

ROLE OF LITERATURE FOR DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

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1.0 Introduction:

Teacher education programmes have long been criticized as a weak intervention in shaping thinking and continuously growing teachers. Fragmentation, weak base of the theoretical undercurrents in the would be teachers, lack of insight for using appropriate pedagogy as per the need of the students and time, extrication from practice, and inconsistent ways of delivering the *what* and *why* of education are the major points to finger at the teacher education. Darling and Hammold (2006, pg 9) expects it to grow strong thinkers and problem solvers in the student teachers, who have sound base of the foundations of education but can integrate the various theories and interweave a new design as per the demand of the situation.

In such a scene, teacher education colleges are expected to create a cadre of insightful professionals who rise beyond mechanical practices of teaching. The notion of preparing teachers as knowers and thinkers is not enough. Teachers need to be prepared as intellectuals and pedagogical innovators (Darling-Hammond, P.78). This paper endeavours to seek answer to the question: Does Teacher Education proliferate insight in student teachers by employing age old methods of curriculum transactions?

2.0 The Problem:

Teacher education programmes infuse *what, why and how* of education in student teachers. If we probe into how this is done, the answer is very ominous. Quite often it is seen that use of interactive methods are propagated employing lecture method. There are more areas

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too where we find an extensive gap between what is preached and what is done. The gloomiest matter is the teaching of the theoretical foundations as it is restricted to information impartation and completion of the syllabus. On the foundation no edifice of practice is built. This results into tedious theory teaching attracting no student teacher to grow as a reflective practitioner. This calls for some alternatives which can make theory teaching **Learning centered** (that is, supportive in focus, in depth learning that results in powerful thinking and proficient establishment with the performance on the part of the student teachers) and **Learner centered** (responsive to individual student teachers' experiences, interests, talents, needs, and background).

One such alternative is to seek help from literature for making the student teachers derive insights for education through extensive reading, reflection and discussion on it. Using literature having theoretical content inbuilt or interwoven in it for developing insights in education and thereby enhance practice is here termed as **literature directed teacher education**.

3.0 Rationale:

Literature and life has a very important and eponymous relationship. Literature is not imaginative trash. It is distilled life. It is a written documentary of ideological or real happenings suggesting to fetch message for making one's life healthier. There is an ample of literature available having educational undercurrents which are read and appreciated only for its literary value. Less efforts have been done to utilize its educative value on the part of the professionals engaged in teaching *what, how and why of education*. The researcher, being a student of literature has known the worth of literary works in making someone learn something out of it. This idea "Literature Directed Teacher Education (LDTE)" has been generated keeping in mind the worth of literature in the context of education.

One of the purposes of education is to develop an understanding in an individual of keeping himself away from being drowned in senseless repetitions. The teacher education system having becoming so in-exuberant, rarely consider the changing needs of the educational institutions and role of learners in learning process. Any teachers' capacity, says Windsor (1967), for teaching excellence at the classroom level depends upon the degree to which he has internalized a coherent rationale for *what should be done why*. No readymade stereotype

prescriptions help in developing this faculty of mind. Chewing literature enables one to develop this.

It is the first hand experience of the researcher that the student-teachers lack insights into synchronization of their understanding of the theoretical foundation and learning activities executed by them. Quite often the mechanical transmission of the theory is responsible for this lacking. The researcher has a strong conviction that it is only plunging into something which makes one derive system of one's own. And her the plunging is facilitated by exerting a push to student teachers in the ocean of literature.

4.0 Research Questions

1. How do student teachers evaluate the traditional method of transmitting theoretical foundations in teacher education?
2. What are the alternative ways of making the theoretical teaching interesting, meaningful and reflective for enhancing performance?
3. What type of literary works can be utilized for imparting theoretical knowledge which is learning centered and learner centered?
4. What should be the nature of the tasks for utilizing literary piece for developing educational/pedagogical insights in student teachers?
5. How can Literature Directed Teacher Education be conceptualized and what are its pedagogical practices?

5.0 Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present study (both: research objectives and task objectives) are as under:

- To search for appropriate literary piece capable for deriving educational insights from.
- To prepare tasks on the literary piece for creating scope for deriving educational insights.
- To get the task package validated.
- To facilitate student teacher reflect on the literary piece in context of the tasks.

- To seek student teacher's feedback on the process of literature directed theory derivation on education.
- To evaluate how literature based tasks enhance student-teachers' insights regarding education.
- To suggest a plan of action for Literature Directed Teacher education.

6.0 Population and Sample:

For the present study, the student-teachers of all the 11 Teacher Education colleges affiliated to Sardar Patel University constitute the population.

