Chapter 3 Need a Philosophy of Teacher Education: Perusing the Praxis and Policies



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"The excellence of a thing is relative to its proper function." -Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chap. 2

Abstract In Indian Traditions, Teacher, being intellectual pivot, was bestowed to humanity as one of the 'gems' in *samudra manthan*' hence, philosophically his role is prominent for bringing reforms in society. However, the spirit of Indian Education System is underpinned in the Philosophical Traditions, the reflections of Western and Islamic Philosophical thought cannot be ignored. NCFTE-2009 and NEP-2020, in spirit and essence, too repoint the need of a Philosophy of Teacher Education. This Paper discusses teacher Education in India in its philosophical perspective. It also makes a perusal whether the need of a Philosophy of teacher Education is significant in post-colonial Indian Education, in its praxis and prospects.

Keywords Philosophy of education · Teacher education · Indian intellectual traditions · Ideology · Teacher training

Introduction

The concepts of Liberty, Justice, Equality, Democracy, and Freedom as well as instincts of Love, compassion, obligations, sympathy, etc. all were the outcome of man's brooding as an eternal intellectual quest of the human mind evoluting the enterprise of Philosophical Enquiry. Socrates long before treated the young minds as germinating saplings of enquiry and questioning in all the affairs of life. Plato through his Academia and Aristotle in his Lyceum, in the remote past evoked the

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[©] The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2023 J. Ahmad and A. Masih (eds.), *Teaching and Teacher Education in India*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4985-4_3

same quest for wisdom and search for the 'hidden' what, Sages and Rishis initiated in their Meditation in Ancient India or Buddha bestowed under 'Bodhi tree' or Sufi found in their whirling and shriving, all led to philosophical fermentation of human mind since the dawn of civilization. A Philosophy of Teacher Education is thus a guiding principle enabling the human person to perform three functions of education viz. creation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge as well as actively engaging in educational process to reorganise the outcomes of knowledge, skills, attitude, and experiences. A glimpse of status of the Philosophy of Education in Global scenario indicates that during the last century, American universities revaluated thoroughly their education system that got momentum with John Dewey's Philosophical thought. India too initiated its educational reframing with university Education Commission-1948, still continuing the dilemma, as mentioned in latest document on Teacher Education, NCFTE 2009, to search for a philosophy of Teacher Education?

What Role Does Philosophy Play?

Philosophy plays a curious role in Education. Philosophical Liberty, in different ages, remained a bookish bastion for educational fundamentalists. Questions like, 'What this liberty is? Or how to achieve this liberty?' What is justice or freedom? etc. are still some perennial curiosities. Philosophy, in Indian context is the very basis of Educational Aspirations that redirect and reinterpret the fundamental problems of Education to be solved. Education is for Liberation, in Indian Philosophy.

Plato conceptualised 'that virtue can be obtained through three stages of development of knowledge: knowledge of one's own job, self-knowledge, and knowledge of the Idea of the Good. (Lee, 1994).

Without equal educational opportunity, an unjust society appears, Plato was, in this sense, viewed Democracy as a defective political system if virtues or educational excellence is not there to guide the masses in decision-making for the good of the nation as a whole. He proposed the 'Philosopher King' for enhancing the Dignity of knowledge and wisdom suited to rule the Nation. John Dewey too talks about Democracy and Education links that influenced Philosophy of Education globally.

A number of factors, says Carlsen (1949), influence the need of a Philosophy of Teacher Education viz. length of Teacher Education Programme, Curriculum, and pedagogy. More important is to contextualise the kind of Philosophical studies desirable in the Teacher Education. Smith (1962) defines five basic tasks of Philosophy of Education

1. The first of these tasks is concerned with the instruction which is carried on by complying logical operations in educational process.

- 2. The second task to which educational philosophy is relevant is that of giving direction to the educational enterprise. This task requires that the philosopher be concerned with the purposes and directions of the total educational programme.
- 3. The third task to which philosophy is relevant is the development of educational programmes. A systematic philosophy of education is incomplete if it does not contain at least the outlines of a comprehensive programme consistent with its fundamental tenets.
- 4. The fourth task is that of keeping educational concepts as clear as possible.
- 5. Finally, there is the task of examining and solving educational problems concerning with epistemological, pedagogical, or axiological aspects.

