

*Report of Workshop on Reconceptualization  
of Pre-service Teacher Education in the  
University of Kerala*

**Organized by the Department of Education, University  
of Kerala on 22 December 2009**

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## **Abstract**

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Trivandrum (a participant of the Workshop)

As suggested by the Kerala Higher Education Council, the Department of Education of the University of Kerala organized a half-day workshop for reconceptualization of the teacher education curriculum of the University of Kerala as a preliminary step in the original plan of the Council for introducing an unified BEd curriculum in the state of Kerala.

The participants were practicing teacher educators of Teacher Training colleges affiliated to the University of Kerala. This report turns the critical search lights on the issues discussed which includes among others, rescheduling the BEd course duration, reformulating Problem-based study, ICT-based teaching and Professional ethics. There is an underlying note that all is not well with current curriculum transaction in the University of Kerala and that practices ought to change.

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The Chair: Dr. Theresa Susan Theresa, HOD, Dept. of Education, University of Kerala

Participants : Twelve Teacher Educators from Teacher Training Colleges affiliated to the University of Kerala

**Introduction**

The Kerala Higher Education Council has found it imperative to introduce an unified curriculum at the BEd level. As a preliminary step, Heads of Education departments of the universities in Kerala met recently. As a follow up of that meeting this Half-day workshop was organized.

The participants were asked to come prepared with a critique of the current BEd curriculum of the University of Kerala. Given below are a few issues discussed:

**On Course Duration**

The advantages of extending the present duration of the BEd programme from ten months to two years or one and a half years was discussed. Comparison with the two-year BEd programme of the Regional Institute of Education (RIE), Mysore was also made.

If it was not possible to extend the duration of the course, the need to extend the Internship from one month to six months was discussed. Finally, if nothing changes it was felt that Practice Teaching should be a duration of at least forty days.

Many participants expressed the difficulties which trainees and college managements were facing owing to the delayed schedule in commencement of the BEd programme (November to October). Rescheduling the course from June to March it was decided, should get top priority.

### **Theory First...Practice Next**

The current trend of sending trainees for Practice Teaching within a month or two of joining the BEd programme was discussed. It was pointed out that such trainees engage in Practice Teaching without gathering any thorough idea about teaching or learning. Such a practice it was felt was irrational and ought to be changed.

This naturally brought into question the current two-syllabus Practice Teaching in vogue in the University of Kerala. The high level of confidence found in trainees who receive four months of theory classes on teaching and learning followed by Discussion, Demonstration and Criticism lessons was highlighted by a couple of participants.

Many participants affirmed that trainees ought to acquire a sound theoretical base before leaving the Training Colleges for Practice Teaching.

### **Addressing Quality concerns**

Speaking of raising the quality of teacher education one participant pointed out that the first thing to be addressed was to attract students with a good academic record for the BEd course. Students who join the BEd course after paying donation for admission invariably have a poor academic record. Such trainees are more likely to be less skilled and would never become teachers with content competence. Their quality of teaching is also likely to be shoddy. Such students would on getting a BEd degree pay donation again and get a job with ease even as meritorious students wallow in the streets without a job. We can only look forward to a deterioration in Quality if incompetent students become our future teachers.

### **On the Content**

The content prescribed for the BEd course also came up for criticism. Trainees by-hearting a lot of theory it was felt was not likely to be of any real help. The vast content prescribed for study according to a few participants is quite meaningless. The need for making trainees to actually observe factors related to socio-economic and cultural aspects of growth and development, instead of mere theoretical study of the same, as mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) Draft for discussion 2009 should be followed.

For college lecturers who do not have any real training in teaching, during In-service courses in the UGC Academic Staff Colleges, Micro Teaching is one major course component. Perhaps the most essential thing a teacher should know is how to teach. So

a knowledge of teaching skills, which Micro Teaching helps to practice is favoured by In-Service Course Directors. Significantly, in Calicut University the BEd course commences with each trainee practicing three skills and engaging a Linked Practice session as part of Micro-Teaching. The conspicuous absence of Micro-teaching in the BEd curriculum of the University of Kerala, it was felt had to be given due attention.

### **Problem-Based Practicums**

Many educational institutions in the West have attuned their curriculum transaction to the developing of problem solving strategies in students. The participants of the Workshop pointed out that, despite the inclusion of two Problem-based practicum for each theory paper it did not result in a commensurate mastery in trainees of the process of problem-solving. This was evident especially when the participants of the Workshop, recently evaluated Practicums in various teacher training colleges affiliated to the University of Kerala during the Practical Examination. To overcome the abysmal failure of trainees to grasp the essentials of a Problem-based approach, as an alternative, the inclusion of just one rigorous and in-depth Problem-based Practicum and Action research was suggested.