The sample of the present study is the 30 student teachers form M.B. Patel College of Education. The sample has been selected randomly.

7.0 Data Collection and Procedure of Data Analysis:

For the present study one group post test design was employed. It followed the following procedure.

- Selection of literary Piece (2 chapters from *PULKIT*, written by P. L Deshpande)
- Preparation of task package
- Validation of Task Package
- Task based teaching of the literary Piece for deriving educational insights.
- Obtaining feedback cum reflections from the respondents using a self prepared tool: SHAHITYA SHIKSHANNI JUGALBANDHI. This tool has two sections. One contained rating scale (three point) for obtaining feedback and reflections on the task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights. Section two contained open ended questions keeping in mind the constructs like usefulness of traditional method of teaching theory in teacher education, worthiness of literature for utilization for derivation of educational insight, recommendation of literary works for deriving educational insights, change occurred in student teachers after having completed the task based teaching of literary piece.

- Analysis of the data obtained . The analysis of the data received from the section 1 of the tool is analysed using statistical device chi square and section 2 using content analysis method.
- Derivation of findings and conclusions.
- Drafting suggestions in the form of Plan of Action for literature directed Teacher Education.

8.0 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data:

The data derived from SHAHITYA SHIKSHANNI JUGALBANDHI tool is analysed and interpreted in the following sections.

8.1 Analysis of the Reflections and Feedback on Task Based Teaching of a Literary Piece for Deriving Educational Insights:

Part one of the tool contained 10 items for availing feedback/ reflections from the respondents regarding task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights. Given below in the table are the components for obtaining the feedback/reflections along with the frequency, chi square value and significance.

Table : 1 Analysis of the reflections and feedback on task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights

Sr. No.	Feedback /Reflection Head	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Chi Square	Significance
1.	Boredom in theoretical teaching when taught traditionally	25	2	3	33.80	*
2.	One way teaching of theoretical subjects resulting into information centeredness	17	6	7	7.40	*
3.	Literature capable of extracting educational insights	26	2	2	38.40	*
4.	Literature directed teacher education seem practical due to its contextualization.	24	3	3	29.40	*
5.	Literature directed teacher education facilitates reflective thinking.	21	6	3	18.60	*

6.	Task based teaching increasing activeness.	24	5	1	30.20	*
7.	Scope for establishing Connectivity between various foundations in literature directed teacher education resulting into holistic understanding of education.	27	2	1	43.40	*
8.	Scope for comparing one's role as a teacher with that of the characters and situations occurring n literature.	24	4	2	29.60	*
9.	Scope for interesting, meaningful derivation of education rather than cramming of the theoretical portions.	28	1	1	48.60	*
10.	Scope for deriving guidelines for one's own teacher performance rather than availing prescriptions.	19	9	2	14.60	*

* Indicates that the spread of frequency in a given statement is significant. So the statement shows significance towards the category in which highest frequency falls.

The chi-square values mentioned in the above table suggests that the highest frequency for all the ten components are in the column 'agree' and the significance value is less than .05 for each components. This suggests that the spread of frequency have significant difference in them. In all the components respondents have favoured literature directed theory teaching. This reflects that the traditional information centered theory teaching lack in interest in meaningfulness for the respondents. They feel that the task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights enhance activeness, holistic understanding of education, connection between theory and practice and helps in guiding one's own teacher behavior, and comparing one's performance with the life shown in literature. It is clear from the analysis that respondents have welcomed Literature directed teacher education as they have felt literature worthy of educating them the educational insights. Moreover it is also clear that literature directed theoretical teaching requires interactive and reflective tasks wherein no prescriptive information is directly imparted.

8.2 Analysis of the Responses (open ended in nature) on Task Based Teaching of a Literary Piece for Deriving Educational Insights:

Part B of the tool consisted 4 open ended questions. The responses to these questions is summarised in the following table by mentioning key idea units with their frequency as per the major areas of responses.