A great deal of the difficulty encountered by teachers in the classroom arises from the fact that they do not understand language. They run into all sorts of elementary semantic problems with which they cannot deal for the simple reason that they have no knowledge of the logical and semantic dimensions of verbal behaviour.

Problem of understanding, while elaborating, the technical terms by students and making sense of the language of the students by the teacher, are, if not generally, exigent distortions, to be attended by Philosophers of education. There arises a problem of semantic distortion when a teacher is equally vague in grasping the meaning of very common terms in its operational sense.

The lack of intellectual rigor in the classroom is due not to the teacher's lack of knowledge of his subject, but rather to the fact that he neither understands the logical structure of his subject matter nor has command of its logical operations.

Meanings are relative or may be specific to context, however, the general meaning of the term gives only a superficial understanding distorting the Philosophical approaches. Sometimes the question of defining a term is the primary exercise which, often is not handled properly by the teacher, for example, teaching a topic on 'equality in education' requires, first to grasp, what equality is.

Take another example; it is dubious to declare it reasonable to say that India is a Democratic-Secular Country, unless we work out a definition of democracy and secularism to satisfy the reasonability of the statement. Philosophy of Education determines the very idea of the concept and its logical understanding before deliberation on an issue in Education.

Another problem that Philosophy of Education relooks is the way of thinking differently and dubiously, from the ordinary perspective when you are in the classroom. If a teacher thinks in the way of a person who is unfamiliar with the Educational problems in hand to be solved with Philosophy, he/she is, to the largest extent, deals with the things in a less substantial manner, and may not be academic. Educational Problems may vary for example, such questions as why there will be education imparted to the desirous? Who deserves to get education? Who will teach? What methods of instruction will be taken into consideration? What will be the subject matter to be delivered? What type of discipline will be employed in educational process? Although they all do not involve a philosophical context, yet have their philosophical aspects. These preliminary aspects of Educational philosophy that are involved may belong to epistemological, pedagogical, sociological, psychological, axiological, or metaphysical concerns. Reflecting the concepts by taking them to task and treating the things critically are the fundamental exercises in Philosophy. A Philosopher's approach, undoubtedly is to clarify the doubts but with raising the systematic questioning and doubting the procedures. Thinking paradigms make distinguishable differences among pedagogical approaches.

A Philosophy of Teacher Education

It is interesting to note that some 50 years back observed that the problem which Indian education faces is not simply the obvious tensions in the national consciousness between the ancient and the modern, the spiritual and the scientific, the East and the West. It is all of these gathered together in a crisis of faith which affects university students and intellectuals generally.

Some other thinkers observed

...to my mind, the first component of the malaise from which the Indian intellectual suffers is utter uncertainty and instability.... Utter lack of faith is the culmination of the Indian intellectual's neurosis.¹

...the new university has no ideal attachments, no philosophy, no urge to help in creating a national ethos, no readiness to supply any intellectual and moral basis for the great enterprises of evolving a good life in a free country, no sense of mission... lacking moral foundations of wider loyalties to the nation and humanity.²

Although a humanist philosophical basis of Indian Education, was thought of since independence yet, for the last at the very least fifty years as says Dhankar (2020) "it has been an arena of irresponsible play of unexamined and half understood ideas. This happens in the name of improvement and keeping abreast with current developments. The remedy is not to stifle new ideas through any kind of systemic restrictions that would be a disaster as it will kill all new initiatives. The solution lies in rigorous philosophical examination of all such attempts and ideas, and a proliferation of philosophical writing which is closely connected with the practice at the ground one hand and most generalised and abstract but rigorous theory on the other".

The role of Human factor in education has been highly appreciated after independence. In its task of promoting emotional and national integration, the first objective of every school in India was thought of not only to inculcate love and loyalty of the motherland in all its students, but to educate them, irrespective of caste, creed, or community to be good Indian first and good Bengali, or Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati or Hindu, Muslim, Parsis or Christian second."³

¹ Sampuranand, *The Indian Intellectual*, pp. 4, 6, 15 ff.

 $^{^2}$ Zakir Hussain, addressing the Convocation of the Punjab University. Reported in The Indian Express for December 18, 1960.

