

Evolving Perspectives in Teacher Education: Scope, Context, and Challenges in the Education System Essay

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Abstract

Education plays a vital role in holistic social development in which teachers play a central role. Teacher education, thus, focuses on the type of training needed to achieve a particular academic goal because a teacher's ability directly influences the student's learning process. In addition to meeting institutional objectives, teachers have a responsibility to contribute to community development. To achieve this, they need professional skills for their own continuous development. However, they also face several challenges in their profession. Therefore, this paper discusses the scope of teacher education, the changing environment of teacher education in the Nepalese context, and the key challenges facing teacher education in order to understand how teacher education meets modern needs.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Professional Development, Educational Policy, Inclusive Education, Pedagogical Innovation, Teacher Competence, and Educational Reform.

Introduction

Institutions are the key sources of information that provide and share knowledge and enlighten people (Concept of Teacher Education, n.d.). It is mainly the teacher within institutions that makes knowledge and education possible and brings out the best in the learners. Thus, the teacher constitutes the most important component of any educational programme because it is through them that objectives at all levels of education are achieved. Therefore, it requires investment in training to enable individuals perform their roles better so that individuals, communities, and countries can thrive on the teachers' capabilities. Teachers should be professionally trained and skilled enough to enable them meet their objectives.

Apart from helping institutions achieve their goals, teachers should also strive to contribute to their community and serve the nation. Teacher education cannot be

underestimated because of the significance involved. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, for instance, highlights a number of teacher expectations that initial and in-service teacher education courses must respond to. The concept of teacher education revolves around the fact that learners' achievement is largely dependent on teachers' competency, sensitivity, and motivation. Teacher education, therefore, refers to all those formal and informal activities and experiences that are likely to improve an individual's capability and prepare him or her for teaching (Concept of Teacher Education, n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

Teaching is a challenging profession that requires teachers to handle a wide range of issues pertaining to the advances in teaching, technology, methods, and varied learner groups among other areas. The following questions, therefore, guided the research:

1. What are the roles of teaching at different levels?
2. Does the changing notion of teaching affect the profession?
3. How does inclusive education affect teaching?
4. Does education policy influence teaching?

Objectives of the Study

Teacher education covers all aspects of the teachers' learning processes and, as such, the concept is dynamic. As such, the research had the following objectives:

- a. Determining the scope of teacher education
- b. Assessing the theoretical basis of teacher education
- c. Examining the inclusiveness, equity, skills, and challenges teacher education faces
- d. Describing the main aspects of teacher education

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design. Due to time constraints, the study relied on library research to evaluate the scope of teacher education, inclusiveness, gender equity, challenges, and the role of technology, including information and communication technology. In addition, the study involved surveying teachers who differed in age, religion, and caste among other aspects to assess their views and opinions regarding teacher education.

Scope of Teacher Education

An understanding of the scope of teacher education involves examining its relevance in different levels of education, considering the theoretical basis of teacher education, and focusing on the key aspects of teacher education (Concept of Teacher Education, n.d.).

Teacher Education at Different Levels of Education

Teacher education is key at all levels of education including pre-primary, primary, elementary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary education. Due to the differing

nature of education at various levels and the increasing complexity of the education system, different levels of education require distinct teacher preparation. Thus, teacher education should be modular, focusing on the needs of learners at different levels of education and the roles played by teachers at these levels instead of providing generic training applicable to all levels and stages of education. Teacher education has a significant role to play in preparing teachers for instructional and academic roles. In addition, teachers working at specialized institutions often come prepared better with theoretical and practical skills relevant to their areas of specialization. Specialized teacher preparation is, therefore, critical, especially for those new to the profession. Special education and physical education, for instance, require specific insights into their respective fields. The scope of teacher education, therefore, covers level and stage differentiation as a way of enhancing teacher preparedness.

