



Classroom Tradition and Teacher Education in India:

A Criticism and Hypothesis

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Abstract:

How young people involvement classroom tradition is precisely related to the teaching-learning involvements they interview. This implements them to make meaning of the civil existence around them. Situated in India's laminated and absolute society, teaching-learning environments tend to reproduce existing hierarchies. This is figured by current epistemological frames that often militate against the aims of classic education and Indian Constitutional codes. Hence, the teaching-learning process is central to developing a critical citizenship and democratic inclination. Dewey viewed schools as small societies that could enable the cultivation of a democratic civil order. This in turn is affectionately related to how teachers are prepared. Classroom tradition in contemporary India is largely seen to be decisive by what is taught and how it is taught. In this frame the teaching-learning process is viewed narrowly as the effective delivery of the school curriculum which in turn can only be measured through learning outcomes. The role of teacher preparation in transforming the teaching-learning environment is largely unrecognized. Even where this may be understood, the deeper underlying

advance is uncharted. This review paper attempts to do just that. Drawing upon disciplinary and inter-disciplinary contexts it tries to appreciate the affectionate relationship between the education of teachers and classroom pedagogic tradition. This would be done by first examining educational change in the larger international and national socio-political context. Following this, the teacher education conversation and foundational patterns argued to have a direct bearing on classroom tradition are examined.

Keywords: *Classroom Tradition, Criticism and Hypothesis.*

Educational Change in the Neo-liberal Context

Educational change needs to be seen in the contemporary context of a neo-liberal budgetary and civil engineering oriented international policy conversation, centered on concerns of national competitiveness in a globalising world. Education transforms since the 1980s in budgetary developed countries were driven by the insistence of a highly skilled workforce in the context of free market economies. Even though India is a lower-middle income country with very different developmental needs this conversation gained momentum in India over the last decade. This could be traced to the increasing commitment of the amalgamated sector and international interests in education, leading to a superficial policy consensus around the instruments of change in school education. This is often in conflict with the entitlement input-based accesses that are now constitutionally and justly authorized and increasingly sanctioned by the courts.

The second specific context is the prompt educational concerns of curriculum development and the preparation of teachers that has pursued to shape educational tradition. Viewed from the context of praxis, educational conversation in some of the developed countries saw a major shift of redefining the problem of teacher education from a *training* problem during the 1960s and 1970s to a *learning* problem in the 1980s. Ideas and correlated tradition of contemplative teaching generated practitioner knowledge within frames of sociological and feminist research on curriculum and assessment. Beginning with the New Sociology, followed by the post-modernist and feminist conversation, academic debates have brought into question the processes of curriculum design, selection of knowledge and pedagogic accesses. While early sociological theorists made explicit the relationship between educational knowledge, civil control and cultural reproduction, a later post-modernist and post-structuralist conversation serves to challenge the

very idea of knowledge.

As observed by scholars, educational transform in budgetary more developed countries was characterised by two opposing viewpoints: the multiple voice of the academia on the one hand and the voice of the politicians and policy makers on the other. Although policy makers cognise the importance of the wider aims of education, budgetary gains from education are seen to be primary; and education is seen to be central to the reconstruction of the nation-state in a globalised world.

As a result of such transforms a renewed insistence on education as „deliverables“ and „outcomes“ came into being. This conversation speaks of budgetary efficiency as related to the proposed educational agenda of enhanced learner assessment, teacher accountability and effectiveness. In this frame the pedagogic enterprise is to „teach to test“ and the central thrust of pedagogic tradition is one of „control“ and „outcomes“. As testing regimes lead to market competition between schools, they change the very nature of teaching and learning. Feminist research has validated how market-oriented performance pedagogies sustain rather than reduce class and gender inequalities and how education transmits the neo-liberal conversation and versions of selfhood. Parental choice, testing regimes and the „new managerialism“ assumes that educational foundations can be run as businesses. As a result philosophy and sociology of education cease to be valid commitments for the preparation of teachers as they are argued to have no direct bearing on the nature of teaching, issues of knowledge considered valid in a globalising world and how it is learnt.