³ D'Souza, A. Austin, p. 151.

"The growing generation" says Humayun Kabir, "must be trained to be Indian who accepts their total heritage".⁴ India has always been recognised as having a great tradition for plurality and assimilation from all cultures.⁵ For disseminating, the purpose main instrument was obviously the curriculum with amenable role of teachers who, undoubtedly, are the producers, agents, and promoters of peace, love, fraternity, knowledge, and national integration. Abdul Kalam (2001) advocates 'school-teachers to be the role model of students'.⁶

Richard Pring (2020) gives a very appealing example of 'humane Teacher' whose task is to educate persons in humanity through Education, but the very idea of Education is itself ambiguous.

The paradox of 'educated' is finely expressed in a letter which the principal of an American High School sent to her new teachers-

Dear Teacher

I am the survivor of a concentration camp.

My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers

Children poisoned by educated physicians

Infants killed by trained nurses

Women & children shot and burned by high school and college graduates

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human.

Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, and educated ichmans.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important but only if they serve to make our children more human.

Similar case may also be taken from a Position Paper on Education for Peace (NCERT, 2006) where a student makes a complaint about his teachers fifty years after his unripe education,

....A teacher had a dream in which she saw one of her students fifty years from today. The student was angry and asked,... 'Why was I not better educated?...With ever greater anger, the student shouted, 'You helped me extend my hands with incredible machines, my eyes with telescopes and microscopes, my ears with telephones, radios and sonar, my brain with computers, but you did not help me extend my heart, love, and concern for the human family. Teacher, you gave me half a loaf.' (Education for Peace, p. 34)

A Philosophy of Teacher Education, thus, is much more than a mere structural caricature of the curriculum and pedagogy. It requires a conceptual and behavioural aspects both to be revamped.

⁴ Humayun Kabir, p. 35.

⁵ Krishna Sobti, p. 64.

⁶ APJ Abdul Kalam, p. 39.

Teacher and Teachers' Training: Policy Perspectives

Buchanan (1948) romantically says, "I realize that each of us has his own Socrates". One may witness a lengthened legacy of teacher oriented philosophical heritage in Indian traditions where teacher-student bonding occupies a splendid place often proclaimed with the epitomes of Dronacharya-Eklavya, Ramananda-Kabir, Krishna-Arjuna, Paramhans-Vivekanda- etc. The conventional saying, is that. "Teachers are born" however is now reviewed as the Kothari commission realised that "the Destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms". In spite of critics who say a teacher is born and not made, no one has been able to discover really distinguishing characteristics between the good and the poor teacher. (Carlsen, 1949). And so, we feel that the ability to teach can be learned with a correctly organised training programme. It is not fair to impose a philosophy of education on teachers. If we are to strive to let students develop their own philosophies, we are certainly called upon to expose them to courses springing from many philosophies of education: the Constructivist, the Existentialist, the Humanist, the Pragmatist, and so on.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) recognises the importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system. It suggests that three primary factors viz. teacher competence, sensitivity, and teacher motivation determine, to the largest extent the quality of learning whereas essential learning conditions play a crucial role in shaping academic and professional standards of teachers for achieving educational goals. Some of the essential conditions according to the draft would include

- 1. The duration of academic preparation,
- 2. Teachers' pedagogical skills
- 3. Diversity in learning situations
- 4. Awareness towards contemporary issues
- 5. Motivation for Curriculum transaction
- 6. Processes of social transformation.
- 7. Working conditions
- 8. Teacher's academic and professional education.

The Philosophy, in Toto, frames the guiding principles at decision-making and implementation levels of a policy. The fundamental stereotype that knowledge is 'given' is now shifted towards the 'construction' of knowledge.

NCFTE indicates not only the need of a Philosophy but also aggregates the reasons behind

......Teachers need to be creators of knowledge and thinking professionals. They need to be empowered to recognize and value what children learn from their home, social and cultural environment and to create opportunities for children to discover, learn and develop. (p. 13)

...Education is not a mechanical activity of information transmission and teachers are not information dispensers. Teachers need to be looked at as crucial mediating agents through whom curriculum is transacted and knowledge is co-constructed along with learners. Textbooks by themselves do not help in developing knowledge and understanding. Learning is not confined to the four walls of the classroom. For this to happen, there is a need to connect knowledge to life outside the school and enrich the curriculum by making it less textbook-centered. (p. 14)

Education as an area of interdisciplinary knowledge is not merely an application of a few core disciplines, but a praxis and a context where theories and practical wisdom are generated continuously. Likewise, Training is not a panacea until the thought is shaped. We train dogs and horses. We educate persons (Pring 2020).

