

Innovative Practices in Teacher Education

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Abstract

In India teacher education program is being provided in universities, colleges and teachers education institutions in order to upgrade teachers' teaching skills. Teacher Education is a discipline which educates the progressive generations for preparing skilled and innovative teachers to make a civilized and creative society. For teachers there is need to integrate social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual competencies, with numerous teaching skills. Innovation is one of the most important key to improvement in any area. In current time the obsolete ideologies and methods of teaching do not work therefore there is earnest need to start innovative practices in teacher education. Teachers have to be innovative in teaching, curriculum development and teaching practices. National Curriculum Framework 2005 under the heading "Encouraging Innovations" in Chapter 5 entitled "Systemic Reforms" states that, 'individual teachers often explore new ways of transacting the curriculum in addressing the needs of students within their specific classroom context. The challenges that might occur in applying situated cognition in teacher education programs, including insufficient opportunities for cognition apprenticeship, limited social interactions, and constraints in microteaching, required to be improved for making an innovative teacher. These outcomes are believed to contribute to both teacher education and educational technologies in the contemporary milieu of education.

Keywords: Innovations, Teacher Education, Constructivism, Team Teaching

Introduction

The revitalization and strengthening of the teacher education system is a powerful means for the upliftment of educational standards in the country. There are many issues that need urgent attention for improving the quality of teacher education programme. Innovation is the key to improvement. It is the time when the obsolete ideologies and methods of teaching do not work. One has to be innovative with teaching, integrated teaching, teacher curriculum and teacher education for the development of nation. Time is constantly changing and the only way to keep up with it is to keep growing and evolving and this is also applicable to teachers. In order to relate with children teachers need to keep themselves upgraded with new ways of teaching. Today is the age of videos and podcasts and children can easily learn through this interactive media and hence teachers of current India need to keep up with the current technology.

Learning never stops. To be a good teacher, need is to explore themselves, and try innovative educational measures in teaching. With internet being so widely used, knowledge is just not restricted to textbooks, children have access to internet and information. In such times if teachers stick with a decade old way of teaching then it's difficult for children to relate to them. Teachers have to look beyond textbooks and take help from audio and visual aids of teaching to make a subject interesting.

Meaning of Innovative Practices

Etymologically, the word "Innovation", is derived from the Latin word "Innovare" which means to change something into something new. It is a promotion of new ideas and practices in education and training. Being innovative means looking beyond what we currently do well, identifying the great ideas of tomorrow and putting them into practice.

Research and innovations play an important role in improving the quality of teachers and the education imparted to them for all levels of teaching. They demand to introduce new ideas and practices in classroom transaction and other curricular and co-curricular activities. The teacher's effectiveness can be enhanced with good leadership and appropriate teaching methodologies. The purpose of teacher education is to prepare teachers who have professional competencies to lead the nation forward through their manifold roles. There may be wide variation in using innovative practices in teaching and learning. For an instance, the use of colored chalk, basic audio-visual materials, electronic technology use of sophisticated technologies and methods, practices etc. are some of the innovative practices use in teaching and learning.

Some Innovative Practices in Teacher Education

Following can be some of the innovative ideas that need to be focused in teacher education;

- a) **Team Teaching:** It is Cooperative or collaborative learning process. When teacher and students have to work under so many constraints, then the practice of “*Team teaching*” is always a good option. It is a team work where members support and rely on each other to achieve an agreed-upon goal. Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement.
- b) **Reflecting Teaching:** Reflection refers to the ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal, pedagogical, societal and ethical contexts associated with schools, classrooms and the multiple roles of teachers. Teachers must examine their belief, assumptions and biases regarding teaching and learning and determine how those beliefs influence classroom practice. Reflection is a natural process that facilitates the development of future action from the contemplation of past and current behavior.
- c) **Constructivism:** Constructivist paradigm evolved from cognitive psychology is based on the contributions of Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, Dewey, Tolman and many other educationists. Constructivist learning is based on student’s active participation in problem-solving and critical thinking regarding a learning activity. Students construct their own knowledge by testing ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledge and experience, applying them to new situations and integrating new knowledge gained with pre-existing intellectual constructs. In constructivism the students are engaged in the design process in the steps as given below:
 - Think it
 - Dream it
 - Plan it
 - Share it and
 - Make it.
- d) **Blended-Learning:** Blended-learning combines traditional teaching and learning approaches with information and communication technologies. Blended-learning describes an approach to learning where teachers use technology, usually in the form of Web-Based

instruction or perhaps utilize components of a learner-centred Web course with components that require significant instructor presence and guidance. Use of the Web in such settings provides many affordances for the teacher and students in the form of communication channels, information sources and management tools.

