

Emerging Trends in Teacher Education in India

Dr. D. Chitra

Abstract

A quality teacher education program is rational and streamlined to address specific pedagogical issues. It elucidates the ideas about what constitutes good teaching and the content and scope of course work and practical experiences. Teacher education courses are very much connected to practice as well as theory. High quality teacher training programs have students studying to be teachers (preservice teachers) and working continuously with expert master teachers. Teacher education programs focus to build teacher proficiency and competence; candidates are able to face new challenges in educating students. In today's world, the demands on teachers are increasing. They must be able to create understanding with investigative minds; assimilating the required transformation and accommodating and responding to universal needs. The purpose of this paper is discuss significant changes that have incurred in teacher education in India and also provide how these national tends relate to global trends, reforms and innovations in teacher education. The need for teacher education programs to be innovative and encompass various approaches and practices is also discussed. It is recognized that teacher education programs should be structured and modified so that teacher candidates learn to respond dynamically to new problems and challenges in the field of education. With this knowledge and skills, future teachers can lead and guide the development of the country

Keywords: Emerging trends, teacher education, India.

Dr. D. Chitra is principal at the Krishna College of Education for Women, Elayapalayam, Tiruchengode Taluk, Namakkal District, India. She can be reached at drchitra2012@gmail.com

There have been changes in the perceptions of education in recent years; and this has been partially due to the new flows of information and teacher resources which can be found in the form of the Internet. Because of India's brittle financial situation and challenges which remain in our society, there have been debates regarding whether or not teaching should be professionalized and whether or not this investment is a worthwhile value. Those who commentate in the world of education now believe that more is needed in order to develop effective teachers. Merely having the knowledge and skill to teach lessons is no longer enough as teachers now are expected to recognize and respond to additional circumstances including a depressive or negative personality in students or even signs of abuse in some severe circumstances. Being open and personable from time to time adds to a teacher's professionalism.

Improving Teachers' Skill by Doing Research

Teaching has come a long way from the traditional lecturer-listener system. Today, teachers are not just lecturers, but guides; and students are not just listeners, but co-explorers of knowledge. Education has become more interactive and experiential for both parties. Thus, teaching skills have also evolved, with more techniques available for teachers to use. Fortunately, there is one method that helps a teacher see the aspects of his or her teaching that need improvement. This method is research, and particularly Classroom Action Research (CAR). In its broadest sense, research is itself helpful when a teacher is trying to introduce concepts to students. Teachers who do their own research on the topics they teach, instead of depending on textbooks, can gain a much better understanding of those topics and how their students interact with the topics. As a result, they can be more effective in sharing the knowledge with students. CAR is more specific than basic research, and it is more concerned with the teaching process itself than with the topics taught. Briefly, CAR is a form of practitioner research that investigates the current situation of a class. The practitioner (the teacher) is the one who conducts active

research on what his or her class truly needs. Since CAR is practitioner research done by one teacher for a particular class, it may produce unique results that can be generalized to other classrooms. Classroom Action Research is truly helpful for teachers to find out what the students need. But more importantly, it is a tool for them to identify what they themselves need to improve in their instruction. This identification is the first step towards better teaching, and consequently, better quality education.

