

Exploring teacher education in India and China: The striking similarities and differences

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Teachers are the greatest assets of any education system. They stand in the interface of the transmission of knowledge, skills and values. They are accepted as the backbone of education system. Teacher quality has been globally accepted to be significantly associated with the quality of education in general and students' learning outcomes in particular. The Education Commission (1964-66) of India accepted this influence of teachers in powerful words, "No system can rise above the status of its teacher..." Similar sentiments were expressed by the Delors report 1996 and UNESCO report on *Teacher and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015* (2006). The European Commission Report 'Communication on Teacher Education' (2007) in the very beginning observes 'research shows that teacher quality is significantly and positively correlated with pupil attainment and it is the most important within school aspect explaining students' performance. (40, p.3).

Teachers Education in this context is considered as a powerful instrument in reducing poverty and ensuring growth and development, but, how to organize teacher education to meet the challenges of quality improvement has been a perennial preoccupation of teacher educators. Teachers today are confronted with two major issues-In schools the most daunting task in an age of mass basic education is not so much teaching per se as teaching in the context of individual differences among students in abilities and motivation. In the larger society, shift in economy and political policies calls for new skills and values in school leavers in which teachers may be ill equipped (Mak1999). The teacher's preparedness to deal with these two issues is a major challenge for all societies but more prominent in the growing economies like India and China. The organisation of teacher education in any system can be visualized at two levels. At the systemic level the positioning of teacher education determines its nature. Teaching is a multifaceted and specialized activity and therefore is housed in single purpose institutions in majority of countries around the world. The second level is the structure of curriculum i.e. what should be taught and how it should be taught. At this level Schulman's (1987) conceptualization of teacher's knowledge provides the base of teacher education curriculum structure. According to Shulman (1987) a teacher

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should possess subject content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and the knowledge of educational contexts and goals; and should be able to use this knowledge creatively to deal with ever changing classroom situations. If we analyse teacher education systems in different countries we will find majority of teacher education reform efforts centred around reforming the knowledge base of teachers and similarities can be observed in teacher education curriculum across various societies. However, the problems and methods to resolve these vary and are context specific as in the case of India and China. Yet the trend analysis of the teacher education system of these two neighbours reflects striking similarities.

Education in India and China: Some basic facts- Before having discussion on the teacher education system of India and China it is pertinent to have the basic data on the education system and policy perspectives of these countries. One of the significant common features of the Indian and Chinese education system is that, both the countries have adopted five year planning system that has been influenced by the erstwhile Soviet Union. Most of the communist states in the 20th century adopted this pattern including the Peoples' Republic of China in 1950-60s, and India's pro-Soviet government. Both the countries are currently at the beginning of 11th Five-Year Plan period, though the Chinese government now refers to their plans as 'guidelines'. Like India, the Chinese Five-Year Plans include different sections of economy and society including education. Both the governments have also the similarity, in that, since the independence of India in 1947, and founding of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 these countries had to face the challenge of eradication of illiteracy and poverty from their respective societies.

The right to education has, in principal, been recognized and accepted by both the countries but while China initiated concrete actions to realise this principle by promulgating the Compulsory Education Law in 1986 which yielded rich dividend, India has yet to bring out a Central Legislation on Compulsory Education, though it was one of the major recommendations of the Indian Education Commission way back in 1966. The 93rd Constitutional Amendment to make education a fundamental right of the child was enacted only in 2001 and is yet to permeate into the system. China has 200 million children and 10.36 million teachers compared to India having 391 million children and 5.52 million teachers. According to the Seventh all India Educational Survey (2005) there are 3494670 teachers at the elementary level (Grade I-VIII); of these 1,912,931 teachers are engaged at the primary level (grade I-V) and 1,581,739 teacher are employed at the upper primary level. There are 996054 teachers at the secondary level (Grade IX-X) and 1,037,455 teachers at the higher/senior secondary level (Grade XI-XII). The total number of teachers engaged at the school level (Grade I-V) is 5,528179. The country is still experiencing serious shortage of qualified teachers in various

