

Emerging Perspectives in Training of Teachers for Indian Higher Education

Abstract

Indian higher education is witnessing a peculiar challenge insofar as capacity-building missions and their truer perspective of reorienting the system is concerned. In this regard, training of teachers becomes a point of pivotal concern. The author traces here the various perspectives in a historical frame of reference and highlights the issues which seem to currently preoccupy the scenario of higher education in our country.

Keywords: Teacher, Higher Education, Emerging Perspective

Introduction

Traditionally, college teachers learn techniques through experiences. Senior teachers and principals inspect their classes and give suggestions for improvement. This continues to be a good technique for improving skills of teaching even today. It may be true that there are many born teachers who have innate qualities essential for teaching. They know how to teach as well as what to teach. There are, however, many others who do not belong to the category of born teachers. They need to be prepared for the purpose. Training becomes necessary for those who feel difficulty in teaching effectively. It may also not be certain that training can change patterns of behaviour of teachers. Effect of training depends on various factors, which are personal in nature and vary from one trainee to another. Again, the application of newly acquired skills and knowledge requires suitable work atmosphere. Lack of this facility makes the trainee forget the skills and knowledge acquired during the training programme. Not only is training necessary for initiation into teaching but also for successful continuance in the profession. In recent times, the World Declaration on Higher Education (1998) has emphasized on the need of updating and improving the faculty's pedagogical skills through appropriate staff development programmes, whereas such need has been repeatedly expressed by various commissions, committees, policy declarations etc. in our country from time to time over the years.

Review of Literature

According to National Council for Teacher Education, NCTE (www.ncte-india.org): NCTE is a statutory body set up under the National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993 to facilitate planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system in the country, and for regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system. The Council is empowered to grant recognition of institutions offering courses or training in teacher education.

According to All India Council of Technical Education, AICTE (www.aicte-india.org): The AICTE was established in 1987 for ensuring proper planning and coordinated development of technical education (this includes engineering, management education amongst others) and for the regulation of proper norms and maintenance of standards. For this the council constituted the NBA (National Board of Accreditation) that periodically reviews and evaluates technical institutes or programmes and recommends their recognition or de-recognition. The AICTE also provides funds to institutes for development and new initiatives.

According to University Grants Commission UGC (www.ugc.ac.in): UGC set up under UGC Act 1956 is responsible for coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards and release of grants to universities and research organizations. The Indian constitution makes education a responsibility of the Centre as well as the federating states. The —coordination and determination of standards in institutions of higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions is exclusively the responsibility of the centre. To take care of this provision, the UGC was established as a statutory body



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required to regulate academic standards in addition to giving funds. The UGC is thus a coordinating as well as a grant giving body for academic purposes. Grants given by the UGC are meant to develop the academic and research programmes in the universities.

Training for Higher Education Teachers in India

Recommendations at a Glance

The University Education Commission 1948-49 suggested the necessity of observation of classes of senior teachers so as to improve one's teaching skills.

The Education Commission 1964-66 viewed the issue threadbare, as follows:

Necessity for Providing Training to Higher Education Teachers

"The tradition of India has been to regard training for college teachers as unnecessary. Born teachers who can dispense with training certainly exist. Many are keen, devoted scholars, whose scholarship may win over the respect of the students - though this is not always a safe presumption - and may thus be able to discharge their function satisfactorily in spite of professional inadequacy. But the bulk of teachers do not fall into these categories. For them, some suitable form of training and orientation is essential, not only to overcome their initial 'teaching' trouble and to create a sense of confidence, but also to give them a reasonable understanding of educational objectives and purposes, the *raison d'être* and place of their special subject in the curriculum, of new methods and techniques of teaching and learning, and a knowledge of psychology on which good teaching should be based. No question of *amour-propre* should be involved. In most highly skilled professions - and education is certainly one - training is regarded as an essential qualification." (Art.4.60)