Theoretical Basis of Teacher Education

The need to have distinct areas of teacher education highlights the need to consider the relevance of the different academic fields that contribute to teacher education's theoretical basis. Teacher education has a theoretical basis that has been developed from allied fields of study, including psychology, sociology, and philosophy among others. These fields of study have been adapted and applied in teacher education to come up with the academic needs of the teachers' profession. Philosophy, for instance, informs the teacher about the various educational thoughts, including the historical perspectives on education. It provides a theoretical basis for considering issues affecting learning, curriculum, instruction, and discipline. Sociology, on the other hand, enables the student teacher to understand his or her society and how it influences education, including global education and values. Finally, the psychological basis enables the student teacher to develop an understanding of the psychological aspects of learning, as well as his or her own personality, which subsequently helps him or her identify the best strategies to use in teaching.

Key Aspects of Teacher Education

The key aspects of teacher education can be assessed from the teacher educator (who), students (whom), content (what), and pedagogy (how). The aspect of 'who' revolves around the issue of teacher educators. Teacher education's success lies in the ability of the teacher educators to provide appropriate pedagogical content and skills needed by student teachers during their professional preparation and subsequent practice. In addition to preparing student teachers, teachers' education programs also focus on training the teacher educators themselves. 'Whom,' on the other hand, refers to the students. Through teacher education, the student teachers seek to gain the knowledge needed to achieve personal and professional goals because teacher education programs equip them with theoretical and practical skills needed to face the challenges brought about by the profession. Thus, teacher education prepares teachers to perform their

duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently, including their subject matter competence.

Changing Context of Teacher Education in Nepal

Nepal has a long history of teaching and learning, during which teachers and education have been through numerous challenges. Immediately after independence, tremendous efforts were made to revamp and restructure teacher education, which in turn brought numerous positive changes. However, as the Nepalese school education system expanded, there was a great need for improved teacher education, especially given the huge influx of students into schools. Thus, teacher education has been continually adjusted to meet the changing pedagogical needs of the education systems in order to ensure that teacher education curricula are context-specific and responsive. At present, teacher education in Nepal boasts of an extensive network of national, provincial, and district resource centers that provide support and sustain quality teacher education at all levels in addition to ensuring effective in-service and pre-service teacher education programs. Some of the key factors that have influenced the changing context of teacher education in Nepal include the following.

Influences of National Policy

Nepal has recorded tremendous progress in education, notably literacy rates, infrastructure, and access to education and enrolment. In particular, two major factors have influenced the current teacher education reforms in Nepal, including the political backing of Universalisation of Elementary Education resulting in the Right to Education (RTE) Bill of 2008 and the National Curriculum Framework of 2005. The Right to Education Act was passed by the parliament, making free and compulsory education for all children aged between six and fourteen years. Notably, the Act requires a 1:30 teacher-student ratio in primary classes with a maximum enrolment of 200 students in a school (Concept of Teacher Education, n.d.).

Developments in School Education

Since independence, developments in school education have been tremendous and have contributed to the current teacher education reforms in the country. Currently, about 82 percent of Nepal's approximately 200 million children are enrolled in schools. Nevertheless, about half of all children drop out of school before completing the eighth class due to existing regional, economic, social, and gender imbalances, which continue to challenge school education in the country. Besides, the compartmentalization of education in Nepal creates additional barriers to achieving universal education for all children enrolling in schools. On the other hand, increased commercialization and diversification of schooling have taken place alongside the universal right to education for all, regardless of gender, social, or economic status.

Changing Roles of Teachers

The roles of teachers have significantly changed over time, and they currently play a variety of roles to help students achieve holistic social development. Whereas in the past teachers focused mainly on helping students improve their intellectual abilities, they are now also committed to helping them develop morally and ethically. Education has become a means through which students learn the values, principles, and norms that guide them in becoming valuable members of society and nation builders. As such, teachers have to be constantly updated with new teaching strategies to help them achieve this goal.

Professional Competence and Challenges

Teaching remains a very challenging profession, and teachers face several challenges in their professional lives. Teachers face challenges brought about by working conditions, instructional responsibilities, classroom instructions, meeting diverse needs of students, and peer relationships. Teachers should, therefore, develop good communication skills and should also learn to manage their emotions so that they do not lose temper easily with their colleagues and students.

Research and Innovation

Research and innovation help the practitioners to improve their practice. Such research could be carried out through reading books, articles and reports, accessing information from internet and by doing field work like visiting other schools to observe the other ways of teaching and learning. Research thus, becomes an integral part of professional development. Innovation, on the other hand, means infusing creativity and newness in the teaching practices and it is through innovation that the teaching and learning process in the education system keeps on improving.