There are several specific ways in which this has shaped educational tradition. It has replaced learning involvements with regimes of national and international testing. It has shrunk the space for civil sciences in school learning due to the exclusive insistence on the testing of maths and science achievement. The result is a narrow focus on skill-based, instrumentalist aims of education. More importantly, these transforms reflect a components shift in thinking about education and its purposes, across the world.

Similar, yet opposing strands of thought can be discerned within the more recent policy conversation in India as well: the neo-liberal frame of standardisation, teacher accountability and learning outcomes that regards education as an enterprise of efficient delivery especially in the context of Right to Education. This is in contrast to the academic-led context on school

curriculum (NCF, 2005) and the proposed preparation of teachers (NCTE, 2009) that re-affirm the central role of teachers as agents of civil transformation. It is important to note that the curriculum framework for schools and teacher education, although in consonance with processes of policy-making are nevertheless outside the realm of policy enforcement and the current instruments that are used to enable this. Policy for instance, cannot ensure that a curriculum is interpreted as intended through the medium of a textbook. Therefore, while school and teacher education curriculum speak of educating for and in a diverse society, specific policy measures adopted, such as large scale testing of learning outcomes, seek to standardise school education. Likewise, policy makers, rhetoric often focuses on the need to enhance the quality of teachers and to bring teacher education in line with the context of National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009. Policy enforcement on the other hand seeks to ensure teacher accountability rather than teacher development.

This wedge in the educational conversation became visible with the first wave of liberalisation in India in the early 1990s. As reflected in the Kothari Commission (1966), the pre-liberalisation educational conversation in India was citizen-based with an insistence on a modern vision underpinned by a critical scientific context. The role of the teacher was related to civil transformation as a core educational aim.

The NPE 1986 shifted focus by bringing the child to the centre of educational transform process. A huge district-based education delivery infrastructure was established with almost no focus on developing practitioner capacities. This missed opportunity led to a further decline in the quality of teacher education over the 1990s.

The second wave of liberalisation in the 2000s of the service sector economy, led to a deeper penetration of market-based transforms in the education sector. The success of the neoliberal growth model meant increasing buoyancy of central resources and the redefinition of education as a deliverable. Several new programmes were initiated to universalise elementary education. With this came a range of unexpected ramification such as a concerted focus on an outcome based access to education, as the international educational conversation and Indian market-led transform came together.

Opposing viewpoints first manifested starkly in the „quality“ conversation in India with the entry of large scale amalgamated and related civil society interventions. Ideas of learning guarantee

through large scale testing of learning outcomes; school and teacher performance and management began to define the „quality“ dimension of education. A spate of commissioned educational research funded by donor agencies led to a conversation around aspects of teacher absenteeism, teacher motivation and teacher accountability instructional time-on-task. This research positioned the school teacher as the chief reason for the declining quality of school education. An anti-teacher conversation and the resultant poor public opinion cast aspersions on the integrity of teachers, leading to loss of public dignity and eventually a marginalisation of the teacher from the processes of education. Examples of teacher marginalisation can be seen both within the state and the private sector of education.

The recent Central Board for Secondary Education decision to relieve teachers of the task of setting question papers is a clear indication of marginalising the teacher from processes of education (CBSE, 2010). It takes away from the teacher her right and the capacity to formulate questions - central to the profession of teaching. Huge amalgamated investments being made to develop self-learning, “teacher-proof ” materials (along with ICT-related delivery) are being seen by private schools as an opportunity to enhance learning outcomes; cut costs of delivery and hence „profitability“ without having to invest in teacher development. This attitude of resignation towards teachers pervades the school education sector in much of the country – both public and private.