states and regions of the country and forced to utilize the services of contract teachers under the umbrella of para teachers' schemes, working on short term contract basis at different levels of school education, but, predominantly at the primary level. The number of such contract teachers has increased upto seven million. According to the Seventh All India Education Survey (2005) 14.99% of total primary schools are single teacher schools. Systemic factors like lack of teachers (especially female), teacher absenteeism, irregular classes and overcrowded classrooms have affected the quality of teaching/learning in schools. The review of the status of Education for all (EFA) of these countries reveal that while China has now entered into the stage of universal coverage of nine years of compulsory education, India lags much behind China. In 3022 counties (cities and districts) sharing 98.5% of total China compulsory education for nine years has been universalized, and illiteracy has been eliminated from young and middle age adults. By the year 2007 the Chinese population with nine years compulsory education and illiteracy eliminated' has reached to 99%, the net enrolment at primary schools has reached 99.49% and percentage of full time qualified teachers reached upto 99.1%. One of the distinguishing features of Chinese education system is that because of the control of birth rate and the compulsory education law, the total number of primary and secondary school children has declined and consequently the demand for new teachers has also shown a declining trend.

In contrast to China, India is still struggling to universalize its compulsory education, though remarkable progress has been made during six decades of its independence. The literacy rate of the country remained 65.38 according to the 2001 Census of India. India has more school age children than China, and has even lower attendance rate. It is also characterized by largest number of out of school children. According to the UNESCO report (2006) '*Children out of school*' which comprises of 17 percent of school age children in the country have still not reached to the schools. These include 9.5 percent boys and 11.2 percent girls and in spite of all efforts the country is in a danger to miss the millennium development goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015.

Major Landmarks in Indian and Chinese Teacher Education Systems Despite obvious differences in the political ideology of India and China both the countries share certain common trends in teacher education. Both enjoy rich cultural tradition wherein teachers have been accorded highest esteem, though this high respect in the society is not matched by commensurate economic rewards. Both the countries have also witnessed gradual decline in the status of teacher and low income in teaching profession, making it the least preferred choice of any employment seeker, particularly at primary and secondary school levels. One of

the prime reasons for this apathy of job seekers for teaching profession is inadequate financial inputs provided by the government for compulsory education. Nonetheless China is in a much better position than India considering their literacy rate by 2001. The Chinese government has concentrated more on spending on higher education than the other two levels though over the years financial allocation for compulsory education increased tremendously in both countries. According to Wang (2006) the total investment in higher education in China increased by a factor of three from 1996 to 2001, while for compulsory education the increase in investment has been by a factor of 0.6 only. In contrast in India, the total expenditure on education sector remained limited to 3.57 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), though according to a press release of the Government of India in November 2007, the XI five Year Plan approach paper promises to increase public spending on education by 6% of the GDP. Higher education in India has received less public support than lower levels as the prime concern of the Indian government is to remove illiteracy from the country and fulfill the millennium goal of Education for All by 2015. Consequently the attention of the government has been more focused on the elementary education sector, and university and technical education accounted for about 15% of total spending on education by Central and State governments during 2005-2006. Between 1990-1991 and 2004-2005, the share of GDP spent on higher education fell from 0.77% to 0.66%, whereas the share dedicated to primary education increased from 1.78% to 1.89%. The total expenditure on education in the country has rarely exceeded three percent of the Gross Domestic Product in India while the international average is approximately five percent.

The teacher education system of these countries has to be discussed within this broader perspective. The analysis of teacher education in these countries indicate that though change in teacher education system is a continuous process but the decade of 1980 appears to be crucial for reforms in the education system in general and teacher education in particular, for both the countries. A parallel may be drawn between the developments taking place in education system of India during late 1980s with that of the developments in early 1980s in China when a series of initiatives were taken by the Chinese government, such as the *Fourth Conference on Teacher Education in 1980*. In this conference reforms in teacher education was placed at the top of the agenda. In the years that followed a number of initiatives can be observed which revolutionized teacher education system in China. These initiatives include the document entitled '*Decision on the reform of education system (1985)*' published by the Ministry of Education (MOE), China which considered the development of teacher education as strategic measure in developing education (MOE, 2000).

The spirit of this document finds reflection in the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) of the Government of India, and echoes the concerns of Education Commission (1964-66) which strongly believed that no system of education can rise above the levels of its teachers. In 1993 another important document '*the outline for reform and development in education in China*' was published which allocated increased financial resources to improve teacher education (MOE, 2000). Subsequently in 2001 the state council delivered an Executive Circular '*Decision about reform and development of basic education*' replacing the concept of 'normal education' with 'teacher education' for the first time and permitting institutions other than traditional normal schools to prepare and train teachers. According to Yuan (2004) 'it indicated a significant transformation from a system of teacher education in China which was independent and separate from other institutions and forms of higher education for almost half century, into one operating within an open and multi institutional framework'.