"We do not think it necessary, however, to propose that full-fledged training colleges should be established for college lecturers, though we do not rule out the possibility. For the present, we suggest that universities, individually or co-operatively, give their mind to this problem and work out practicable methods of meeting the present situation. Some measures have in fact been taken in recent years. The UGC, for example, has started a scheme of summer institutes in which teachers of different subjects are brought together under the guidance of competent professors and scholars to study the new dimensions of their disciplines. Their number is increasing and it is hoped that more will be organized. But they are not a complete answer to the problem. In a few colleges, special lecture courses have occasionally been organized for this purpose and have proved useful. Some universities have instituted special postgraduate diplomas to meet these needs. These, however, have only a marginal effect on a problem for which more massive and imaginative measures are needed." (Art.4.61)

Making Provision for Orientation of New Teachers in Every Session

"Every university, and where possible, every

college, should have regular orientation courses organized for a few weeks early in the session in which some new and some older teachers participate." (Art.4.62-3).

Necessity for Making Provision for Regular Courses

"It may be possible, in the bigger universities or a group of universities, to place these activities on a permanent and continuing basis by establishing something like a staff college where teachers from all affiliated and constituent colleges as well as the university will be brought together for orientation, discussions, seminars, workshops, etc. Where this is not possible, a conference centre would be necessary to facilitate discussion of the issues which teachers have to face, e.g., objectives of education, methods of teaching, enrichment of subject matter, etc." (Art.4.62-4)

Publication and Distribution of Teacher Support Materials

"The staff college or conference centre should also produce, in co-operation with other members of the faculty, occasional brochures, book-lists, guidance materials, etc. of use to all teachers." (Art.4.62-4)

Resource Persons

"The best teachers of the institution - as well as some distinguished teachers from outside - should discuss with them the outstanding problems of teaching, research and discipline as well as the mechanics of the profession. Care should be taken to associate with these courses only such persons as enjoy high reputation in the academic community for their scholarship and character and are likely to exercise a beneficial influence on new members." (Art.4.62-3)

Benefit of Participation

"During such courses new teachers will be able to make social and academic contacts and find their feet in their new environment. They will learn to feel at home in the college, accept some of its ideals and traditions and come into contact with well-known teachers of their own institution and from outside." (Art. 4.62-3)

The National Commission on Teachers II 1983-85 highlighted the issue in the following manner:

Inadequate Skills of Teachers

"Very few of those wishing to enter the teaching profession are born teachers who can dispense with training. For the large majority, some amount of training should be given so that they can perform their functions effectively. In the present situation characterized by the absence of training opportunities, entrants to the teaching profession are supposed to learn from experience. As a result they are forced to copy mechanically the methods and procedures adopted by their own teachers and inflict them on their students so that the dull and pointless tradition of 'giving lectures' is passed on from generation to generation." (p.46)

Necessity of Making Provision for Training

"If such a situation is to be remedied, it is necessary that suitable opportunities are provided for

the training of teachers. Teachers can be given some training at the pre-induction stage itself. Besides acquiring subject matter knowledge during their M.Phil./Ph.D. (i.e., minimum qualification for entering the profession); prospective teachers could also take up some specialized courses directly oriented towards teaching. Again, immediately after a person is inducted into the teaching profession, facilities should be provided for the teacher to undergo a training course relating to proper orientation towards the profession and its values, skills in pedagogy, curriculum construction, use of audio-visual aids, educational psychology, evaluation methods." (p.47)

Faculty Managed Training

"Such a training course should be conducted by the respective faculties in accordance with their requirements rather than being conducted like a B.Ed. course by the Faculty of Education" (ibid)

Necessity of Providing for Continuous Training

"Considering that teaching is a life-time profession, and also that there is rapid explosion of knowledge, it is not enough to provide training to teachers on a once-for-all basis. Facilities should be provided for re-training of teachers periodically throughout their career. Advanced centres and/or departments should be set up at State/regional levels for such training programmes. Every teacher should be linked to one such centre/department and participate in its programmes from time to time, say, once in every five years. The performance of the teacher in such programmes be rigorously evaluated and should be taken into account in the context of career development." (ibid)

The National Policy on Education 1986 stated that a major effort will be directed towards the transformation of teaching methods and orientation of higher education teachers will receive attention. "This will require preparation of teachers at the beginning of service as well as continuing education thereafter." (p.15).