- e) **Soft Skills:** Soft skills refer to personality traits, social gracefulness, and fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, career prospects and hard skills which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity. Soft skills are broadly applicable in teacher education programme that the curriculum of teacher education could contribute to the development of a holistic human capital that can foster economic, social and personal development. Infusing the soft skill in the curriculum of teacher education is the need of the profession for it to be successful.
- f) **Information Communication Technology (ICT):** ICT presents a major opportunity to rapidly spread information and knowledge cost-effectively even to the most remote rural areas of the country. Cradler (2002) gave seven requirements for effective use of Information and communication technology (ICT) in education as given below:
- Suiting technology to education goals and standards
 - Having a vision for the use of technology to support curriculum
 - Providing for both in-service and pre-service training
 - Ensuring access to appropriate technology
 - Providing for administrative support for technology use
 - Providing time for teachers to plan and learn how to integrate technology
 - Providing for ongoing technical support for technology use

Hence the students are encouraged to use internet resources for collecting information, creating a learning community through groups, use LCD or projector for presentations, and participate in synchronous meetings through chat, videoconference etc.

Categories of Innovative Practices

Anderson and Pelgrum, (1999) provides a comprehensive selection of innovative adaptations in various countries, compiled according to age group. There may be several innovative practices in teacher education such as;

- Student activities (e.g. processing information, creative work, communication...)
- Computer-related technology (e.g. preparing documents, programming, databases design...)
- Curricular domains (e.g. math, mother-tongue, foreign languages, sciences, social studies,

cross curricular...)

- Gains for students (e.g. motivation, activity, creativity, self-confidence building, possible negative influences...)
- Changes for teachers (e.g. an increase in knowledge, co-operative skills, ICT skills...)

When used intelligently, computers become genuine tools in the hands of teachers and students. The ICT influences on local curricula, the changing role of teachers and the productive activity of students.

Innovative Practices and their Implications

A UNESCO publication, *The Changing Role of the Teacher*, states: 'There was a time when the teacher's role was to pass down to the younger generation the knowledge, experiences and mythology of a slowly evolving society. The pace of change in contemporary society has made this role redundant. The modern teacher must be, among other things, a change-agent. It does not matter whether one is addressing the situation in a developing country or an industrialized nation, the problem remains the same. What are the new dimensions of his or her role, and how is the teacher to be trained to fulfil that role. In examining the changing role of the teacher we need to see the changes as being a response to, and an attempt to confront, the pressures of a society undergoing constant transition.' (Goble and Porter, 1977)

There may be several advantages of using innovative practices in teacher education. A few of them are given below;

- Student Motivation Levels Increases:** innovative practices are easy to manage the students and direct them towards the task. There is no chance of students' distraction which ultimately increases the motivation level of students. .
- Removing Stressful tasks:** innovative practices are better in satisfying teachers' experience and make tedious tasks simple an easy to understand which makes students to be busy and engaged, thus remove stressful task of teachers.
- Self-Learning:** innovative practices provide self-learning opportunity to learners. Learning may not be directed towards teachers' objectives in classroom teaching but extra coordination can be observed in the classroom.
- Extension of students thinking:** Ideas and thinking of students may go beyond teachers' capabilities and experience which may bring and provide double confidence of levels of teachers.
- Active Learning Process:** using innovative practice in teacher education students' may

go beyond the teacher's own subject of expertise. Learning becomes active and complex subject matter becomes easy.

- f) **Instruction to the right learner:** Teachers feel easy to spend time with students that need extra attention and practice to catch up with the subject.
- g) **Attention:**using innovative practices slow learners have also concentration on the teaching-learning process without deviation and distraction.
- h) **Changing Status and Roles of Teachers:** Teacher Education is one of the most accessible accounts of the choices facing educational systems regarding teacher preparation. Innovative practices have a strong focus on developing the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge in teaching learning process which brings confidence in teachers and creativity in teaching profession. There is a challenge for teacher educators to articulate for themselves the set of theories and practices that will best enable them to have the most positive impact on the teachers they educate in the context of really preparing teachers to implement the curricula and assessment modes of the 21st century.

Conclusion

Teachers' and students' relationships are changing, as they learn from each other. Teachers' roles are shifting from owners of information to facilitators and guides to learning. Educators are finding different ways of using class time. Introverted students are finding ways to participate in class discussions online. Different approaches to teaching are being used in the same class. Students are getting a global perspective. Teacher education in India needs to orient itself to the new challenges and enable its pupil to compete level. The pupil who are pursuing teacher education are required to place community and future citizens at a higher place by possessing new skills and attitudes as well as competitive knowledge in the stream of education concerned. All these can be possible through practice of innovative teaching practices in Teacher Education. The existing innovative teaching practices in teacher education are very important and critical input for growth and survival. Innovation is the path to progress for any nation and the future of the nation is in its classrooms. It is not necessary that each innovation is structured and invented; it could be even a crude, unstructured, informal method adopted by the teacher for the sake of meaningful learning of the students. Hence, we need to respect such innovations as well and promote innovative methods and new ideas and practices of teaching in our schools, college, universities and other institutions.

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