Historically both the countries initiated pre-service teacher education separate of university training as part of a binary system though later on teacher training was relocated within the university system also. Both the countries are also engaged in major curriculum reform efforts in order to respond to the challenges of globalisation and market economy. At present China has 475 institutions of teacher education including 183 normal colleges and universities, 34 independent educational institutions, and 258 general comprehensive colleges and universities. China adopted the policies of '*merge and upgrade*' and '*transformation and upgrade through amalgamation*' with respect to teacher education institutions to meet the challenges of contemporary educational needs and to ensure better coordination between institutions. The policy of merger and upgrading is generally applied on institutions of same type. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, China about 1083 institutions had been merged into 431 new organisations by the end of May 2006. About 17% of these new institutions still carry their original names. The size and reputation of merged institutions was the deciding factor about the name of the new institution. Consequently the original name of larger and more prestigious institution was retained and the previous name of smaller, less-renowned institution was replaced (Shi & Englert, 2008). Therefore Shenyang Normal University has come into existence as the result of merger between Shenyang Teacher's College which provided pre-service teacher training and Liaoning Teacher Training Institute which provided in-service teacher training. The name of former college was retained. The mode of '*Transformation and upgrading*' refers to merger of different types of institutions. For instance according to the MOE(2006) statistics about 91 former teacher education

institutions were merged with 136 institutions including general universities and 53 new institutions were established which are comprehensive or polytechnic institutions. About 17% of these new institutions are still carrying their original names.

The same criteria have been adopted in naming these institutions so the new institution has been named after the higher and more reputed institution. New names have been given to other 83% institutions. One of the crucial reasons for this merger and amalgamation in China has been projections based on demographic data on enrolment of primary and secondary schools in China. In contrast to India, the demographic projections of increase in population of students in China at elementary and secondary level by 2010 requiring additional infrastructure facilities to cater the demand, the MOE China projects decrease in students enrolment from 120 million to 105 million leading to the surplus of one million teachers (Huang and Wu 2006) making it difficult for small teacher education institutions to survive independently. According to Yuan (2003) the relationship of demand and supply of teachers at primary and secondary schools has undergone great changes, from an overall lack in quantity to a structural imbalance. There is problem of overstaffing at primary schools but not at middle and high school. Merger of these institutions has, therefore, been thought of as viable option for managing demand and supply. Regional needs for teachers have also played a crucial role in reforming the institutional structure in China. Regional diversity in terms of educational status and economy can be observed in both the countries. As a result, in the economically developed areas like the eastern part of China normal schools no longer exist, teacher colleges are promoted to universities, normal universities become comprehensive universities, and liberal arts colleges and comprehensive universities are also involved in preparing teachers; in the western region on the other hand, normal schools continue to play a crucial role in preparing elementary school teachers (Zhu & Han, 2006). India has also developed equally large network of teacher education institutions to prepare teachers for various stages of school education. These include approximately 1465 teacher training institutions, 31 Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs), 104 Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), 31 State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), and 527 functional District Institutions of Education and Training (DIETs). In addition, there are Departments of Education in various universities which provide B.Ed., M.Ed, M.Phil programmes, and research degrees etc. This fairly developed network of teacher education institutions spread over the length and breadth of the country caters to the pre-service education and continuous education needs of the huge teaching force and the National policy on Education (1986) played major role in overhauling of

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the teacher education system in India. One of the specific features of teacher education system in India like China is that, teacher education is considered as a continuous and life long process with pre- service and in-service as the essential components of this life long process. The National Policy of Education (1986) states "teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in service components are inseparable".

