

In Service Teacher Education Programme In India Through Technology Mediated Learning

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THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Teacher education programme through non-conventional mode in Indian context is more than four decade old. The Education commission (1964-66) recommended opening supplementary channels for clearing the backlog of untrained teacher through **Summer courses, Vacation courses, Part time courses and Correspondence courses**. During sixties another channel, i.e. **correspondence course** was introduced. The correspondence-cum-contact mode was considered suitable especially for teachers of the secondary school stage. In order to institutionalise this mode of teacher training, the Central Institute of Education, then a constituent of NCERT, started in 1966 a B.Ed. programme through the correspondence-cum-contact mode.

Though these five institutions, i.e. the Central Institute of Education and the four Regional Colleges of Education, now Regional Institute of Education have since given up the programme, their involvement along with their academic credibility were instrumental in making programmes of secondary school teacher education through the correspondence mode more widespread. Other an factor that gave impetus to correspondence courses was the three delegations of experts sent by the University Grants Commission to the erstwhile USSR during 1967-69, to study the system of correspondence courses and suggest the suitability of this channel for India. These delegations made positive recommendations and included 'teacher training' as one of the areas in which courses through correspondence mode could be offered to begin with. During the seventies and later, such courses leading to a B.Ed. degree have been instituted by many universities. By 1996, the number had increased to twenty-four.

The way correspondence courses have expanded and have been implemented leaves much to be desired. They have assumed the status of an 'alternative' channel, deviating from the original supplementary role of reaching out to those who cannot be accommodated in regular training institutions. On the one hand, they have drawn in large numbers, and on the other, they have come in for a lot of criticism for vitiating the quality of teacher education and making it commercialized.

However, another trend that seems to have emerged during the last two decades is in terms of modes of curriculum transaction. If clearance of backlog untrained teachers and provision of teacher education programme for certain special groups represent fields/specific needs, the institutions of correspondence courses, and now their **improved forms such as distance education programmes represent steps for making teacher education more responsive to field needs**. Recent trends towards developing open and distance learning systems represent efforts to explore more varied and effective modes for curriculum transaction as well as imparting teacher education programmes effectively.

An expert committee appointed by the NCTE under the chairmanship of Prof. R. C. Das (1995) felt that:

"If part time face-to-face institutional programmes are equivalent to face-to-face full time institutional programmes in their total duration of instruction, programmes and academic staff support and other infrastructure as per National Council for Teacher Education norms, then the National Council for Teacher Education may consider their recognition after obtaining detailed information from these institutions."

The institutions of correspondence courses, and now their improved forms such as **Distance Education** represent steps for making teacher education more responsive to field needs. However, recent trends towards developing Open and Distance Learning System represent efforts to explore more varied and effective modes for curriculum transaction of teacher

education programme. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) now recognizes **Open & Distance Learning** as a viable mode of imparting teacher education programme.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research in distance education is less focused on the teacher and more on the materials and means of transmission. Review of related literature shows few studies on teacher education through distance education mode and almost nil at the national level. Hence the researcher felt the need to study in detail the profile of the NCTE recognised open universities (OUs) and distance education institutes (DEIs) in India offering teacher education programmes through distance education mode.

The findings of the study would throw light on the functioning of the OUs & DEIs, and try to find the lacunae if any in the programme delivery and offer suitable suggestions to improve the system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the printed study materials, its volumes, coverage's and the media mix packages used etc.
2. To study the organization of personal contact programme for the conduct of lectures and practice teaching lessons.
3. To find out the process of submission & assessment of response sheets.
4. To suggest measures for improving the programme delivery of teacher education programme.

METHODOLOGY, SAMPLE & TOOL

In order to achieve the objectives of the present study, survey method of descriptive, qualitative type was used. In this study the researcher has:

- i) identified the various NCTE approved OUs and DEIs offering Teacher Education Programme through distance education mode.
- ii) described the profile of the various selected institutions in detail.
- iii) analysed and interpreted the available data qualitatively.

SAMPLE

Being a census study all the NCTE approved OUs & DEIs in India, conducting teacher education programmes through distance education mode were considered.