Inclusive Education

Exclusion from schools takes different forms, for example, exclusion of persons with disabilities and exclusion of children from marginalized communities. In this regard, teachers should be committed to achieving inclusive education and be against discrimination based on caste, creed, race, religion, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status. They should be willing to confront such challenges in order to empower the oppressed and marginalized groups. The Persons with Disability Act 2005 provides for free and compulsory education to persons with disabilities up to the age of 18 years old. This indicates the concern for education of economically disadvantaged groups. Teachers should be wary of the measures that could be undertaken to prevent social exclusion.

Equitable and Sustainable Development

Education plays a pivotal role in achieving equitable and sustainable development at community and national levels. It enables people to take care of their families, be productive at work places, lead responsible and healthy lives at home and in the wider society. It also promotes environmental conservation, community development and sustainable livelihoods.

The Role of Community Knowledge in Education

Community knowledge in education is concerned with bringing up learners who are able to utilize their knowledge and skills for the betterment of the community. Teachers should be able to help students to connect what they learn in the classroom to their daily practices. In the same way, students and adults also bring knowledge from their experience and practice to the classroom. For instance, when dealing with matters relating to morality, ethics or communication, teachers should enable students to apply such values in their daily lives. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 encourages teachers to promote community-based knowledge by making it an integral part of the curricula, syllabuses and pedagogies.

ICT in Schools and E-learning

With the increased need for integrating information and communication technology in schools, there is need for incorporating such knowledge in teacher education curriculum. Technology has become part of the teaching and learning process at all levels of education. For instance, computers are used in schools to facilitate teaching rather than teachers using them in teaching. In higher education, students use technology to submit assignments while teachers continue to use the chalk and talk method. Thus, teacher education is concerned with helping teachers understand the difference between appropriate and non-appropriate use of ICT in schools. In addition, teachers should be competent enough to keep on developing their knowledge and skill set in the field of ICT.

Teacher Education Programmes

Teacher education programmes have undergone a long way and currently offer a comprehensive programme which prepares teachers for the teaching profession. The teachers are expected to play different roles in order to meet the educational needs of the communities they serve. For instance, they are required to perform their academic roles like teaching, managing classes, maintaining good rapport with their colleagues in addition to playing leadership roles in schools. They are also expected to perform their managerial roles including planning, organizing, directing, controlling and coordinating, especially regarding the organization of such programmes as competitions, workshops and seminars. Consequently, teacher education programmes prepare teachers who are

able to perform all these roles effectively in order to serve the community with utmost integrity.

Systemic Challenges in Teacher Education In Nepal

There has been a dramatic increase in teacher education in the last ten years due to the increased number of students enrolling in schools. This can be attributed to the education reforms carried out through such programmes as Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Universalisation of Elementary Education (Kumar & Azad, 2016). However, the current teacher education system faces several challenges which include:

Insufficient research

Research is important for the identification of challenges and the need for addressing them. However, insufficient efforts have been made in carrying out research on teacher education. The teacher education system has failed to produce empirical studies on instruction and other education-related issues. More effort should be made in carrying out joint researches in order to address the gaps in teacher education. Trainers should also undertake research on all aspects of teacher education as a way of supporting the development of teachers' skills (Toom & Oancea, n.d.).

Lack of quality teachers

Teacher quality plays a significant role in determining level of education and the subsequent impact of that education in the wider society. The presence of quality teachers has a positive effect on students' performance, which is not the case with inadequate teachers. Lack of quality teachers is a big challenge facing teacher education in Nepal. This could be due to lack of sufficient skills or interest in teaching among the teachers.

Lack of motivation

Teacher motivation encompasses commitment, satisfaction, morale and attitude among teachers. On the contrary, lack of motivation leads to poor attendance, misbehavior and desertion (Richardson, 2014). Lack of motivation is a big challenge in teacher education in Nepal. This could be evidenced by the fact that most of the schools in Nepal have many lecturers absent from their duties most of the time.