The NPE (1986) and its Programme of Action (POA, 1992) recommended in-service training for school teachers once in every five years. As a sequel to the recommendations of NPE (1986) and its POA (1992) a 'Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education' was launched in 1987 and a strong network of teacher education institutions like District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE) and Institutes for Advance Studies in Education (IASE) were established in the country to meet the training and retraining needs of teaching force engaged at various stages of school education. India however adopted a different approach to develop such institutional network of teacher education instead of Chinese *merger and amalgamation* especially in the context of CTEs and IASEs as these institutions were established by *strengthening selected Secondary Teacher Education Institutions on the basis of their academic standard and availability of adequate infrastructure facilities and staff*. While the DIETs have been developed as nodal institutions for improving quality of elementary education (Grades I-VIII) and conducting pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes at elementary level, the CTEs are responsible for organising pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes at the secondary level, provide extension and resource support services to secondary schools, school complexes and individual teachers and conduct experimentation and innovation in school education etc. The IASEs are envisaged as centres of excellence and research.

Organisational Structure of Teacher Education System

A comparison of the organization of teacher education institutions in these neighbours reveals communality in the stage wise arrangement of pre-service teacher education though the duration of teacher preparation is much longer in China than India. China and India both have three staged teacher education system. The primary teachers in China are trained in three year teacher colleges or four year teacher colleges; the junior and senior high school teachers are trained in four year colleges and normal universities. And some of the senior high school teachers are required to attain to postgraduate level. Teachers for kindergarten schools in China are trained in the secondary *pre-school teacher training schools*. Besides, few regular secondary teacher training colleges and vocational senior secondary schools also offer pre school teachers training course. The entry qualification and

duration of this programme is similar to the primary teacher training programmes. The *secondary teacher education institutions* enroll graduates from junior secondary schools to prepare teachers for primary school education. This programme is of three or four year duration. The secondary school teachers are provided training in *General Higher Teacher Education Institutions*. Normal universities, teacher training institutions and teacher training colleges enroll graduates from senior secondary schools. Four year programmes are offered for preparing senior secondary school teachers and two or three years programme for junior secondary school teachers. The teacher education programmes in India are also organised stage wise.

The *pre primary teacher education programme* aims at preparing teachers for children of 3-5/6 years of age and except for few government managed institutions is left to the private bodies, at present, two programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) are recognized by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) which is the regulatory body for programmes in the field of teacher education. The entry qualification and duration of first programme of ECCE (pre-primary) is Grade X qualified and is of two years duration. The programme prepares teachers for the children of 3-6 years of age. The second programme is also of two years duration however, the entry qualification for this programme is Grade XII qualified. This programme prepares teachers for children of 4-8 years of age covering pre- primary and Grade I and II of primary stage. This programme has become more popular and the new institutions are seeking recognition from National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) for this ECCE training programme. *Elementary stage* comprises primary stage (Grade I-V, in some states it is Grade I-IV) and Upper primary stage (Grade VI-VIII or V-VIII as the case may be). The teacher preparation programme for this stage is generally of two year duration, however in the north-eastern states of the country the duration of the training continues to be one year. The entry qualification in majority of states for this programme is Grade XII pass but few states like Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal have recently prescribed the Bachelor of Art or Science (B.A/B.Sc) as the entry qualification for elementary teacher education programme. Variations in the nomenclature of the elementary teacher education programme can be found across various states of India. For instance it is called as Elementary Teacher Education (ETE) in Delhi, Basic Training Course (BTC) in Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal, Diploma in Education (D.Ed) in Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, and Andhra Pradesh, Diploma in Teacher Education (DTE) in Tamil Nadu and Teacher Training Certificate (TTC) in Kerala etc. In addition to these courses, the University of Delhi is presently offering a degree level integrated programme known as Bachelor of Elementary Education (B.El.Ed) of four years duration