Reflections of the teacher accountability conversation can be seen in policy formulation around the RtE. “Although the RtE Act has several clauses that claim to ensure the provision of elementary education of acceptable quality and inclusivity, its silence on and ambiguity about the provision of professionally qualified school teachers remains discomfoting”. The Act seeks to ensure teacher accountability, while consciously evading any serious commitment with the professional concerns of teachers.

New formulations for the education and hiring of teachers are likely to exacerbate the problem of providing education of equitable quality. The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) stipulated as an added qualification via a NCTE Gazette notification (GoI, 2010), conducted by CBSE and state agencies for instance, and undermines the validity of the content and direction of pre-service education of teachers. What remains valid is its qualifying status for taking the TET. This would leave little scope for innovating or developing the need to innovate in processes of teacher

preparation. In the long term, it can even lead to a dismantling of foundational structures that prepare teachers for the nation's millions of children. This in turn will create more vacuous spaces waiting to be filled by for-profit agencies for which education offers the prospects of a new market regime. The courts on the other hand maintain the position that education cannot be a profitable activity – setting the stage for a future confrontation with the executive and for-profit teacher education agencies.

It is evident that while the policy imperative is to bring both the contending streams of conversation into the fold of education, the focus of education amongst some mainstream elites seems to have shifted from developing an active citizenry to creating an underclass of knowledge workers for a “service economy”. This amalgamated journey that claims to have begun with philanthropic civil responsibility may culminate in education investments for profit-making. The policy-tradition interface thus remains purposefully unaddressed as a new set of non-state actors and stakeholders enter into an active commitment with school education in India. This range is wide from political parties and ideologues, university academics (including from overseas foundations) and other intellectuals, members of non-government and voluntary organizations, donors (Indian amalgamated and international donor agencies) and private sector players. Many of these agencies view education as a key instrument to facilitate budgetary and civil mobility and only in some cases civil transformation.

These strikingly different assertions about the role of education reflect different conceptions of society: a society comprising of individuals for whom the imperatives of personal wealth and budgetary growth are foremost or where individuals manifest greater consciousness of their positions in society and their role in developing civil cohesion. Making the poverty-capability link, Positioning Dewey's ideas in the contemporary global context, scholars have argued how education must be seen as critical in the formation of a deliberative contestatory democracy that can foster inclinations to enable cohesion between individual and society and the inclination to act to make a difference.

This components difference it is argued is glossed over by an educational conversation couched in artifice. Traditional education vs. innovative (alternative) education; child and curriculum; pedagogy and curriculum; theory vs. tradition; contemplative practitioner vs. technician are artifice that figure prominently in the educational conversation. These are actively reinforced

and extended by the processes that seek to train teachers. The use of binary oppositions to explain educational phenomena has two serious ramifications: first, it marginalises and excludes certain forms of thinking and second, it justifies gaps by rendering them beyond the realm of human control. Scholars have observed how teaching, when viewed from a taxonomic lens does not enable an examination of the relations between different layers of knowledge. Each of the crucial elements of a dichotomous conversation thus get circumscribed and become resistant to meaningful interrogation. The inability to release the tradition of education from a dichotomous conversation has led policy makers to focus on the *teacher* as the *object of transform* rather than foundational cultures and provisions that prepare teachers. Nation-wide programmes to universalise elementary education have focused on training teachers to perform and become accountable and not on changing the ways in which teachers are prepared and supported, reminiscent of the Fordist conversation on factory workers in the early 20th century.

An entrenched teacher education conversation and tradition further accentuates dualistic ways of viewing the problems of education. Classified in mutually exclusive categories it has become immune to interrogation and challenge. Several issues, long debated are now being positioned as „forced choices“ for teacher preparation. These include the conflict between diversification and selectivity of the teacher work force; private vs. public locations as the site for teacher preparation; long duration pre-service teacher education vs. short-term measures of in-service training and the contradictions of concurrent over-regulation and deregulation of pre-service teacher education. This review paper argues that the tension between policy imperatives and the lived reality of school education cannot be addressed by merely classifying problems of education into dichotomies. What is required is a re-envisioning of this space through a deep interrogation of the artifact posed and the foundational schedule in which these are reinforced and extended.

