

AN INTENSIVE STUDY OF 3 COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN
PUNJAB AND FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Dr. Evelyn Marr, et al
Department of Teacher Education, Institute of
Education, National Council of Educational
Research and Training, New Delhi.

Summary

Reference: Vol. 11 (1969) G3 (p84)

An investigation into the functioning of 3 colleges of education identified their problems as follows:

- (a) Syllabus too lengthy and theoretical.
- (b) Insufficient time for discussions of practical teaching, and inadequate supervision.
- (c) Method of teaching mainly lectures.
- (d) Lack of books generally and books in the mother tongue particularly.
- (e) Evaluation of theory and practical work by persons unfamiliar with the modern approaches in education.
- (f) Admissions on the basis of performance on previous examinations.
- (g) Lack of opportunity for the professional growth of the teacher educator.

Follow up work was conducted by a series of conferences and discussions and seminars for the teacher-educator. A blue-print for change, including the broad outlines of a new programme, was agreed upon and committees set up to work out the details of the several aspects of the teacher's training.

For the future it is planned to organise workshops for the teacher educators to orient them to diagnostic and remedial supervision procedures in the supervision of practical teaching, and introduce them to the preparation of teaching tasks, and micro-teaching techniques.

Report

The Problem

Teacher Education is a difficult and challenging task. While there is no limit to what one would like the student-teachers to learn, the programme has to be planned keeping in view the limited time during which it has to be completed. It is necessary to examine the programme continually in order to see how it can be improved, to make sure that the important aspects are receiving due attention, and that time is not being wasted on any superfluous items. The programme has to be viewed in its entirety, so that a change suggested in one area is not at the cost of any other area.

It was decided to make an intensive study of some of the colleges of education which were following the same programme. The aim was to examine the actual functioning of the programme in the colleges, to find out the problems being faced by them in carrying it out, and to determine the scope for improvement.

Procedure

Three colleges in the Punjab, affiliated to Punjab University were studied: one a Government College, the other two private colleges. One of the private colleges was for women students only, the other private college, and the Government College were co-educational institutions. The two private colleges had approximately 250 students each, while the Govt. College had about 320 students. The two private colleges were run by religious organizations, and their funds were supplemented by these organisations, more in the case of one than the other.

As far as possible all aspects of the programme were studied. The investigators visited each college and spent about a week to ten days in interviews and observation.

In each institution interviews were held with the Principal, all the staff members, and about twenty-five to thirty students. In selecting students for study an attempt was made to secure representation on the basis of sex, academic achievement (high, average, low), teaching subjects, and whether they were hostel or day students.

A few class lectures and other group activities were observed. But the time was short and some of these activities were held only once a week or less. Hence the opportunity for observing them was rather limited. On the other hand since the investigators were spending the full day at the college, and some members of the team lived in the college hostels, there were opportunities for informal contacts and observation, which proved useful.

Findings

Only some of the major findings are discussed here. Information specific to separate institutions is not included, rather common elements are stressed.

Courses of Study:

During the training programme the major portion of the time of the student teachers was occupied by the courses of study. Therefore what

they could get from the programme depended largely on the syllabus prescribed by the university. There was considerable similarity in the reactions of the teachers and the student-teachers to the syllabus as a whole. The most commonly expressed views among both groups were that the syllabus was too lengthy, too theoretical; and that there was overlap between the different subjects. There appeared to be a need for reducing theory as well as of bringing out the practical implications of the theory studied. On the other hand, there were indications that the academically gifted students did not find the course challenging enough. Teacher educators were generally aware that some of the courses needed to be updated.

Student Teaching:

The programme of student teaching included demonstration lessons given by members of the staff, discussion lessons by students, and about a month's teaching in schools after the final examination in theory.

Each student observed two demonstration lessons, one in each of his or her teaching subjects. The students reported that they found these lessons useful, and were of the view that there should be more such lessons to demonstrate the teaching of different types of subject matter.