### **Giving rather than receiving**

Over the years many teacher educators have begun to feel that regional agencies of education, is taking them for a ride by experimenting with half-boiled ideas about teaching. The conspicuous change from 'Process' (the second column of Lesson Plans) to 'Assessment' even when the 'Specification', 'Learning Experience' and 'Evaluation'

of the four column Lesson Plans once followed in the University of Kerala had well addressed 'process' and 'assessment' is a case in point. New jargons like 'discourses' 'Critical Pedagogy, 'Issue-based curriculum' are elucidated on academic platforms by local 'experts' as if it is new wine. This was pooh-poohed by the participants.

During the ensuing discussion the reason for being at the receiving end was identified, viz; the failure during the revision of BEd curriculum in recent times to incorporate currently popular and effective theories in use in the West which included 'issues' and 'critical pedagogy'. Every one present felt that the Training Colleges and its curriculum should turn out to be path finders and trend setters and the revision of the BEd Curriculum this workshop aims at, should overcome failures if any.

### **On Trainee Assessment**

The meaninglessness of evaluating Teaching Practice in one or two periods when most of the trainees will be moving around students in the classroom as facilitators of group work was discussed. When a teacher trainee is busily engaged in providing activities in the class it becomes quite difficult to assess the real teaching ability of the trainees. Naturally the absurdity of turning teaching periods into full time activity-based teaching if was felt had to change.

### **On Art Education**

Many policy statements on Education in post-independent India have highlighted the need for art education. Even NCF 2005 has identified Art Education as one major

curricular area. It was pointed out during the workshop that the BEd. curriculum in the University of Kerala has completely ignored this area. In this connection the BEd Programme in RIE, Mysore which included Art Education as a separate paper for assessment was discussed.

### **Monitoring of teaching of Teacher Educators**

Assessment by the Principal of a Teacher Training College of the work done by the Teacher Educator at the end of the academic year it was felt was insufficient. Some participants felt the need for monitoring the quality of teaching of the Teacher Trainers the way in which Syndicate Members of Universities visit Teacher Education Centres for inspection. In addition, Trainee Assessment of teacher educators, it was felt was desirable.

### **Faculty exchange**

As mentioned in the NCF 2009 Draft, the exchange of faculty of Teacher Training institutions both in India and abroad it was felt had to be considered.

### **Cluster of Training Colleges**

Sharing of resources through the formation of cluster of teacher training colleges it was felt will benefit many teacher training colleges which do not have competent staff to teach.



## **Integration of ICT**

The NCF 2005 document on Educational Technology states:

### *6.4.4 In pre-service teacher education:*

- *Introduce teachers to flexible models of reaching curriculum goals.*
- *Introduce use of media and technology-enabled methods of learning, making it inherent and embedded in the teaching-learning process of teachers.*
- *Train teachers to evaluate and integrate available materials into the learning process.*
- *Enable trainee teachers to access sources of knowledge and to create knowledge.*

Though ICT is a part of the present BEd curriculum the end result is that most trainees are at best able to download plenty of both relevant and irrelevant materials as part of their assignments without even choosing or editing them with discretion.

ICT assignments of trainees ends with the submission of PowerPoint presentations of topics assigned on a CD-ROM. This, many participants know is usually made by local experts hired by trainees for a small fee. The participants deemed this state of affairs regarding the preparation of technology-based teaching materials rather pathetic especially when primary school children in leading educational institutions make class room presentations based on self-created PowerPoint and Flash presentations. The need to squarely address the poor competence of BEd trainees in ICT was emphasized by the participants.

### **On communicative competence**

Many participant expressed the need for improving the communicative competence of trainees by introducing Communicative English as a compulsory paper as already done in Calicut University.

### **Teacher Ethics**

Lack of commitment in teachers and the absence of professional ethics it was felt had to be addressed in the BEd curriculum. The NCF 2005 and 2009 guidelines for teacher education programmes mentioned below, it was felt, had to be reformulated and strengthened in the BEd programme proposed to be revised :

*Making the teacher be an :*

- *Encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners(students) to discover their talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens.*

### **Summing up**

Both the organizers and the participants found the Workshop extremely fruitful. The success was attributed to the rather warm and cordial atmosphere in which the discussions which lasted nearly three hours took place. It gave every one a chance to perceive both theirs and other extreme points of view. The HOD of the Department of Education thanked the participants for their whole-hearted participation for a Workshop which was organized on a very short notice.