TOOL

As the present study is a census study of the qualitative, descriptive type, questionnaire was obviously the most suitable tool for gathering data. So an institutional questionnaire was prepared and duly validated by experts in the field of Education and Distance Education. After validation, some items were revised as per the suggestions of the experts, some were ignored and some new one's got included.

DATA COLLECTION

The researcher and his colleagues visited each of the selected institutions and the questionnaire was personally administered to the concerned institution. The data were collected during March to June 2004 by visiting the institutes personally. Some of the institutes were even visited twice on return journey since the entire data could not be obtained during the first visit. Besides, during the visit to the institutes a set of study materials, prospectus and other related guidelines pertaining to the conduct of these teacher education programmes were also collected.

Some of these on payment basis others were complimentary. But with the exception of Karnataka State Open University, YCMOU-Nashik, Vardhman Mahavir Open University, Rajasthan and Punjabi University, Patiala from where completely filled in questionnaires were received, the other institutions were not all that cooperative. In fact two of the DEIs from Andhra Pradesh refused to oblige even after repeated reminders and phone calls. In such cases, the researcher has relied upon secondary sources such as leaflets, prospectus, website etc.

Finally with the exception of IGNOU New Delhi, Shri Padmavati Distance Vishvavidyalayam, Tirupati & Directorate of Distance Education S.V. University, Tirupati, the data (both Primary & Secondary) collected has been tabulated, analysed and interpreted.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

As a part of the sanctioned study a nationwide survey was conducted to look into the teacher education programmes offered through distance education mode in Indian universities. There are more than 300 universities out of which 106 universities are having Distance Education Institutes including 10 Open Universities in the country at present. While a large number of institutes/universities were offering teacher education programmes through correspondence/distance mode prior to the establishment of NCTE as a statutory body by the Government of India, at present there are only 11 institutes/universities (roughly 10% of the total DEIs/OU) offering teacher education programmes through distance education mode. There is an uneven distribution of these institutes/universities offering teacher education programmes through distance education mode. While there were five institutes in the north and equal number of institute in the south, YCMOU represents the only university in the western corridor to offer teacher education programme through distance education mode. Surprisingly not a single institute/university either in the east or in the north east offers these programmes through distance education mode although there are a quite number of DEIs & OUs in this part of the country.

Except IGNOU, all other DEIs & OUs restrict the admission of students to the limit of their territorial jurisdiction. Therefore, there is an urgent need to start teacher education programme through distance education mode in the northeast as well as eastern part of the country. May be some of the DEIs/OU could be persuaded to launch teacher education programme in these parts of India. Directorate of Distance Education of Tripura University, Agartala has started Teacher Education Programme through distance education mode very recently.

One of the broad aims of this research study was to find out how effectively teacher education programmes could be delivered through distance education mode. Delivery of teacher education programme in this context means how curriculum transaction could take place. Since this is a professional course, the study aims to find at the extent of usefulness of using distance education mode. The curriculum of teacher education programme involves practice teaching in the school, conduct of psychological experiment and of course the pedagogy part. Some of the major findings of the study will highlight these points.

The oldest of all the institutes is Punjabi University, Patiala in Punjab, which was established in 1968. The latest one on the scenario is Shri Padmavati Mahila Vishvavidyalayam, Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh, which was established in 1999 and is a deemed university. It is important to note that these programmes are offered only for in-service teachers.

Institutes like Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam, H. P. University, Shimla; KSOU, Karnataka; Punjabi University, Patiala and YCMOU, Nashik offer both B.Ed & M.Ed programmes whereas the rest of the institutions offer only B.Ed programme. The enrollment in B.Ed course varies from 250 to 2000 and in the M.Ed course from 100 to 475. The higher enrolment figures is in respect of OUs only, whose jurisdiction covers the entire country in case of IGNOU and the entire state in case of state open universities like Karnataka & Rajasthan.

The medium of instruction is English and the local vernacular medium like Telugu, Kannada & Marathi in A.P, Karnataka and Maharashtra respectively. In the northern belt it is English & Hindi with the exception of Punjabi University, which offers instruction in Punjabi also. Enrollment is on the basis of written tests & interviews for B. Ed. and merit alone for M.Ed. In some cases weightage is given to those teachers who are having longer teaching experience in school systems.