The student-teachers were required to give two discussion lessons each, and to observe about 30 lessons of fellow students. Although the majority of student-teachers said that they learnt something from these lessons, they were agreed that after a time it became a boring routine. Several teacher educators expressed dissatisfaction with the discussions following both demonstration and discussion lessons. The common problems appeared to be that the student teachers were unable or diffident to discuss the lessons critically, and that sufficient time was not budgeted for the discussion. These views were confirmed by the observations of the investigators. Attempts were being made to prepare the student-teachers for participating in the discussions.

With regard to practice teaching in school the main problem was that of supervision. Each teacher educator was expected to supervise about twenty students, and it was impossible to give sufficient time to all lessons. Further, teacher educators often had to supervise lessons in subjects with which they were not familiar.

There was a marked lack of agreement among teacher educators on the objectives of student teaching, and they differed on what they tried most to convey to the students they supervised. Although students were helped to plan their lessons in advance, no effort was made to inculcate teaching skills before they entered the class room. In fact there was a lack of awareness of activities that could be introduced for this purpose.

Method of Teaching:

The methods of teaching most commonly employed by the teacher educators were lectures, lecture-cum-discussions, and lectures supplemented by assignments. There were a few notable exceptions, but generally the teacher educators were not trying out in their own teaching the progressive methods which they were discussing with their students. There were, of course, serious difficulties in introducing new methods. The majority of student teachers were not used to participating in discussions, and their reading habits were poor. Besides, suitable reading material

was not available in the mother tongue. One institution appeared to attract a better calibre of students, and it was mostly in this institution that some innovations had been made in teaching methods, and the students had done assignments which required consulting various sources. All three institutions had tried some form of seminars and tutorials, but in only one were they a regular feature. Here too there was much scope for improvement.

Individual Study:

The majority of students were relying on books written from the examination point of view. In all three institutions members of staff had tried to guide them to more meaningful study, but only in the institution in which the students had a comparatively better educational background had they met with partial success. The lack of good books in the mother tongue was a serious problem.

Library Facilities:

Considering the difficulties of procuring books in India two of the institutions could be said to have fairly good libraries. In all three institutions there was scope for subscribing to more professional journals. The students expressed the need for more copies of certain basic reference books, also for school text books which were required for their practical work.

Evaluation of Theory:

Evaluation appeared to be one of the major problems of the colleges of Education. Fifty per cent of the marks allotted to theory were evaluated by means of internal assessment, and fifty per cent by external assessment.

The difficulty with internal assessment was that there had been no attempt to bring about parity between the evaluation done in different colleges.

Regarding external assessment the general complaint was that the type of questions set encouraged rote learning rather than understanding, and the same questions were repeated over the years.

Evaluation of Sessional Work:

Two hundred marks were assigned to sessional work which included participation in co-curricular activities, social service, class participation, general behaviour etc. Apart from these factors being difficult to assess objectively there was a lack of clarity among staff members on what they were to evaluate.

Evaluation of Student Teaching:

Evaluation of teaching skill was made on the basis of two final lessons. These were observed by an internal examiner and an external examiner. A coordinator was referred to in cases of doubt. In all three institutions the teacher educators complained that the external examiners were headmasters of long standing who had old fashioned ideas and did not appreciate the methods advocated by the colleges of education.

Admission Procedures:

Students were admitted on the basis of their performance on previous examinations. In two colleges interviews were also held, but

according to several staff members these were a mere formality. Generally the staff were of the view that other factors besides achievement should be taken into consideration.

Co-curricular Activities:

All three institutions were organising a number of co-curricular activities. The students were appreciative of these, they said that they not only enjoyed these activities but learnt much from them. Several reported that these activities had helped them to gain confidence in facing an audience.

Professional Growth of Staff:

The majority of teacher educators had participated in seminars and workshops organised by the National Council of Educational Research and Training or by other organisations.

Two institutions had extension services departments attached to them. Most of the staff members of these colleges had conducted workshops and seminars for teachers, some of them were also regularly visiting schools to guide projects and give talks.