Foundational Schedule and the Civilisation of Teachers

Given this backdrop we can now explore how classroom tradition is closely tied to the manner in which teachers learn to engage with teaching as a practical and political activity. This is done by drawing upon theoretical and empirical literature and a mapping of micro processes that various foundational schedule invoke. These foundational schedules are probed against the backdrop of a

policy conversation that is driven by concurrent but contradictory persuasions: political and bureaucratic imperatives, and academic judgment. The attempt is to understand how civil interactions within teacher education foundations give rise to patterns of commitment in the teaching-learning enterprise, thus shaping pedagogy.

In order to understand how civil interactions and patterns of commitment shape pedagogy it is important to examine teacher education and the foundations that deliver them through a civil and ideological lens. The implications of this can be fully grasped if we also keep in mind that the evolution of teacher education in India mimicked models of the monitorial and pupil teacher systems prevalent in 20th century Britain and considered appropriate for a large mass of teachers. This access to the education of Indian school teachers has remained unchanged for half a century in two crucial aspects: the foundational intellectual isolation of the school teacher and a circumscribed commitment with pedagogy as mere technique. Each of these is explored below.

It is well known that the isolation of teacher education institutes from centres of research and higher education even within universities makes them insular. As a result they operate in closed spaces, intellectually impoverished environments that actively discourage commitment with new ideas and contexts. It can be argued that teacher education foundations in India function as exclusive, „private“ spaces akin to that of a family. The use of the metaphor of family is frequently interviewed in teacher education organisations to coerce adherence to foundational tradition and norms. For instance, it is customary for students to seek blessings of their teachers through the ritual of touching their feet and to invoke the divine to inaugurate academic events. Elements of feudalism manifest in teacher-student relationships co-exist with the public posture of a secular academic direction. In many cases this is actively encouraged and even imposed as a civilizing mission. In this frame, interactions between teacher educators and student-teachers assume the character of a cultural decree in which the elder patronizes, controls and is assumed to have the sanction to exploit. Student voice that may wish to question such traditions are either marginalised or actively silenced. Pedagogic accesses such as the tradition of internal assessment of student-teachers are used as foundational instruments to further crystallise this patronising culture. With the blurring of boundaries between the foundational ethic and cultural tradition, teacher education institutes operate in a culture of patronage, perpetuating an incestuous environment of learning to be an educator.

The foundation of teacher education is thus a system of established and prevalent civil rules and conventions that structure civil interaction. Dewey (1922) was of the view that foundations work because rules are embedded in shared habits of thought and behaviour. Viewed within this frame, it can be said that Indian teacher education foundations reproduce shared habits of thought through the conventions and the rituals of teacher preparation within a culture of patronage. These rituals are set ways of doing things: from conducting the morning assembly to the prominent display of slogans, icons and thought for the day developing charts and models to be used as teaching aids and formulating lesson plans within predicative rigid frameworks. Rituals gradually assume the character of rules, fostering normative inclinations.

Conventions include the behaviour expected of student-teachers while conducting the morning assembly; the choice of appropriate content for it; how tradition teaching is arranged, how student-teachers are expected to dress and how they conduct themselves in the presence of their teachers and the children they would teach. Many of these are prevalent as unstated rules of teacher education organisations. Student-teachers are constantly reminded of how to be disciplined, punctual, even subservient to authority and moralistic about fulfilling duties. Studies reveal that being punctual, disciplined, regular and sympathetic sums up the image of a good teacher for most teacher educators. This is in consonance with the view the bureaucracy has of a school teacher as acknowledge in the general guidelines/regulations for conducting teaching internship for the D Ed programme recently issued by the Government of Haryana. Clause 11 of these regulations states what is expected of teachers in explicit terms: It is required that the interns must wear a decent dress/formal clothes during internship they must be clean and smart as well as punctual. Their mannerism i.e. appropriate behaviour, including dress, language etc would remain under constant watch by authorities.