The Programme of Action 1986 document of the Central Government brought out for implementation of recommendations of the National Policy made the following specific suggestions:

1. Organization of specially designed orientation programmes in teaching methodologies, pedagogy, educational psychology: etc., for all new entrants at the level of lecturers;
2. Organization of refresher courses for serving teachers to cover every teacher at least once in 5 years; and
3. Organization of orientation programmes by using the internal resources of universities and by bringing a number of colleges together.

The National Review Committee 1990 on NPE 1986, finding teacher training in the university system weak, stated,

"Teachers who are recruited into the university and college system are not given adequate training as of now". In order to enhance the quality of university teachers, it suggested a pre-induction training for them for a period of one year after their recruitment: This training should be organized on a decentralized basis by the respective universities

themselves." (p.226)

The CABE Committee on Policy 1992 not finding favour with the recommendations of Acharya Ramamurti Committee on provision for one-year induction programme for new lecturers, stated, "In view of the resource constraint, it may not be possible to provide training facilities in every university. We suggest that UGC may closely monitor the implementation of the scheme .of ASCs." (p.51)

The Programme of Action 1992 reiterated the findings of the Committee as follows:

"In order to ensure proper development of both orientation and subject refresher programmes, short and long-term plans for Academic Staff Colleges may be prepared on a regular basis and proper policy directions may be given from time to time.

The innovations being carried out by Academic Staff Colleges and reading and reference material developed by them should be properly co-ordinated so as to avoid duplication and help sharing the benefits of each other's efforts.

The progress of Academic Staff Colleges should be regularly monitored through quantitative and qualitative information. Based on such analysis, necessary feedback may be given to Academic Staff Colleges for their future development.

A mechanism should also be created for networking of Academic Staff Colleges. For carrying out these activities, a consortium of Academic Staff Colleges may be set up in' close collaboration with NIEPA. The details of consortium may be jointly worked out by UGC and NIEPA; for this purpose, NIEPA and UGC may enter into a memorandum of understanding." (p.66)

The POA document further suggested:

1. Implementation of the recommendations of the UGC Review Committee on Academic Staff Colleges at the earliest.
2. Measures to be taken by the UGC for consolidation and strengthening of the existing ASCs, before considering further expansion.
3. Making efforts to initiate training and orientation of teachers in engineering and technical subjects.
4. Undertaking by UGC of a five-yearly review of the performance of the ASCs.
5. Designing suitable distance education programmes, keeping in view popularity of the IGNOU's Diploma in Distance Education and Higher Education, for upgrading knowledge and skills of teachers in institutions of higher education.
6. Integrating and co-ordinating efforts of UGC and IGNOU for training of teachers and organizing contact programmes for those teachers who are enrolled in IGNOU's Diploma in Distance Education and Higher Education. (ibid)

The Committee to Review the Pay Scales of University and College Teachers 1997 viewed the issue of training of higher education teachers through Academic Staff Colleges in the following manner:

"These were designed to offer opportunities for professional and career development, initiative for innovation and creative work and proper orientation in concept, techniques and value system to enable the

teachers to fulfill their role and responsibilities, thereby enhancing their motivation through systematic orientation in teaching methodologies, pedagogy, etc. for all the new entrants as lecturers." (Art.4.8.1, p. 271)

The Committee noted the progress made in the scheme of training of teachers as initiated by the UGC through its academic staff development programmes and operated by Academic Staff Colleges (ASCs). The scheme has provided opportunity to a good proportion of teachers to complete orientation and subject refresher programmes. However, this facility still falls short of requirement, as a large number of teachers have not been able to attend such programmes. As per the UGC regulations, a teacher is required to attend the orientation programme and one subject refresher programme to become eligible for placement in the senior scale and is required to complete at least two more refresher programmes in his/her career for placement in the senior grade. The teaching community as a whole has also appreciated usefulness of such programmes. The Committee recommends that there is need for introducing the concept of induction training programmes for the teachers through Academic Staff Colleges. The training should be imparted soon after recruitment.