Table 2 Analysis of the responses on task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights

Major Areas of Responses	Key idea units received as responses with their frequency	
Evaluation of the traditional method of teaching theory subjects in terms of the usability	Boredom(21), Repetition (21), Meaninglessness(19) No connection with practice (14) Passivity on the part of student teachers (7) Exam-orientedness (4)	
Evaluation of the task based teaching of a literary piece for deriving educational insights in terms of the usability	What was liked?	Interactive nature of the class(23) Selection of the literary piece (17) Scope for relating literature with real life experiences(14) Language used by the author (9) Execution of tasks (6) Freedom in the class to express one's self (3)
	Which points of theory got strengthened ?	Techniques of teaching (13), teacher behavoiur (17),motivation (12), Language teaching (8), communication (4)
	Which new ideas got triggered ?	Freedom in the class (8) Innovativeness in learning activities
	What was not liked?	Less time given for some tasks(4),
Suggesting literary works for	Toto Chann, divaswapna, stories from Panchtantra, Geeta,	

literature directed teacher education	diary ansh by Pururaj Joshi, Angad no Pag, Motni mala
Change occurred in the insight of the student teachers after passing through the experience of SHAHITYA SHIKSHANNI JUGALBANDHI	Become reflective (9), Reading literature not just for enjoyment (3) Linking various foundations of education (2) New idea for teaching through literature based tasks(1) Integrative and multi disciplinary approach (1)

From the above table, it is clear that the literature directed teaching has attracted the respondents due to its active student role, meaningfulness, interest level, and innovativeness and reflection generative scope. The tasks based teaching of the literary piece for deriving educational insights made them involved in establishing dialogue with others and with the self. They could relate experiences of their own with the contexts given. No spoon feeding of the information of the theory is advocated by the student teachers.

9.0 Findings:

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis and interpretation of the data, the following findings have been derived.

1. Traditional impartation of theory of the foundational subjects, being information centered fail in bringing fruitful outcomes in context of its usability and relevance for the actual performance.
2. Literature Directed Teacher Education (LDTE) has a potential in making teacher education programme interesting and meaningful as far as the development of theoretical insight is concerned in connection with the practice.
3. Literature is a powerful mean for deriving educational insights and implications if the student teachers are facilitated with reflective task based discussions thereof. The interactive nature of such a practice makes student teachers reflective practitioners. They not only become active in comprehending the theories but they are able to derive, blend and evolve theories in context of their need and environment.
4. The task based teaching of a literary text for deriving educational insights must characterize with extensive reading of the literary piece, relating it with current system,

comparing the situations with the existing one, reflecting over one's role, imagining and inferring outcomes, evaluating someone's actions and offering suggestions. The what, why and how should get amalgamated in such a way that no formal distinction between theory and practice is visible.

5. Literature directed teaching of the theoretical foundation generates a holistic understanding of education. It is more interdisciplinary and targets nothing less than life.
6. There are ample scope of finding literature which carry educational undercurrents.
7. There is a need of saving teacher education from becoming mere a requirement of certification. Innovations are needed to be brought in the form of altering the **“how”** part of it.

10.0 Recommendations:

Based on the findings derived from the analysis and interpretation of the data, the following recommendations are made to teacher education institutions, teacher educators, student teachers and policy makers in order to entrance the level of insight of student-teachers in teaching.

- Teacher Education field should understand it clearly that enhancing teaching insight and skills is the essence of the professional course. The teaching of theoretical foundation is means to this end. So the activities, teaching practices and theory should be facilitated in such a way that teaching insight becomes consolidated.
- Teacher Education colleges should work at developing a growing student teacher who learns form his teaching practices by reflecting and bringing in theoretical knowledge.
- Teacher Education colleges are expected to do away form the traditional approaches by inviting innovation, experimentation and creativity in their way of preparing student-teachers to develop their teaching proficiency.
- Teacher education syllabus should contain literary works having educational undercurrents in each paper.
- Teacher educators should organise workshops for constructing learning generative task based programmes based on literary works. The participatory nature of the tasks must be kept in mind.

- The learning material produced through such workshops be given chance to be evaluated in simulated or real situations by the material producers to enhance the quality of it.
- More researches of this kind should be taken up to bring in light alternative ways of theory impartation.
- The policy makers should design the curriculum in such a way that the theoretical understanding aids in enhancement of teaching performance. The theory-practice nexus should be taken care of.

11.0 My Research Experience:

Out of dissatisfaction and frustration on observing how students respond to theory teaching in their understanding and performance got unfolded the research problem which was felt more strongly to be undertaken. While talking to some of the teacher-educators having concern for improving the quality of Teacher education the feeling became a passion. Through this study I was confronted with my own pedagogical understandings and their feasibility in reality. Reflecting on what I believe, what I know, what I understand, What I can do, and how I can facilitate educational insights to be developed through literary works enabled me prepare the tasks and try them out.. More interestingly, I evaluated my style of theoretical teaching in context of its interest level and meaningfulness. .The interaction with other the group with whom I worked for this research led me search for more alternatives for developing theoretical impartation.. In short this study led me to think from *what is* to *what & how can be*'.

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