For developing teachers, discipline is projected as the key to successful classrooms validated through „model classes using techniques of micro-teaching and simulated classrooms. In simulated classrooms the ideal student is one who pays attention to what the teacher says, does not ask questions even to clarify what is stated in a textbook. Discipline is seen to be important because it is considered to be the most *practical* way of completing expected tasks: covering the syllabus, preparing children for examinations and fulfilling other daily insistence of school authorities.

This takes us to the second critical dimension of the prevalent model of teacher preparation where teaching is viewed as the wisdom of tradition and pedagogy as mere technique. This view dominates teacher education institutes in India even today. There is a deep conviction that teachers derive practical knowledge from their tradition of teaching. The practical includes elements of craft, art and technique. Many teacher education institutes across the country design student-teachers work in schools as the tradition of delivering lessons despite efforts at redesigning them to amalgamate the wider and deeper meanings of school internship. Teaching is established as a technical skill through repeated exercises in micro-teaching either carried out in imaginary classrooms or through the ritual of delivering a minimum number of planned lessons. Teacher educators are more concerned with the number of lessons transacted and supervised than with processes of teaching and learning. This access is the mainstay of the pre-service education of teachers, overriding other critical concerns that prepare a teacher. This reduces the possibility of exchange in the classroom to the minimum thereby essentialising teacher knowledge to be a set of pre-defined skills.

Attempts are made to make teaching effective by deriving prescriptive principles from psychological theories of learning and instruction set in behaviouristic frames. While progressive conversation correlated with the ideas of Gandhi, Tagore, Gijubhai, Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky assert the agency of the child and may even form a compelling part of teacher education courses in India, the nucleus of Indian educational tradition revolves around the concept of discipline. The idea of disciplining children also stems from deep-rooted folk conceptions about children and their relationship with adults. Cultural notions correlated with child rearing and the education of children permeates the tradition of teacher preparation and schooling across the country. These are: the hegemonic relationship between adults and children, often manifest in either a culture of patronage towards the young or control through power or the firm belief that education is the effective transmission of given knowledge. Both these have deep cultural sanction. These cultural notions militate against the emerging constitutionally authorized child rights framework that seeks to make education of equitable quality, a components right.

The underlying message is that an effective teacher is one who can control children by keeping them silent and attentive in class. The idea of control manifests in the popular conception of education which is to civilize children in desirable ways of sitting in a formal class, behaving in

school and following instructions from the teacher. All this is towards the larger aim of building character and morals as the most important goal of education. These popular notions about schooling are in consonance with the culture of teacher education foundations where student-teachers are civilised to be compliant and to exert authority to make children compliant. Most teachers are trained to believe that they need to be judgmental about children and their learning; that they need to be in control.

Within this overpowering conformist framework, the convention of the unconditional acquiescence to the guru forms the core culture of learning in institutes of teacher education in India. Conventions and rituals serve as distinct psychological mechanisms through which such a culture is designed to self-perpetuate. Foundational schedule thus designed train the teacher to view her as implementing agency and is suitably rewarded to remain uncritical in attitude and mind. This perhaps explains why the legacy of logical positivists remains etched in the tradition of many (science) teachers despite attempts to redesign school curricula in the frame of reconsidered epistemological basis and why learning continues to be perceived as acquisition of knowledge rather than as understanding and conceptual change.