The Committee further recommended that Academic Staff Colleges may continue to conduct such programmes at the beginning of the academic session as well as sometime after the winter break so as to provide opportunity to newly recruited teachers for attending orientation programmes. There is need for strengthening these programmes and making the opportunity available to a large number of lecturers so as to help them update their knowledge and skills. Diploma in Higher Education of the Indira Gandhi National Open University has already been recognized as equivalent to an orientation programme by the UGC. This may continue.

Efforts to Improve Skills of Higher Education Teachers

In late sixties, the University Grants Commission organized summer institutes and orientation courses for college teachers in different parts of the country. In 1972, the University of Bombay started offering Diploma in Higher Education Course, covering aspects such as educational psychology, methods of teaching and evaluation, role of university education, educational research, etc. In 1976, MS University of Baroda started a one-semester in-service course for new faculty and probationers. The topics covered were such as objectives of university education, university governance, history of higher education, unrest on campus, lecture method, semester system, audio-visual aids, guidance, continuous assessment, multi-media approach, etc. Similarly, Diploma in Higher Education Course of the University of Madras covered theoretical topics such as principles of learning, teaching and communication, educational evaluation, etc. and practical work involving seminars, symposia, workshops, construction of tests, project work, etc. In 1976, the University of Calicut started offering a

Master of Collegiate Teaching (MCT) course that covered theoretical topics such as philosophical and sociological bases of education, educational psychology, development and problems of higher education, curriculum, teaching, evaluation, etc. and allied practical work.

Some other agencies/institutions involved in engineering and technical education also organize faculty development programmes. AICTE carries out an Early Faculty Induction Programme while the Indian Society for Technical Education and the National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training and Research have their own programmes. A study (Jayaprakash Narain, Mukhopadhyaya and Barki, 2005) on the effectiveness of a one-week training module in Basic Pedagogy programme for the teachers working in engineering colleges found Skill Practice that covers skill of demonstration, use of chalkboard, oral communication and delivery of questions as well as other areas like motivation, valuation and instructional objectives to be most useful. Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Rajasthan has been organizing faculty development programmes since 1976 in the form of Intensive Teaching Workshops, covering areas such as behavioural objectives of a course, visual communications including blackboard use, oral communications, use of modern gadgets etc.

Training of higher education teachers and would-be teachers is also conducted by IGNOU through its Diploma in Higher Education and Master of Higher Education courses.

The ASC's Initiative

The University Grants Commission started orientation courses through 48 Academic Staff Colleges in 1987-88 and initiated refresher courses in 1988-89. To supplement these efforts of the ASCs, the UGC identified 180 university departments/Institutions on Regional or national basis for conducting subject-oriented refresher courses. In 1991, an expert committee set up by the UGC reviewed the scheme of ASCs.

Suggestions for Improvement- in Functioning of ASCs

A few suggestions for improvement of the quality of programmes organized by Academic Staff Colleges are as follows:

Prior Planning

Academic Staff Colleges need to do proper planning sufficiently in advance to maintain the quality of their programmes. Sometimes, the resource persons take classes without much preparation, or without adequate subject knowledge. Non-availability of suitable resource persons is quite a big problem for the staff colleges which has resulted in poor quality of their training programmes and refresher courses. The ASCs need to facilitate adequate preparation by the resource persons and the participants with relevant literature and inputs to ensure their proper enrichment both in content as well as pedagogy. The, ASCs should assess the needs of participants and develop the programme accordingly. They may circulate the programme schedules as well as enrichment material in advance to make participation

by the participants meaningful.

Deciding Programme Delivery Strategies

Methods of teaching employed by resource persons play a crucial role in developing suitable competencies in teacher trainees. There may be strategies such as games and exercise sessions, panel discussion, brainstorming, book review, project work, discussions, etc. Normally, the resource persons use the lecture method. They need to address and exploit innovative strategies and mechanisms to ensure quality training.