E – Learning

Information technology has long past dawned, and knowledge of it is now considered almost a basic necessity. It is no wonder that schools have begun using computers during classes, whether for basic tasks such as student report presentations or even for crucial activities such as exams. Electronic quizzes are hardly new today. To complement the use of computers, various types of software are available. The most basic ones are the word processors, spreadsheet creators, and presentation programs. Then there are more specialized ones such as attendance trackers, educational games, and graphic organizers. With computers, the use of the internet predictably follows. And with this classroom innovation comes an endless world of possibilities. Notes can be recorded, uploaded, and shared. More communication channels are opened up than ever before. Some classes even utilize social networks for communication, as evident in online groups and forums. There are also more substantial school activities done over the internet. For instance, absentee teachers may create online tutorials for students, so that students will not have to miss a learning session. Some major projects also require the use of online journals and blogs for documentation and the like. There are even those who experiment with the creation and maintenance of websites for the exclusive use of the class. In the end, this is the goal of every bit of educational evolution: a journey towards the best quality of education possible for the younger generation.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning is a system in which two or more people cooperate in a learning experience to share and contribute to each member's understanding of a topic and to complete a given task. Sharing information and connecting with others, whether we know them personally or not, has proven to be a powerful tool in education. Students are collaborating with each other through social media to learn more about specific subjects, to test out ideas and theories, to learn facts, and to gauge each others' opinions. Collaboration is a natural part of life and should be included in the curriculum. Sometimes teachers will build a lesson designed specifically to teach collaborative learning and teamwork. There are many teambuilding games and activities that can be done in a classroom that force students to work together to complete a task. In this scenario, students can learn just as much as if they were developing a presentation on their own, but they get the added benefit of learning how to collaborate. Collaborative learning is on the rise in our classrooms. Done correctly, it is a great opportunity to break up the monopoly of the lecture, teach teamwork to our students, and help them to become more productive members of society in the future.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory is a philosophy which enhances students' logical and conceptual growth. The role of teachers is very important within the Constructivist Learning Theory. Instead of giving a lecture, the teachers function as facilitators whose role is to aid the students to develop their own understanding. This takes the focus away from the teacher and lecture and puts it upon the students and their learning. The resources and lesson plans that must be initiated for this learning theory take a very different approach from traditional learning as well. Teachers following Piaget's work in constructivism must challenge the students by making

them effective critical thinkers and must not merely be a "teacher" but also a mentor, a consultant, and a coach.

Improving Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is paramount to the development of students and should be the goal of all teachers no matter what subject they teach. Teachers should consider building critical thinking skills in all the rubrics and lesson plans they use in their classrooms. Critical thinking skills can be taught in any classroom and any subject with a little creativity. Some ways to incorporate critical thinking into teaching include:

1. Deep analysis - Take something that students see often and take for granted, and have them analyze it more deeply. For example, if a class recites the Pledge of Allegiance every morning, one day have them spend some time answering some questions about what it means and why they say it.

2. Evaluation - Give a concept to the students and ask them to evaluate its merit, giving supporting reasons why they think it is good or bad. This makes students think beyond what someone has told them or what they feel and into the realm of the logic of an argument. This can even be done in a group if it is too difficult for the students to come up with several reasons on their own.

3. Synthesis – Give two or more articles to students on a topic and have them put the information together in a summary. Students demonstrate that they truly comprehend the material in an article instead of simply memorizing it.

4. Debate - Give a topic to the students (something as non-controversial as possible to start) and have one group of students debate one side of the argument and another debate the opposite. Make sure that there are some strict guidelines in order to avoid the degradation of the debate into a heated argument. These types of activities can be used in any classroom for any subject,

and, if used correctly, can result in a higher level of thinking for students; a lofty and worthy goal for any teacher.

5. Paraphrase - Give a passage of a book or article to students and ask them to explain it in their own words. This is similar to synthesis in that students must demonstrate understanding of the passage rather than memorizing it.

Global Education

Global education aims to raise children and to give them a boost, putting them on an even footing despite their unprivileged background. Global education can also be founded on international affairs, as the name would suggest. Students who experience this concept in curriculum are more curious about life and about the various intricacies which are associated with it. Students who are educated with a global focus think about how their actions and their lives have an impact on the world in a far larger scale than they might have imagined beforehand. It is a different way of thinking for young people which they can use in their everyday lives, as they make sense of the different challenges which are faced in the world.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is needed as some teachers find it difficult to relate the curriculum to the children they teach. This might be because an educator in the city is far more likely to teach a greater number of children who are from a multicultural background. Experts believe this type of education is progressive, preventing young people from being made the victim of assumptions.

Trends in Educational Research

Looking at current trends in educational research provides an eye-opening view of the modern classroom. Preservice teachers who are pursuing careers in education must keep current

with changing instructional styles that prepare them to enter the field with the tools they need to best serve today's students.