The faculty strength varies from a minimum of 4 in Kakatiya University, to a maximum of 23 in Himachal Pradesh University. It is a good trend that all the institutions running programme through distance education mode are at least having some core faculty member to oversee the programme delivery of the course. Most of the faculty members have a doctorate degree to their credit and are generally highly experienced.

The course materials are prepared in the self instructional material (SIM) form in case of OUs & printed booklets and topic wise notes in DEIs. Films, Audio Visual Aids, Audio Cassettes and Computer Assisted Lessons supplement them. The size of SIM is usually around 200 pages, written in simple language with adequate topic coverage and bibliography.

Such is the quality of study materials of IGNOU & YCMOU that they have bagged international awards & recognition from organisation such as COL, Canada for its standard of material production. The fact that both the teachers & students of conventional universities use the study materials of distance education programme to supplement their classroom teaching & learning speaks for their quality.

The course materials are prepared in general by a course team and evaluated by experts in the field of teacher education and distance education in relation to the relevance of content, style of presentation and language difficulty. Generally they are good thick bound booklets and their cost is included in the course fees.

As far as practice teaching goes, all the institutions insist on giving 40 lessons during the course (20 in each method). Lesson guidance is given both individually and in groups. The lessons are evaluated by teacher educators, school teachers, and principals of schools and core staff of DEIs. The students are given feedback both individually and in groups.

The Personal Contact Programme Lectures are held in varying times depending on the institutions either at the beginning or at the end or in the middle of the course. The duration of PCP is usually a given time slot, which range from 6 days to a maximum of 15 days. The attendance is compulsory. These programmes are conducted at the contact centers, study centers or DEIs. The faculty members involved is the staff of the DEIs, visiting faculty or both.

It is also seen that the support services provided include library with reference and lending facilities, study rooms, photocopying facilities, audio-visual aids. In YCMOU, on line guidance is also given. The counseling is given as per the student's demand regarding choice of papers, practice teaching, use of library, examination, confidence building etc.

Evaluation is an ongoing process with 25 to 30 percent weightage being given to internal assessment. It is usually done through assignments, oral and written tests, seminars and external examination. Remaining 75 to 70 percent weightage is being given to term end examination/final examination. Evaluation is continuous in both DEIs and OUs.

Assignments are compulsory for all students. The main purpose is to enhance student learning and assessment of their performance midway. The students are required to submit assignments of 6-10 pages in each unit. Staff of DEIs or part time tutors evaluates the assignments. The comments given are usually individualistic in nature. The time given for submission ranges from 15 days to 6 months. The marks of these assignments are added to the final examination marks.

Thus the present research study shows that distance education can work and if well designed can be educationally effective .It has been applied to the education of teachers and has been shown to be effective on a number of measures. Earlier studies have indicated that distance education programmes have often shown advantages over conventional programmes.

Even international experience shows that the governments in developing as well as developed nations of the world are using the distance education mode extensively to impart teacher education programmes. In countries such as Hongkong, Zimbabwe & Kenya, imparting teacher education through distance education mode has been made a part of the policy decisions in education.

In our context, Distance Education has been used to teach, support and develop teachers for many years. As the NCERT started summer training programme for the in service teachers during the 1960s, similar programmes could be adapted for imparting teacher education programmes through distance education mode more effectively now with the availability of new information and communication technology.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As the study reveals that there are hardly any DEIs/OU's either in the east or north east offering teacher education programmes through the distance mode, it would be a welcome idea if efforts are taken in this direction. It is good to note that recently four NCTE recognised institutions have started B.Ed programme through distance education mode. These institutions are Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal; Jamia Milia Islamia Centre for Distance and Open Learning, New Delhi; Directorate of Distance Education, Tripura University, Agartala; Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Allahabad.

The finding of this project vindicates the report given by R.C. Das committee appointed by NCTE on part time teacher education programme that "If part time institutional programmes are equivalent to face to face full time instructional programmes then NCTE may consider their reacquisition after obtaining detailed information from these institutions". Therefore as a policy decision distance education system should be encouraged to offer teacher education courses as it is an equally efficient and viable mode.

Moreover the Distance Education Institutes of the conventional universities should be encouraged to offer teacher education programmes through distance education mode as this mode has proved to be equally effective in delivery of the programme.

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