which combines professional education with general education of graduation level, and besides preparing elementary school teachers, this programme also aims at preparing a cadre of professionals for elementary education. The entry qualification for admission in this course is senior secondary pass (Grade XII) and the programme is designed to integrate subject knowledge, human development, psychological knowledge and knowledge of self. It aims at preparing reflective teachers who are professionally well equipped and are socially sensitive. It is noteworthy that all these programmes prepare teachers for entire elementary level (primary grade I-V and upper primary grade VI-VIII), but as per the recruitment rules of various states of the country these teachers are eligible for teaching only at the primary level .i.e grades I-V, as the academic qualification for teaching at the upper primary classes is graduation level. The most popular programme of teacher education in the country is *Bachelor of Education (B.Ed)* that prepares teachers for the secondary level. In fact teacher education is often considered synonymous with this programme. This programme continues to be considered suitable for preparing teachers for Grade VI- XII though officially the elementary and secondary stages of school education include Grade I-VI and Grade VIII-XII respectively. Majority of the universities of the country are engaged in one year B.Ed degree programme of teacher education, although this duration has been considered to be inadequate for turning a candidate into a professional. Realizing this inadequacy few universities and the Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) of Ajmer, Bhubaneswar, Mysore and Bhopal have experimented with the two year B.Ed programme on pilot basis, however there are only few takers of this two years programme. Another type of teacher education course at secondary level being practiced in the country is integrated four year B.A/B.Sc., B.Ed degree programme which had been practiced in the RIEs till 1996 but the B.A., B.Ed course of these institutions was discontinued on the recommendation of a review committee and currently only four year integrated B.Sc., B.Ed programme is being offered. The entry qualification for this course is senior secondary, thus providing greater opportunity to the institutions to inculcate professional skills and values in the teacher trainees. In addition, the university departments of education and specific institutions of teacher education like the private B.Ed colleges, Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), University Departments of Education and Institutes of Advance Studies in Education (IASEs) offer B.Ed, M.Ed, M.Phil and Ph.D programmes in education. One of the significant contributions in the field of teacher education in India has been the establishment of National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1993 as a statutory body through an Act of Parliament that helped in planned and coordinated development of teacher education in the country and regulation and maintenance of norms and standards in teacher education system in the country. China and India both are multicultural society. China has 56 ethnic

minority groups having the population of 108 million accounting for 8.98% of the total population, while India also has various religious minority groups who are provided cultural and educational rights under Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India. While Article 29 ensures that minority groups are not denied admission in state run institutions, the Article 30 provides the right to all minority groups, whether based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their own choice. Both the countries therefore are flexible in permitting the ethnic minority groups to establish their own educational institutions including teacher education institutions. In China such institutions are encouraged in areas where there is concentration of ethnic minority groups. For instance there is concentration of minority population in the northwest and south west regions of China and therefore teacher training centre in the Northwest and English Teacher Training Center in the Southwest are established to cater the needs of these population.

Curriculum reform in teacher education

Toward the last decade of 20th century majorities of countries around the world tried to gear their education and teacher education systems to meet the challenges of fast changing world and the requirements of the knowledge society. Publication in the Delors report (1996) and American report on the reform of teacher education entitled 'What matters the most' are reflection of such concerns and attempts. The analysis of teacher education curriculum of various levels in China and India reveals that teacher education courses in these countries include foundation/core courses, optional courses, teaching practice, and extracurricular activities (China, regular secondary education programme preparing primary teachers). Indian teacher trainees are given orientation in the socio- cultural and educational concerns of the country besides the knowledge of the developmental stages of children. While in China the *ideological and political education* forms an important component of foundation course and optional courses are organised according to the regional needs and are aimed at deepening the knowledge of students and fostering their interest and aptitudes. In addition vocational and technical subjects are also offered according to local requirements. In China the State Education Commission initiated the "*Reform Plan of Teaching Contents and Curriculum of Higher Teacher Education Facing the 21st Century*". This effort centered around the objective "to reform the educational mode, adjust the curriculum, update the content of education with technology, modernize the content, curriculum pedagogy and techniques, promote the professionalism of teacher education, and cultivate teachers who can meet the social and educational development of the 21st century." In order to operationalise the recommendations of this plan a *Committee for Reform of Teaching Contents and Curriculum of*

counting for 8.98% of the minority groups who are included 30 of the Constitution not denied admission in to all minority groups, administer educational therefore are flexible in their own educational in such institutions are for minority groups. For the northwest and south re in the Northwest and lished to cater the needs

as around the world tried to meet the challenges of fast society. Publication in the field of teacher education concerns and attempts. The models in China and India include foundation/core curricular activities (China, primary teachers). Indian cultural and educational developmental stages of *21st education* forms and all courses are organised around the knowledge of addition vocational and requirements. In China the *Teaching Contents and "21st Century"*. This effort on the national mode, adjust the methodology, modernize the the professionalism of the social and educational use the recommendations *Contents and Curriculum of*

Higher Teacher Education Facing the 21st Century was setup which suggested guidelines for implementing the recommendations and allocated a special fund for the plan. This plan brought significant changes in the mode and curriculum of teacher education in China and educational courses for teacher education in normal universities became diversified with 3+1, 4+1 and 4+2 modes (Fang & Zhu 2007). These endeavours have resulted in significant improvement in the mode and curriculum of teacher education in China. In India a number of efforts have been made during 1998- 2009 to gear the teacher education system to meet the challenges of 21st century.