Inadequate infrastructure

Infrastructure affects most of the aspects of education including enrollment, retention, student performance, among others (Mokaya, 2013). Lack of adequate infrastructure has been a bigger challenge in education in Nepal (Kumar & Azad, 2016). This is because most of the schools are located in urban centers with no proper facilities for learning. In addition, lack of proper facilities affects student enrollment and retention. Most students,

especially in rural areas, discontinue their studies before realizing their potential in academics. Lack of infrastructure is a bigger challenge to teacher education in Nepal because of its impact on enrollment and retention.

Lack of professional competencies

Teachers need various professional competencies in order to effectively perform their duties. These competencies include communication, problem solving, interpersonal, decision making and leadership skills. Lack of these skills could affect the performance of the teachers and subsequently the performance of their students. Lecture method is still practiced in most of the teacher education institutions in Nepal (Ogalo, 2011). Thus, more effort should be made to ensure that professional competencies of teachers are up to standard.

Lack of subject matter knowledge

Some of the teacher education institutions lack the basic competency requirements, for instance, most B.Ed programs over emphasize on pedagogy as opposed to the subject matter (Subject Knowledge: Leading Teaching, n.d.). Knowledge of a subject is important in teaching since it enables the teachers to understand the concepts they intend to teach their students. Lack of subject knowledge affects the ability of the teachers to present certain concepts, which in turn affects the performance of the students.

Recruitment and selection issues

Proper recruitment and selection of teachers are important in order to achieve quality education. Every teacher has to meet certain professional standards before being employed. The recruitment and selection of teachers is a big challenge in Nepal and elsewhere due to the unavailability of competent teachers. These factors should be considered in the recruitment process. In addition, the issue of recruitment and selection of teachers should continue to be reviewed (Abdou, 2012).

Incomplete competency development

Most teachers in schools and teachers' colleges lack the required competency. Lack of competency leads to lack of motivation, which affects the performance of the teachers. The development of competency is important for a good career. Lack of it has been a big challenge in teacher education in Nepal. In addition, teachers' competency plays a significant role in influencing their behaviors and attitude towards their work environment. Poor competency results in lack of commitment to work and poor working condition, which has become a big problem in teacher education in Nepal (Shukla, 2014).

Inadequate practice teaching

Teachers need adequate practice teaching in order to develop their skills before they join the teaching profession (Helping Colleges Improve Student Success and Retention, 2018). Teaching is both a science and art and requires teachers to gain good practice teaching for them to become effective presenters of knowledge. Inadequate practice teaching is a great challenge in teacher education in Nepal because of its impact on the performance of the teachers.

Inappropriate methods of teaching

The use of appropriate methods in teaching is vital for effective teaching and learning to take place. The teachers should be aware of the level of education of the students and develop appropriate methods for effective teaching and learning. Inappropriate methods impede the teaching process. Most of the students in Nepal learn better when taught through lecture method. This implies that teachers should be conversant with this method in order to achieve effective teaching. The other methods that are used in teaching are: demonstration, discussion, role-play, laboratory, contests, projects, assignments, fieldwork and practice teaching (Shinn, 1997).

Conclusion

Teachers are very vital in any educational system since they offer education to the students. The quality of education depends on the methods teachers use in teaching their subjects. This paper aimed at discussing teacher education by considering its relevance in different levels, its theories and major domains. It also looked at the role of teacher education in the teacher's life and other issues affecting it. In addition, the paper focused on the role of teacher education in social change and development and how the issues affecting teachers' education in Nepal affect the country's development.

Teachers education has faced several challenges hindering it from meeting the needs of the community. Some of the issues affecting teacher education in Nepal include: insufficient research, lack of quality and motivated teachers, lack of infrastructure, lack of professional skills, subject matter knowledge, competency, recruitment and selection challenges and inappropriate methods of teaching. Addressing these issues will enable teacher education to meet its goals and contribute positively to the development of the community. Thus, more effort should be made to increase motivation and professional skills of the teachers. The process of selecting teachers should also be emphasized in order to ensure that only qualified teachers are recruited and retained in the teaching profession. Teachers should also be encouraged to acquire knowledge about the latest methods and techniques used in teaching.

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