. As a part of instructional supervisory functions, ATEO does the job of in-service training of teachers. But, in fact an ATEO also has administrative functions of inspecting and directing the school activities, thus, administrative function has little supervisory functions and causes supervisory ineffectiveness. In this way, an ATEO is organizationally not very effective as teacher trainer.

ATEO's should be relieved of their administrative functions and necessary instruments should be developed so that the ATEO's will be able to provide supervisory/advisory functions to the schools. It is hoped that effectiveness of ATEO's position as trainer will improve to great extent.

NCTB-DPE Collaboration In In-Service Training Of Teachers

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is the organization to take up programmes of curriculum evaluation and development. In the process it develops syllabuses and textbooks and teachers

guide. From 1992 it went into implementation of new competency based primary curriculum. Since the administration of schools is the job of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), NCTB-DPE jointly undertook in-service training programme for the school teachers on new curricular teaching. They trained about 1,73,000 teachers, teacher-trainers, officials and supervisors upto 1996. This was great and should continue.

However, there should be collaboration between NCTB and DPE in designing in-service teacher training programme where the ATEO's will also be involved.

In-Service Training of Teachers Through IDEAL Project

For improvement of quality of teaching in schools government has taken up Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) Project from 1996. It introduces Multiple ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL), Child to Child Approach To Education, Safe Learning Environment Approach to Teaching etc. IDEAL Project in Collaboration with NCTB, DPE and UNICEF conducts in-service training for primary school teachers on modern approaches to teaching.

Though IDEAL covers a few districts only, it trains teachers for efficiency, enrichment and excellence. It aims at making classroom and school as joyful place for learning. So, it is necessary to diffuse IDEAL activities to all the districts of Bangladesh to bring about positive changes in teachers and schools.

Conclusion

After Jomtien declaration Bangladesh enacted compulsory Primary Education Law, 1990 with (Education for all) EFA 2000 target of 95.0% enrollment and 30.0% dropout for primary education. By this time enrollment target achieved more and dropout rate decreased to about 38.0%. Government has put emphasis on raising the standard of quality of education which will surely increase retention rate. To make sure of the supply of trained teachers two shifts have been introduced in some PTI and government itself is sending its non-trained teachers for pre-service training. PTI curriculum revision is now under consideration. Government is also keen to improve the in-service scenario and taking steps to professionalize its non-trained ATEO's.

However, this article has stated the present state of both pre-service and in-service training of primary school teachers with identification of problems. It has also given recommendations for the solution of each of the problems. It is hoped that if the primary teacher training problems are acknowledged and steps are taken to remedy them then we will have a new era for excellence in primary teachers' education in Bangladesh.

The author is Member (Primary Curriculum), National Curriculum and Text Book Board.