Only a few teacher educators are actively engaged in research. The major obstacles mentioned by them were heavy work load, lack of guidance, inadequate library facilities and lack of finances.

It may be said there was much scope for improvement in various aspects of the programme, particularly in the syllabus, in student teaching, and in evaluation. At the same time in all three institutions a sincere concern among the Principals and staff members to do their best for the preparation of teachers was evident. They had many good ideas for the improvement of the programme which have been helpful in the follow-up action.

Follow-up

On the basis of these findings the Department of Teacher Education introduced its Intensive Teacher Education Programme in the Colleges of Education affiliated to Punjab University. This is a programme of comprehensive improvement of Teacher Education which is being carried out in selected regions in the country. As a first step a conference of the Principals of the Colleges involved was organized. Representatives of the Punjab University and of the Departments of Education of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh (the states and union territory in which the colleges were located) were also present. A working paper based on the study was presented at the conference. Papers giving suggestions for the improvement of various aspects of the programme were also discussed. The conference gave its recommendations regarding the syllabus, the practice teaching programme, admissions, and certain internal problems. A blue print for change including the broad outlines of a new programme was agreed upon. In this programme there was some reduction in theory, and greater emphasis was placed on practical work. It was decided to set up committees to work out the details of the syllabus in each subject.

The Syllabus Committees comprised of representatives of the colleges of education involved, the Central Institute of Education, and the

Departments of Science Education and Teacher Education of the National Institute of Education. An attempt was made to bring the syllabus in each subject in line with the latest developments in the field. To ensure that duplication was avoided and all important aspects covered the syllabi were discussed in a general meeting of the members of the various committees. The draft syllabi were submitted to the Board of Studies of Punjab University.

At this juncture two new universities, i.e. Guru Nanak University and Himachal Pradesh University were set up in the region. Some of the colleges formerly affiliated to Punjab University were transferred to these universities. The programme was extended to cover all the colleges of education in Punjab, Haryana Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh.

The syllabi drawn up by the committees were accepted with minor modifications by Punjab University and Guru Nanak University. Himachal Pradesh University has for the present suspended its B.Ed. programme due to a surplus of trained teachers in the state. It is hoped that when the B.Ed. course is revived by the University the new syllabi will be introduced.

In the new programme considerable change had been introduced in the syllabi for Teaching of the Mother tongue, Teaching of English, Teaching of Science, and Teaching of Mathematics. Therefore, seminar-cum-workshops in these subjects were held for the teacher educators who were to teach them. The programme in Teaching of English was carried out in collaboration with the Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh; the others were organised with the help of the Department of Science Education and the Department of Text Books of National Institute of Education. The aims of these programmes were to help the teacher educators to acquire a deeper understanding of the nature of the subjects concerned, and to introduce them to modern methods of teaching them. Some instructional materials were also prepared at these workshops.

Some of the other programmes of the Department which are being carried out on an all India basis are also having an impact on the colleges in this area. Under one of these the Department has made a study of admission procedures in colleges of education all over India, and an intensive study of some outstanding procedures. On the basis of the study suitable admission procedures have been recommended to the colleges.

In another programme the Department is organising a series of seminars designed to help teacher educators to plan research projects. Teacher educators come to these seminars with tentative research designs, which are discussed and refined during the seminar.

Future Plans

The two areas in which the colleges appear to be most in need of help are evaluation and Student Teaching.

The weightage given to internal assessment has now been reduced. Consequently, the importance of the external examination has increased. It is proposed to hold workshops for the paper setters of the external examination. At these workshops blue prints for the papers and sample question papers will be drawn up. It is also proposed to organise a workshop for representatives of the colleges of education to work out objective procedures for the evaluation of sessional work.

With regard to student teaching it is planned to organise workshops for teacher educators to orient them to diagnostic and remedial supervision procedures. It is also proposed to introduce them to the preparation of teaching tasks and micro-teaching techniques.