Preparation of Reading Materials for the Trainees

Reading materials are essential in any teacher training programme. ASCs have not been able to give much stress on this aspect. In many ASC programmes, cyclostyled reaping materials are supplied after delivery of the lecture. Resource persons prepare reading materials rather hurriedly and/or circulate the material wholly taken from a book without any acknowledgement whatsoever. UGC need to take up the task of developing modules for training of higher education teachers. The participants need to be acquainted with standard authors, self-study material and professional journals as well as recent books on content, pedagogy, innovative practices and techniques. An exhibition could be conducted for the purpose as part of the programme.

Training in Communication Skills and Teaching

Every lecturer ought to be an expert communicator. Lack of adequacy in communication skills tends to make the programmes ineffective and the quality of teaching poor. A lecturer of 18 years of experience, found standing in attention for the whole period, without making any gesture or movement of head, hand or eyes while explaining from a language textbook presents a miserable sight. The training must lay due stress on the use of gestures, voice, dialogue, humour, etc. to make teaching more tangible. IGNOU has brought out a video-cassette on communication skills which may be used or improved by the UGC. Training in communication skills can be effective, if carried out on a Closed Circuit Television. Such facilities are not available in the Academic Staff Colleges, nor is there any provision for development of communication skills in simulated situations. The skills of introducing a lesson, use of audio-visual aids, including blackboard, bulletin board, flannel board, charts, maps, tape recorder, video-cassettes, films, filmstrips, slides, opaque projector, overhead projector, etc. must be given due importance as part of the induction training programmes.

Delivery of Model Lessons

Normally, provision for delivery of demonstration lessons does not exist in orientation courses. ASCs need to identify expert teachers for giving model demonstration lessons covering a variety of innovative methods including also video recording of the UGC telecast lessons to motivate the participants to use such techniques for teaching their own students. Academic Staff Colleges need also to give due stress on peer observation of teaching. For discussing various aspects of good teaching, an

observation format needs to be developed and utilized by teacher trainees to observe at least a few lessons, delivered by their peers participating in the programme and lessons delivered by selected college teachers. Such facilities can be made available without much cost. Observation should be followed by discussion. In case of orientation programmes, the participants may be sent for observation of lessons in small groups, consisting of not more than 5 in a group. The participants of orientation courses need to do adequate teaching practice under supervised conditions, under experienced and expert teachers.

Development of Skills for Evaluation and Research

Orientation programmes should also give practice in development of evaluation skills for assessing performance of students, assessment of question papers, conduct of examinations, development of question bank, objective-based evaluation, grading, open book examination, etc. The Academic Staff Colleges should carry out research on teaching techniques for higher education, involving survey, experimental as well as action research to acquaint the participants with various techniques and designs of research.

Selection of Faculty for ASCs

There should be an effective policy for selection of Directors, Asst. Directors etc. of Academic Staff Colleges. Providing orientation is more important than refresher courses. The principal criterion for selection of ASC academic personnel may be that the faculty members need to be well-versed with innovative teaching techniques to cope with the latest topics pertaining to Education as a subject. These persons should be expert practitioners in the teaching of their special subjects. The universities should not treat the ASC posts as a dumping ground. Such an attitude of the administration is likely to affect the quality of ASC programmes.

Establishing a National Resource Centre for ASCs

Following the example of the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in UK, a national resource centre may be established in the country to provide academic support to all the ASCs. It may develop guidelines for teaching of every subject and distribute the material thus developed to the participants of the programmes through the ASCs. NIEPA is said to have done a pioneering work, which may be revised and updated for the purpose.

Functioning of Academic Staff Colleges as Regional Resource Centres

The country being very large, the Academic Staff Colleges should be converted into Regional Resource Centres, While the national centre undertakes development and publication of teacher support materials in English language, the Academic Staff Colleges can publish materials in regional languages including Hindi. They can maintain a well-equipped library to provide adequate facilities to the participants of various courses and also to the college teachers, in general. The library should possess various kinds of teaching aids including CD-ROMs,

video-cassettes, audio-cassettes, books, reports etc.. There should be provision for individual teacher membership of the library on payment of a prescribed fee and caution money.

Creating Academic Staff Development Unit in Each College/University

Every college recognized by the UGC and each University having teaching departments should have an Academic Staff Development Unit to take care of the needs of the academic faculty of the concerned college and of the concerned university teaching departments.

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