



ROLE OF TEACHING LEARNING CENTRES

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Introduction

The country has to address the need of supplying well qualified and professionally trained teachers in larger numbers in the coming years. At the same time, the demand for quality secondary education is steadily increasing. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 places different demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed both by initial and continuing teacher education. Teacher quality is a function of several factors: teachers' status, remuneration, conditions of work and their academic and professional education. A teacher education curriculum framework needs to be in consonance with the curriculum framework for school education. Experiences in the practice of teacher education indicate that knowledge is treated as 'given', embedded in the curriculum and accepted without question; there is no engagement with the curriculum.

Importance of Curriculum:

Curriculum, syllabi and textbooks are never critically examined by the student teacher or the regular teacher. If teacher education curriculum provides appropriate and critical opportunities for student teachers to:

1. Observe and engage with children, communicate with and relate to children.
2. Understand the self and others, one's beliefs, assumptions, emotions and aspirations; develop the capacity for self-analysis, self-evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation.
3. Develop habits and the capacity for self-directed learning, have time to think, reflect, assimilate and articulate new ideas; be self-critical and to work collaboratively in groups.
4. Engage with subject content, examine disciplinary knowledge and social realities, relate subject matter with the social milieu of learners and develop critical thinking.
5. Develop professional skills in pedagogy, observation, documentation, analysis and interpretation, drama, craft, story-telling and reflective inquiry.

A curriculum for teacher education

The layout of a curriculum for teacher education can be conceived as comprising three broad curricular areas:

- (A) Foundations of Education which include courses under three broad rubrics, namely, Learner Studies, Contemporary Studies and Educational Studies;
- (B) Curriculum and Pedagogy which include courses under two broad rubrics, namely, Curriculum Studies and Pedagogic Studies; and



(C) School Internship leading to the development of a broad repertoire of perspective, professional capacities, teacher sensibilities and skills. The most critical aspect of the proposed teacher education curriculum is its transaction.

Likewise, establishing resource centres that enable hands-on engagement with concepts and ‘tools’ of education such as textbooks and other resources is critical to transacting a process-based teacher education programme. These resource centres are viewed as mechanisms for grounding the education of pre-service students as well as in-service teachers within immediate classroom contexts, the wider societal context and learner diversity.

Teacher Learning Centres (TLCs)

The conceptual framework within which these centres can operate is given below:

Establishing Teacher Learning Centres (TLCs)

1. A Structural Space for Hands-on Experience

A TLC would be a structural space located within a teacher education institution for providing student teachers with hands-on experience with learning materials, engagement with learners and opportunities for self-reflection. The perspective and design of the TLC would enable processes that engage teacher trainees with the world of the learner and his/her context; subject-content, learning materials and the process of learning; and the trainee himself/herself as an aspiring professional.

2. A Resource for Teacher Trainees, Teacher Practitioners and Teacher Educators

A TLC would house diverse sets of resources that would be required for teacher trainees to engage with a diverse set of processes during their training. These would range from learning materials developed by the trainees themselves and those collated from various organizations that specialize in creating teaching-learning materials, activity manuals, children’s literature, a variety of school textbooks and other alternative materials available.

Opportunities to work with a variety of learning materials would help break the ‘habit’ of relying on the school textbook as the only source of knowledge and teaching in the classroom.

3. A Forum for Interaction and Sharing

A TLC would serve as a forum for interaction among teacher trainees and teacher practitioners on issues of developing materials and planning for teaching. Frequent interaction and sharing would help trainees to articulate concerns with clarity and learn from each other’s experiences. Interaction among trainees could be organized within yearly, monthly and weekly schedules. The nature of these meetings could range from planning the curriculum for the year to planning units and web-charts for a unit.

4. A Platform for Classroom-Based Research

A TLC would serve as a platform for undertaking short research projects that aim to broaden teachers’ understanding of learners and prompt them to enhance their knowledge of



subject-content. For instance, an investigative project on numeracy of how children learn mathematics by focusing on the strategies they use to solve arithmetic tasks. By increasing teachers' understanding of how children develop increasingly sophisticated ways of solving arithmetic tasks, the research based learning framework (used in such projects) provides direction for teaching and learning. This in turn would improve students' learning through teacher's professional development.

5. A Structural Space for Self-directed Activities

A TLC would serve as a structural space whose resources would be available for teacher trainees to undertake self-directed activities such as analysis of school textbooks and literacy primers. Learning teachers would undertake analysis of textbooks to assess their suitability for children of different levels. Analysis of textbooks, using dimensions of subject-content, presentation style, language used, treatment of concepts and issues of gender and pedagogic approach would also facilitate trainees to think critically. The study of alternative text material would expose them to the different ways in which texts can be written.

5. An analysis of these would prompt them to engage with subject-content and to appreciate

The nature of learners' reasoning at different ages. TLCs could provide opportunities for teacher trainees to understand learners' thinking through personal interviews and probing with individual learners. Trainees could develop profiles of learners from diverse contexts to help them appreciate their unique social, cultural and political environments.

6. A Platform for Developing a Repertoire of Skills

A TLC could provide a platform for organizing workshops to develop a repertoire of professional skills such as story-telling, craft, music and drama. Trainees would learn to use stories as a medium to facilitate expression, imagination and the creative use of language in learners; create bulletin boards, story-poem folders and organize reading corners in classrooms. They would learn to use drama and art as learning tools and as strategies for classroom management. Through short research projects, teacher trainees and teacher practitioners will develop skills of observation, documentation, analysis and interpretation.

7. A Structural Space for the Personal and Psychological Development of Teachers

A TLC would focus on activities directly related to the personal and psychological development of the teacher. Trainees would be encouraged to engage with their own childhood experiences, aspirations to become a teacher and their views on issues of gender and identity, personal, familial and social conflict. Some of the self-directed learning strategies would include finding answers to deep reflective questions; reflective reading; reflection on observations in the classroom followed by group discussion; identification of issues for further self-study; keeping reflective diaries/journals.



8. A Structural Space for Forging Links between Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education

A TLC in a teacher education institution will provide the necessary space which could be commonly used both for pre-service and in-service teachers. Teacher education institutions that organize both programmes would need to co-ordinate with the aim to impact select schools in a concerted manner. A cluster of schools selected by DIETs/IASEs/ Departments of Education each year to place pre-service students can also be the selected schools for in-service programmes. All teachers of these schools can be involved in a concerted way through in-service programmes that are redesigned to provide individual support and mentoring.

References

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