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) which is the statutory body responsible for 'planned and coordinated development of teacher education system' in the country published the 'Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education' in 1998. This framework tried to address and reflect on the changing international scenario as the result of globalization, privatization, and communication technology etc. An attempt had been made in this framework to strike a balance between the international demands, and the realities of national life. In a major departure from earlier frameworks it accepted commitment, competence, and performance as the guiding principles in developing curricula and programmes for teacher education. Teacher education curriculum responding to the regional needs of community, culture-specificity in pedagogy, and preparing teacher as lifelong learner had been stressed in this framework. This Framework provided separate course structures for primary and elementary levels, and Academic and Vocational streams of senior secondary teacher education. Besides the framework covered the curriculum for preparation of teachers of alternative systems, students with special needs and physical education. Further it also provided space for in-service education and education of teacher educators. In 2005 the University Grants Commission (UGC) brought out model curriculum for Education which discussed the curriculum of general courses of education as B.A and M.A as well as professional courses like B.Ed and M.Ed etc. Again an attempt was made in 2006 by the NCTE in collaboration with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to update the teacher education system in the light of National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF2005). This framework tried to be in consonance with the NCF 2005 with a view to facilitate smooth trajectory for translation of the vision of NCF 2005. At the very onset it has been clarified that "the NCF subscribes to a view of learner as an active participant in the process of learning and knowledge as social construction.

The teacher education curriculum framework will need to engage with questions of the learner (in this case the teacher), the learning process and the content and pedagogy of educating teachers (p9)." This framework focuses on

preparation of reflective teachers through the process of weaving theoretical knowledge across disciplines with student teacher's own experiential realities and the learners' social milieu. It tries to help teachers to develop a conducive learning environment for addressing the needs of learners. In a major departure from earlier frameworks the components of this framework consists of childhood, child development and learning, teacher and learner in society, aims of educating children and adults, knowledge and curriculum, developing self and one's aspirations as teachers, human rights and rights of the child, adolescence education and environmental education, teacher-child engagement, learning to integrate ideas, experience and professional skills, learning to assess and evaluate, and establishing teacher learning centre. It also visualizes continuous reflective engagement of student teachers by connecting knowledge with their own experiential realities. Internship for longer duration has been envisioned in this framework to help student teachers to choose design, organise and conduct meaningful classroom activities, critically reflect upon their own practices through observations, record keeping and analysis; and develop strategies for evaluating children's learning for feedback into curriculum and pedagogic practice. The draft document also articulates alternative models of pre-service teacher education such as one year B.Ed followed by long duration (5-6 months) school attachment programme, four year interdisciplinary pre-service teacher education programme for different stages of school education, and five year integrated undergraduate and post graduate programme.

The most recent effort to modify teacher education curricula to address the contemporary requirements has been initiated by the NCERT in terms of review of its teacher education programmes in the Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) (Govinda Committee). This committee highlights the interdisciplinary nature of education and recommends that "a systematic exercise needs to be undertaken to identify fundamental concepts, which can be drawn from cognate disciplines, with a view to a) highlighting connectivity among these concepts linked to teaching-learning processes and practices; and b) focusing on distinct nature of 'education' as an area of study with its emerging and evolving interdisciplinary knowledge base and its epistemology. (p33)." Teacher education curricula should therefore allow space to the teachers to introspect, reflect on their own practices and become agents of change. It is noteworthy that the organisation of curriculum for both elementary and secondary levels in India is almost identical and includes foundation courses to sensitize students about the interrelationships between education and social subsystems, process of child development and learning, school organisation, health and physical education, pupil evaluation etc. Stage relevant specialisation includes pedagogy of various school subjects, and practical and sessional work

includes projects, and additional practice teaching of various courses at the school level of their difficulty level and between elementary and number of teaching subjects while a elementary teacher education school subjects while a subjects. Health and physical education are integral components of the developmental needs the linkages between the rather inadequate and the reflects that the teacher education get influenced by the modern indigenous strategy or curriculum reforms drift, simulated teaching, and constructivist approach have long become outdated curriculum and treated as to handle a class with the western model of teaching teacher education in India realities of school life. The face and the teacher education expression in the World receive-preparation for the face: multigrade classrooms irregularly". Similar continuing training programmes in to all without slightest remained unresponsive diversity". The quality of these countries and its neighbours to ensure the Council of Teacher Education entrusted with the responsibility products of teacher education launched 2003-07 New