It has often been argued that even if teacher education programmes in amalgamated ways of addressing civil diversity and enabling prospective teachers to think and question, these do not translate into real school traditions. Such views point to a disjuncture between the conceived idea of a teacher and the foundational preparation of teachers. Empirical evidence, including personal historical has validated the possibility of developing critical teacher practitioners who create radically different classroom involvements and democratic schools. In the more recent context of a global budgetary crisis. In order to understand this deeper, it is necessary to further problematic the dominant tradition and conversation of teacher education, in particular the artifact referred to earlier. Some of these are examined below with an attempt to delineate contradictions and enable the recognition of spaces for possible action and change.

Artifact in the Teacher Education Conversation

The significance of having sound subject knowledge has often been debated against the essentiality of pedagogic skills in the teaching enterprise. This led to one of the most components transforms in UK in the 1980s, where attempts were made to reconstruct the nature of teachers'

knowledge in order to enhance the quality of teaching. Researchers studied processes by which teachers select and represent aspects of a knowledge realm to students. The subject-specific knowledge coherent while teaching came to be known as pedagogical content knowledge. The understanding that pedagogical content knowledge is central to teacher's knowledge came to be seen as the key idea around which the education of teachers could be designed. This appears to have been based on two erroneous acceptances: first, that teachers' depth of subject knowledge has little connection with learning to teach; second, that all teachers have adequate understanding of the content and modes of enquiry of a subject realm which helps them to develop pedagogical content knowledge. A compelling reason for this misjudgment is perhaps rooted in yet another much widely held view of teaching. It is strongly believed that the know-how of teaching is rooted in psychological theory of individual learning with an exclusive insistence on cognitive processes. Central to this frame are ideas of the universal construct of learning and the learner; and classroom tradition as application of theory. It is perhaps for this reason that attempts to link the socio-cultural and historical contexts of teachers' knowledge and to appreciate teaching as civil tradition are rarely witnessed. This also means that the tradition of education has remained an uncharted field for developing pedagogical theory within a civil frame. Curriculum studies of the late 1960s and early 1970s made attempts to interface foundational disciplines with the tradition of education. Sociologists' framing of school knowledge as an expression of power relations led educators to theorise about the impact of school curriculum in maintaining status quo. However, mainstream psychology with a much older commitment with concepts of learning and the psychometric tradition assumed an overarching influence on aspects of curriculum transaction and learning. This happened through the customary rituals of training teachers. Even within psychological theorisation, ideas that fitted well with a positivist direction gained greater acceptability. For instance, the computational model of the learner's mind is considered to be more suitable because it is seen to provide a practical frame for the teacher. This is so, despite a compelling body of research that has established the situated nature of cognition and learning in civil and cultural tradition. This is one example of the unquestioning ease with which contradictory ideas co-exist within the teacher education conversation. The important question here is: which of these ideas gain more currency and are considered valid knowledge for the preparation of teachers and why? While one set of ideas form the core of educational psychology, those emanating from cross-cultural research are considered less relevant to the

tradition of teaching. Empirical researches within the Indian context on constructs of civilization, gender, language, learning and cognition that have a direct bearing on teaching and learning are typically excluded from the readings and classroom conversation of pre-service programmes. Teacher education courses have situated the pedagogic preparation of teachers within the frame of educational psychology; peripheral constructs of the specific and the contextualised.

The hiatus between educational studies as a field of academic enquiry and the tradition of teacher education further explains why the conversation of teacher education remains circumscribed to dualistic thinking fostering deep conceptual disconnects. This can be traced to the long held view that education is a field subject and not a basic discipline. While individual disciplines have been trying to create relevance for the practicing teacher, the tradition of education remains an uncharted field for developing pedagogical theory as a result of its discommitment with activities of knowledge generation. It is important to view this hiatus as rooted in structural schedule rather than merely knowledge related.

The foundational cultures of pre-service teacher education in India are also a consequence of their position in a system of higher education. The bulk of secondary teacher education institutes offering BEd are outside university campuses. Elementary teacher education institutes offering DEd are not related to universities. As indicated earlier teacher education institutes function as closed spaces with the sole mandate of training teachers. This precludes the participation of young people aspiring to engage with issues of education via post-graduate study and research. The only route available to do so systemically is via educating oneself to be a teacher. Insular positioning of the pursuit of education within Indian universities thus creates a complex web of hierarchies, maintaining divisions between academic commitment and the tradition of education, another duality embedded in the structural provisioning of teacher preparation.