Team teaching.

Putting two instructors in one classroom is known as team teaching, collaborative team teaching or co-teaching. This model provides benefits and presents challenges to both teachers and students. Students in co-teaching classrooms observe teamwork in action and learn to see concepts from more than one perspective. They have the chance to learn from teachers with diverse backgrounds and can delve deeper into subjects thanks to the opportunity for more one-on-one instructional opportunities. However, conflicting personalities and the tendency of students to favor one teacher over the other can threaten the stability of this model.

Individualized instruction.

A great deal of research is being done on how diversification of instruction to meet the unique needs of students may help them to better grasp core subjects. This type of instruction moves away from the traditional lecture model of teaching and offers students a way to learn at their own pace. Slower learners can take the time they need to develop a solid understanding of material while more advanced students don't have to wait to move on to the next concept. This better addresses individual learning styles and allows teachers to utilize diverse platforms to provide instruction.

Mixed-age teaching.

The potential benefits of putting students of different ages together in the same classroom are still being researched, but many schools have been using this teaching method for years with good results. In a mixed-age classroom, younger students learn how to interact with older ones and benefit from observing their academic abilities. Collaboration between age groups facilitates further development. Achieving advanced competencies at a young age increases confidence.

Teachers also benefit from mixed-age classrooms in that they're able to track their students through more than one grade to get a clearer picture of academic growth.

Brain-based teaching.

Based on neuroscience research that shows consistent practice of a concept creates strong pathways between neurons, brain-based teaching takes advantage of the power of the developing mind to create the greatest amount of positive changes during the short period that students are in school. Students work in groups, participate in games that address specific concepts, and engage in lessons built around central themes; all with the goal of improving their understanding of important academic skills and ideas. Physical education is included to facilitate the growth and development of new neural pathways.

Critical thinking skills.

Although memorization of fundamental facts is critical to building a foundation of knowledge in the early grades, students also need to be able to apply those facts in a multitude of situations. Research into critical thinking skills is driving new ways of teaching that include encouraging students to ask questions, develop problem-solving skills by working in groups, and discuss the outcomes of their experiments. These methods of discovery give students a more active role in their education and teach them how to make decisions by applying the facts they've learned to the problem at hand.

Preservice teachers should be aware of these and other research trends as they study to become educators so that they know what is expected of them when they are in charge of a classroom. Preservice teachers are encouraged to make what they learn an integral part of their teaching methods, discover what works best for their students and continue to modify their methods to create the best possible learning environment.

Conclusion

Examination of case studies and literature from around the world lead to four broad success factors for the implementation of new approaches to initial teacher education:

1. A clear vision of effective teaching that informs the entire program, provides a basis for prioritization and resource allocation, and ensures that all those involved in supporting preservice teachers present a coherent message.
2. Integrating theory and practice so that professional experience in schools is central to the program, and graduates leave with a full toolkit of effective teaching strategies and the capacity to continually review and improve their approaches.
3. Highly skilled and well supported supervising teachers who are accomplished adult educators as well as expert teachers, equipped to play the pivotal role they are assigned in these programs.
4. Sustainable, scalable partnerships that bring the resources and capabilities of all parties to the table, and engage systems to ensure the benefits of successful approaches are spread widely.

The current policy focus on initial teacher education presents a major opportunity to significantly improve this critical component of a high quality education system. Examination of existing effective practices can provide a strong foundation for further reform. Since the teacher is the pivot of the entire educational system and is the main catalytic agent for introducing desirable changes in the teaching learning process, all attempts need be made for motivating teachers to become innovative and creative. It goes without saying that a self-motivated and really industrious teacher can utilize his or her own resources to keep him or herself abreast of new knowledge and skills. It has been recognized that teacher education programs should be structured and modified in a way that enables their teacher graduates to respond dynamically to the new problems and challenges in the field of education. Only then can teachers help in national development.

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