includes projects, and assignments related to foundation and pedagogy courses. In addition practice teaching provides experience of teaching in school. The content of various courses at the secondary level are slightly pitched at higher level in terms of their difficulty level and comprehensiveness. Another significant difference between elementary and secondary level teacher education curriculum is the number of teaching subjects the student teacher has to offer. In the case of elementary teacher education programme the student teacher has to teach all the school subjects while a secondary level trainee has to offer only two school subjects. Health and physical education, art and work experience are also the integral components of elementary teacher education curriculum keeping in view the developmental needs of children at this level, however at the secondary level the linkages between teacher education curriculum and school curriculum are rather inadequate and the review of teacher education curricula in the country reflects that the teacher education curriculum reforms in India have a weakness to get influenced by the models of developed countries, instead of evolving its own indigenous strategy or model. Consequently we find the teacher education curriculum reforms drifting from classroom transaction analysis to micro-teaching, simulated teaching, and models of teaching, and even the most recent the constructivist approach to learning etc. A number of themes and concepts, which have long become outdated in developed countries are often imported by our curriculum and treated as innovative. In a country where majority of teachers have to handle a class with more than fifty students, blind imitation and practice of western model of teaching have not been found to be much effective and therefore teacher education in India has often been criticized for its unrelatedness to the realities of school life. This divorce between the classroom realities a teacher has to face and the teacher education programmes he/she receives also finds an expression in the World Bank Report (1997) as "in India teachers need but do not receive-preparation for teaching in the situation that two thirds of them have to face: multigrade classrooms with many first generation learners who attend school irregularly". Similar concerns have been expressed by Raina (1999) "teacher training programmes in India have remained procrustean, offering the same menu to all without slightest regard for varying cultural and physical settings. They remained unresponsive to vast cultural, linguistic, regional and geographical diversity". The quality of teacher education curricula has been a major concern of these countries and several attempts have been made by these respective neighbours to ensure the quality of teacher education. While in India the National Council of Teacher Education, established by an Act of Parliament in 1993 is entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the quality of the input, process and products of teacher education institutions, the Ministry of Education in China launched 2003-07 *New Action Plan to Revitalise Education* in which drafting

standards for accreditation of teacher education institutions, curriculum of teacher education and quality of teacher education was outlined (Zhu & Han 2006). However the Kothari (Commission 1964-66) suggested bringing teacher education system within the folds of university system to remove the isolation of teacher education institutions and improve its quality. Zhu and Han (2006) have also arrived at similar conclusion in their analysis of teacher education during *post-shifan* era and emphasized the need for setting the standards of teacher education for ensuring quality. International experience such as that of United States also shows that locating teacher education in the university system ensures better professionalism in teacher education.

Practice Teaching/Internship/School Experience Programme

Usually all the pre-service teacher education programmes have an on the job learning component popularly known as field experience or practice teaching. This practice component is at the core of curriculum which provides interactive and live opportunity to trainees to understand the operational and live context of theoretical discourses. The University Education Commission (1948-49), India suggested a minimum of 12 weeks supervised practice teaching programme. The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended internship in two stages, the first stage was called as initiation stage to orient the student- teachers to the entire school situation and orient them into actual teaching. The second stage of eight weeks duration was suggested for actual teaching in real classroom settings. The recent draft document on teacher education programmes at Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) has proposed six months school experience programme. However, in practice this is one of the weakest areas of teacher preparation programmes of India and state wise variations are found in the number of lessons taught by student teachers, and the method used in internship programme. The number of school subjects taught during internship/school experience programme also varies according to the level of teacher education programme. Therefore, while at the elementary level (Grade I-VIII) student teachers are expected to do practice teaching in all the school subjects, at the B.Ed level which caters to the needs of secondary education, they are required to teach two school subjects, and at the higher secondary level a student teacher is expected to teach only one school subject. It is considered that differentiation and specialisation gradually increases across stages, and at lower levels, different subject teaching situations would enable the development of appropriate pedagogical insights among perspective teachers, whereas at the higher levels, the differentiated form of knowledge itself provides ample opportunity to discern varied instructional situations through which such insights can be developed' (NCTE, 1998. P96). Inter-state and intra state variations across the country are also found in the method of organisation of school experience/