The tension between subject matter knowledge and pedagogy creates a duality that disallows deeper commitment with questions of school knowledge. Most teacher education programmes (such as the BEd and DEd, except the BEEd) do not engage with subject knowledge. It is assumed that a command over the subject has been achieved as a result of general education and that textbook knowledge is legitimate and sufficient. This creates a false acceptance of the unproblematised conception of school knowledge. The contested terrain of formal knowledge, explored by sociologists necessitates a commitment with the epistemological underpinnings of

school subject-matter. However, this is consciously left out of teacher education programmes. As a result pedagogy is viewed as mere psychological technique and teaching as psychological strategy. An exploration of how a layered understanding of subject knowledge frames pedagogic interviews and influences learning rarely enters into the process of preparing teachers. Curriculum studies could offer sound scaffolding for the process of teacher development given the lack of a formal epistemological underpinning in the training of teachers. This too is difficult as dominant models of teacher education (BEd/DEd) do not engage students with concerns of the school curriculum either in the theory or tradition of teaching. Cross-national appraisals of teacher education programmes observe unsurprisingly that teachers have *few opportunities* in teacher education programmes to *develop connected understanding of subject matter with pedagogy*.

Questions of what knowledge is; its relationship with power; why and how knowledge is selected and presented; how power equations based on gender, caste, religion and language operate in educational tradition and are reinforced, extended or challenged need to form the critical core of the preparation of teachers in India. Instead, what permeates the curriculum of pre-service teacher education is a fragmented knowledge of psychological development and learning, relationship between theory and tradition and civil-cultural influences. International scholars have blamed the “new policy repertoires (that) have played a compelling part in a de-theorizing project”. The virtual disappearance of sociological theory and philosophy from teacher education has been combined with an increasingly centralized curriculum for the training of teachers. The result is the continued dominance of psychological theory and an entrenching of the belief that teacher preparation is about developing repertoire of skills. Another decisive way in which classical psychological theory creates the ethos of “training” teachers is its focus on the individual as a learner and teacher, discussed below.

The ‘Individual Historical’ and its Potential Ramification

Ladson-Billings observes how educational psychology as a foundational discipline has created the „individual historical“ as a dominant presence in the teacher education conversation. Poulson argues how teachers“ pedagogic knowledge with an insistence on cognitive processes has resulted in taking the individual as the unit of analysis. Evidence-based focus on teachers' tacit

knowledge has also led to an insistence on the personal dimensions of teacher-thinking and knowing particularly the notion of teachers' voice.

While teacher voice and agency are compelling indicators of an empowered teaching community, it would be erroneous to view teaching as a „personal“ dimension of an individual teacher. In viewing teaching as a personal activity, teachers“ knowledge is interpreted to mean “personal knowledge” that teachers have of their personal circumstances. It has already been pointed out that there is a tendency to view teachers knowledge as distinct from and superior to academic knowledge. Some have even argued that the role of foundation disciplines is of little practical code in preparing teachers. Countering these claims, Beyer and Zeichner analysed how the individualistic and vocational direction of teacher education programmes position themselves as apolitical and non-ideological; but are in effect spaces of conservative forces that contribute towards maintaining status-quo in the system of schooling.