As far as Teacher Education Institutions are concerned, they train teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as a transmission of information. (NCERT, 2005). The NCF has described the current concerns of teacher education as follows:

- 1. 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. Curriculum, syllabi, and textbooks are never critically examined by the student teacher or the regular teacher.
- 2. Language proficiency of the teacher needs to be enhanced, but existing programmes do not recognise the centrality of language in the curriculum.

Further, exclusion in education is a Philosophical Problem till we define the term to the context. Generally, there are two types of Exclusion (NCFTE 2009). The first is the exclusion of the children with disabilities of different kinds and learning difficulties, and second is the social exclusion of children who come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds with diverse learning needs.

The Problems often get unaddressed. The desire for change should be evocative without a biased or prejudiced attitude. NCFTE elaborates

..... Inclusive education refers to a philosophical position as well as an arrangement of institutional facilities and processes. This is to ensure access to and conditions of success in education for everybody, including those in the margins, either with learning difficulties because of physical or mental disabilities or because of their social position. (p.13)

...... It is necessary that teachers who teach and manage the classroom are sensitized and made aware of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments. (P.14)

Another important issue that cannot be dealt with without Philosophical Approach is regarding Sustainable Development perspectives of gender equity, values for peace, and respecting the rights of all.

Education plays a crucial role in promoting values of peace based on equal respect of self and others. In the views of a recent scenario, as NCFTE 2009 explains that Teaching is a Profession that requires, technically, a long period of academic training, an organised body of knowledge on which the undertaking is based, duration of formal and rigorous professional training with practical experience in the field and a code of professional ethics that binds its members into a fraternity.

These dimensions acquire critical importance. Teachers are concerned, in an important way, with the holistic development of students—physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual.

It is observed that earlier Curriculum Draft and Policies on Education, substantially, reflect whether an ideology or a Philosophy steers educational framework. Discerning the prevailing ideology before searching any Philosophy of Teacher Education is indeed a dialectic effort paraphrasing the factors that influence the very idea and concerns of 'Teaching and Learning Activity' in changing global scenarios where things are more interrelated than inclusive.

Observation of NCFTE about Teacher Education will say

- 1. Teacher education is integrative and eclectic.
- 2. It is free from the hold of 'schools of philosophy and psychology.'
- 3. Functions under a global canvas of 'learning society'
- 4. Becoming more liberal, humanistic, and responsive to the need of inclusive education.
- 5. Teaching becoming non-didactic and dialogical explorations.
- 6. Pedagogy is derived more from sociological and anthropological insights
- 7. Recognising potential of social context in teaching and learning
- 8. Promoting multi-cultural education and teaching for diversity
- 9. Paradigm shift in knowledge-base of teacher education.
- 10. Making practices more reflective.

Under this changing scenario and reflective paradigm, there requires a drastic veracity in formulating a philosophy of Teacher Education. The National Education Policy 2020, however devotes utmost attention to the rejuvenation of Teacher Education through its structural overhauling in global professional need well-knit in Indian Traditional Morphemes but to paying heed of a systematic philosophy to much extent.

Teacher is the pivot of all Educational Policies who philosophises the aspirations and turns them into being for reflections on personalities and attitudes keeping in view the formation of a 'Professional and Humane Teacher.'⁷

The Philosophical Concerns in NEP 2020 are self-explanatory in terms of the extension in Praxis for the realisation of Indian Values, Intellectual Heritage, and Potential to keep pace with the advancing world with its cultural treasure within. It considers in its spirit collaborating the local to the global concerns on the line *sarve bhavantu sukhina*.

Following seem to be the major Philosophical concerns

- 1. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 as per Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- 2. Education thus, must move towards less content, and more towards learning about
 - a. How to think critically and solve problems,
 - b. How to be creative and multidisciplinary,

⁷ For detailed discussion see NCFTE-2009, p. 20.