internship programme, and while in some institutions 'block practice teaching approach' is being followed, in others 'day- to-day lessons' are taught. Micro-teaching is also popularly practiced in a number of institutions across the country and has been considered as effective and relevant technique to prepare the new entrants for classroom roles, as through the simulated practice student teachers are helped to develop an understanding of the nature and use of instructional skills, and gain insight into how these skill help in transmitting the curriculum to students. Two major problems generally associated with school experience programmes in India are, inadequate guidance and supervision by teacher educators, and lack of cooperation and coordination among the school and college authorities. The emphasis in internship programme is more on the delivery of a prescribed number of lessons than providing feedback to students for improving the quality of performance. During last two decades there has been mushrooming growth of private and self-financed B.Ed colleges many of which do not have facilities for organising practice teaching programme effectively. This has affected the overall quality of teacher preparation in the country. The relevance of school experience programmes as practiced in teacher education institutions of India is also often questioned and there is general perception among the student teachers that the school experience programmes are far removed from the realities of actual classrooms and are not very useful once they become regular teachers. Practice teaching is an important component of Chinese teacher education programme also and unusually student teachers from normal colleges and universities have six to eight weeks practice teaching session during which they are engaged in classroom teaching, observe teaching and participate in the management of students' activities. Like India, student teachers in China are also received by the practicing schools with reluctance and restraint with the result practice teaching sometimes gets neglected. Some normal schools and universities have tried to improve practice teaching and adopted 3.5+ 0.5 mode indicating six months of practice teaching at primary and secondary schools. Teaching practice has been considered as 'indispensable in nurturing primary and secondary teachers according to the opinion expressed by the Ministry of Education, China (2007) on *Student Teachers' Practicum and Support for Teaching*' (Fang & Zhu 2007).

Conclusion

Teaching is becoming more demonstrably complex than it has ever been before and teachers today often have to learn to teach in the ways they themselves were not taught. Constructivism, metacognition, cooperative learning, continuous assessment and other strategies are now challenging the work of teaching. For the culturally diverse society and growing economies like India and China the teachers' task is all the more challenging as they have to maintain the delicate

balance between tradition and modernity and integrate the cultural diversity in their pedagogical approaches. The analysis of teacher education programmes of these countries reveals the steps initiated by these countries during last two decades to gear teacher education system to meet the challenges of emerging society. However, India has a much more challenging task looking into its literacy percentage and shortage of trained teachers to ensure 'quality education for all' than China which has nearly hundred percent literacy rate and faced with the challenge of teacher surplus. Chinese teacher education system has been widely acknowledged for successfully organising teacher education curriculum to meet the requirements of emerging society. Mak (1999) has summed up the Chinese efforts as 'Chinese teacher education institutions have underscored the malleable nature of curriculum. In approaches to curriculum delivery such as innovations in teaching and learning, which involves not only the structural changes, but also consciousness and behaviour that are rooted in culture, the not-so-mutable nature of curriculum has continued (p358)' Chinese teacher education system has emphasised a more futuristic and world oriented way, and reducing the discrepancies between theories and practices of classroom teaching. In addition professionalisation of teacher education has been ensured in China to a considerable extent since the enactment of Teacher Act (1993) which considered teaching as a profession. In India, systemic reforms in teacher education system to integrate the new developments taking place in the school curriculum, especially after the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) which envisages major paradigm shift towards constructivist pedagogy including equal ownership of students in the teaching-learning process in Indian schools, are still awaited though the steps have been initiated to modify teacher education curricula in the country to suit the requirements of constructivist school curricula. However, Indian teacher education system lags behind China which has ensured quality of teacher education through various strategies and has established its credibility globally. Indian teacher education system can also initiate steps to weed out its numerous substandard teacher preparation institutions which are functioning on commercial basis in the name of self-financing teacher education institutions at the secondary stage and providing B.Ed degree at mass level to young unemployed youths through the process of merger and amalgamation like its neighbour. Locating teacher education within the university system may help in improving the quality of teacher education in the country. Learning from its neighbour's futuristic perspective in teacher education system may help us to a considerable extent to handle the challenges facing our teacher education system.

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