The individualistic direction in preparing teachers has compelling implications for how teachers assume their role vis-a-vis children and their learning. Severed from their contexts, children are viewed as dull or bright, lazy or hard working, obedient or defiant. Teachers are quick in making a „psychological diagnosis“ about students who struggle to learn while coping with alienating aspects of most school environments in India. This may include struggling with the language of the school which in many cases is not the same as the child’s home language. Concepts of “slow learners” and “low IQ”, rampantly used in contemporary Indian classrooms are “naturalized” in the amalgamation of a folk psychological conversation and the entrenched “practical” conversation of pre-service teacher education. High “scholastic achievers” are thought to be superior in intelligence, codes and adherence to normative expectations of society. Low achievers are typically perceived to be from “backgrounds” that contribute to “low intelligence” and lack of “hard work” required for being successful in school. These are not cultural or civil prejudices alone, but are reinforced and extended through the behaviourist frames of teacher education programmes. Both the learner and the teacher develop the conviction that to be effective requires individual effort and individual competence.

What is missing from this “individual historical” is the civil dimension of teaching and learning and the understanding that teaching is civil tradition? The individualistic direction, embedded in the foundational culture is reinforced by the dominant conversation of educational psychology.

Socio-psychological commitment leading to the deconstruction of universal concepts of children's development or feminists, contexts on knowledge and pedagogy are deliberately kept marginal lest they shake the "neutral" foundations of the tradition of teaching. The overarching and oversimplified psychological frame forms the dominant sub-culture of teacher preparation. This maintains the false neutrality and "apolitical posture" of teacher education programmes. Thus teachers never learn to locate education in the larger context of the socio- budgetary and cultural context. Hence, they never feel the need to examine the civil and political factors that influence processes of schooling. For them education remains a routines classroom activity, the holding of examinations where the onus of learning rests with learners. Students learn that school education is about matters other than lived involvement. Hence, they are unable to problematic civil existence they may wish to change.

Conclusion

India has taken several steps since the 1990s to transform the school education and teacher education systems via the enactment of a central legislation of the right to education, investments in education and progressive curriculum transform. Tens of millions of new learners are being educated via the school system. Contemporary curriculum documents position teaching as civil tradition and school education as an enterprise in developing a more cohesive and just society. However, pressures to recruit a large teaching workforce to meet RtE obligations have led the Indian state to once again seek comfort in convenient solutions that "equip" teachers to "deliver education sans theory and meaningful" learning involvements . While state instruments are being used to fulfill the Constitutional obligation of providing free and compulsory education, over 80 percent teacher education institutes are in the poorly regulated private sector. These have poor capacities, limited investments, no linkage with universities and are grounded in a dualistic educational conversation.

This policy contradiction is likely to create a dual system of education: one leading to a set of processes and outcomes that would produce masses of knowledge workers; the other an elite citizenry of critical thinkers. This would perpetuate existing hierarchies in a new knowledge-based society that India aspires to become. The true power of a knowledge society would be based on having a large mass of critical thinkers who can innovate, have agency to address a multitude of socio-political, budgetary and environmental challenges the country and their

communities face.

Classroom tradition and hence learning is being thus shaped by the sub-culture and civil ethos of teacher education as much as the neo-liberal frame within which teachers work and worth is viewed and judged. There appears to be a consonance and hence a logic of delivery between a neoliberal framework, focus on the individual, and the behaviouristic outcome-based model of education. The „public belittling of theory, in the preparation of teachers in favour of the „practical“ fits the agenda of letting the markets dictate the purpose of education - sans people and society. The implications of this on India’s Constitutional codes of equity, civil justice and fraternity could be devastating in the early and middle 21st century.

The paper brings to light the tenuous epistemological frame that currently structures the involvements of those preparing to be teachers. It argues for the need to engage with more robust epistemological underpinnings in designing teacher education programmes. This would include engaging with debates about knowledge and curriculum; dialectics of theory and involvement and the deconstruction of universalistic and individualistic notions of learning and development. This is possible only by re-imagining spaces and the pedagogic commitment of developing teachers. This will begin with a deep interrogation of the dualistic conversation and circumscribed foundational schedule. A new pedagogic imagination can help foundationalism learning as civil activity and teaching as civil tradition, giving fillip to the ongoing process of deepening democracy in a plural India.

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