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 - c. And how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields.
 - d. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, enjoyable.
 - 3. Development of the creative potential of each individual.
 - Multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge;
 - 5. Creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation;
 - 6. Promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning;
 - 7. Life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience;
 - 8. Respect for diversity and respect for the local context,
 - 9. Emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learningfor-exams;
- 10. The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought as prime source of conceptual and functional facade;
- 11. A rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient, and modern culture and knowledge systems, and traditions.

The philosophical Heritage of Indian Intellectual Traditions offers a guiding principle for searching and adapting a philosophy of Teacher Education too.

....The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy. The pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa), and truth (Satya) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self. World-class institutions of ancient India such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Vallabhi, set the highest standards of multidisciplinary teaching and research and hosted scholars and students from across backgrounds and countries. The Indian education system produced great scholars such as Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Bhaskaracharya, Brahmagupta, Chanakya, Chakrapani Datta, Madhava, Panini, Patanjali, Nagarjuna, Gautama, Pingala, Sankardev, Maitreyi, Gargi and Thiruvalluvar, among numerous others, who made seminal contributions to world knowledge in diverse fields such as mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, medical science and surgery, civil engineering, architecture, shipbuilding and navigation, yoga, fine arts, chess, and more. Indian culture and philosophy have had a strong influence on the world. These rich legacies to world heritage must not only be nurtured and preserved for posterity but also researched, enhanced, and put to new uses through our education system. (NEP 2020, p. 4)

The National Policy visualises an Education System deeply rooted in Ancient Indian Cultural Heritage and Philosophical Traditions...... by providing highquality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower (i.e. Visva-Guru)..... to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian,reflecting a truly global citizen (i.e. the ideal of *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*).

It, by no means, indicates a discretion, however an intention to the need of a working Philosophy, in the Making for generation next, to instill among the learners

a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

Apart from the Politics of Language, the Philosophy has much to do with the interpretation of Language in Teaching and Learning Process. NEP 2020, reconsiders the Philosophical role of language by equally encountering dialectically and aptly the historical statement of Macaulay, it says so-

.....Sanskrit, while also an important modern language, possesses a classical literature that is greater in volume than that of Latin and Greek put together, containing vast treasures of mathematics, philosophy, grammar, music, politics, medicine, architecture, metallurgy, drama, poetry, storytelling, and more (known as 'Sanskrit Knowledge Systems'), written by people of various religions as well as non-religious people, and by people from all walks of life and a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds over thousands of years. (NEP 2020, p. 14)

The problem of language is one of the fundamental philosophical problems in classroom teaching and learning. The very basis of both reflections and refractions of thought is language competency to understand the knowledge, culture, people, traditions, and even emotive aspects. The more knowledge available across the languages (through translations) one is aware of, the more he would be able to bridge the gaps among minds and hearts. NEP-2020, realises this power of language and hence considers its role as prominent in constructing a cultural camaraderie.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding, from classical viewpoints of Astik or Nastik schools, there are many other readings to Indian Philosophy viz. Buddhist Readings, Jain Readings, Dalit Readings, Secular Readings, Religious readings, Pragmatic readings, and Sikh, Muslim, or Christian readings too that might equally study what constitutes upbringing and education. Further, a contextual concern for deterring an equivocal framework highlighting the need, perspectives, and provision for a philosophical paradigm shift in educational practices and the reconceptualisation of Teacher, Teaching, and Learning is a need of the time. The Three basic concerns of the NEP-2020 reflect revamping all aspects of the education structure, twenty-first century education including SDGs, and building upon India's traditions and value systems. In fact, Indian education for the last seventy years has been an arena of irresponsible play of unexamined and half understood ideas. There is a wide gap between theory and practice. It is further unfortunate that this happens in the name of reforms and innovations and overhauling. Rather than contextualising with an ideology, Teacher Education should be appreciated, genuinely, in its philosophical identity. It is further a paradoxical issue to distinguish between ideology and Philosophy often unanswered in the intellectual arena as the politics of Education is inevitably an emerging area to be treated in the academic periphery.

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