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Improving learner proficiency through sound teacher- training curriculum
at B.Ed. Level

Dr. Suresh Kurapati

Assistant Professor in English
Centre for Foreign Languages (English)
Central University of South Bihar, Gaya, Bihar



ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the gap between the objectives of teaching English and its outcomes in Indian context. Most of secondary school boards in India are having 'developing communication skills in English' as goal in their curriculum, however, even after 10 or 12 years of study, students fail to communicate in English. One of the reasons behind the failure of teaching/learning is certainly falls on the existing curriculum or teachers' training curriculum and their ways of teaching, because in most of the government schools, 'qualified' teachers who had undergone 'teacher training' teach English language to the target students. Therefore, one can arrive at a conclusion that there is need for implementation of sound theoretical and best practices in the curriculum of teacher training itself. This paper tries to bring out the relation between curriculum of teacher training and consequent outcomes of their teaching. It will also try to discuss the issue of curriculum implementation in terms of teaching approaches, methods, and techniques in relation with the contemporary technological era in the teacher training curriculum.

Keywords: Quality Education, Teacher Training, Curriculum of B.Ed., Duration of (B.Ed.) Teacher training Programme, Issues of Teacher Training

Introduction

The purpose of education is overall development of the learner i.e. making the learners competent citizens of the world. Where they live and let other live in a harmonious way in the society. The overall development includes understanding self and society, society needs and their roles, coping with other citizens, values of society, understanding new trends in society. In the similar lines the purpose of the teacher training education programme is to provide the best quality education to the student teachers and in turn help the education system of our country.

Though our modern education began since long time ago, the competence of our teachers or quality of teachers is not meeting real national need or global need. Due to this many of our human resource are being wasted. Even now, India is having large chunk of teaching folk but there is lack of ground breaking innovation in any field of study –arts, science, technology, medicine, literacy, development, food, public relations etc. Therefore, resulting consequences are: unemployment, poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, health issues, social

relation issues, insecurity, etc. The main cause of the problem certainly lack of quality education among all the citizen of this nation. It has been widely reported in many of the learned journal and reports.

The quality education gives overall development to the self and the society. We also know very well that good education liberates all human beings from the clutches of evils. (savidya ya vimuktaye) Therefore, the teacher education, that too the quality education is vital for the overall development of the nation and citizens in India. This paper specifically, focuses on English language teacher training/education, its outcomes and consequences in Indian context.

Importance of English

English language has a prominent status in India. Being a multilingual country and having more than 300 year of English association, India adopted English as an Associate Official Language of the Republic of Indian and gave the constitutional provisions to it. English has been used as an inter-state communicative language, language of administration, language of higher education/Professional courses, library language, etc in India. As there is an unavoidable use with English language in Indian and in international circles, its usage has been growing day by day. Because of the importance of English language, learning English became an essential requirement of all the educated people to actively take part in administration, higher education, inter-state and inter-national matters. "English is increasingly becoming the preferred language of education even among the students hailing from poorer sections of the society and also rural areas of Andhra Pradesh". (Daily News & Analysis- 26 March 2011) Due to this great demand from the citizens of the country, the governments had to take measures to implement English language education since primary schooling onwards.

Problem at the field: Failure of communication skills

Based on the requirements of English, teacher training programmes have been started up in the educational institutions to impart English language to the target students. Though, English language has been taught by trained teachers in India since long time, the outcomes of the teaching-learning is not up to the mark. Even today, there are competency and proficiency problems among the students. Many research studies and Educational reports reported that many of our students are not attaining required communication skills for their development and career advancement. This problem was reported in detail in *The Hindu* news daily on 23rd May 2011. 'They (Andhra Pradesh Students) do not have communication abilities' (*The Hindu*, 23rd May 2011) required for their employment or career. The same issue of communication in English was also reported a decade earlier by a research scholar, as

It was observed that only some learners manage to participate in the target language (TL) communicative situations, whereas the majority fail though they have more or less the same socio-economic, educational and linguistic background and almost the same language repertoire.

(Amita 1998: ii)

Though the students are spending a considerable amount of time (8-10 years), throughout their schooling or even after that, still the learners are failing in communicating in English in the desired situations. Sanjay Kumar & Pushp Lata in their book on *communications skills* (2011) by OUP points out the communication problem of Indian students as, "Most of our students are scared of a situation in which they have to stand up in front of their audience and say something. The fear is so widespread that as many as 70 percent of the university students regard it as a very big challenge and seek to avoid the task of making a presentation as long as they can". (Sanjay & Latha 2011: 277)

Reasons of failure: Inadequate 'teacher training'

Though, there are many affecting factor for poor communication skills of students at the field level, the teacher or teacher quality is a major prominent factor. In most of the B.Ed. colleges the prospective teachers take teacher training roughly one year assuming to get the adequate skills in many areas for teaching at the school level. They study as per the recommendations of NCERT and pass with good marks. But the problem with the teacher training in reality is many of the trained teacher do not meet the expectations of the school boards in India, forget about the requirement of the other boards form foreign countries. The 'trained teacher' who were badly promoted to teach at school, usually teach the given textbook with wrong methods and approaches with meaningless practices, teachers finally end up in importing no skills to the students.

Usually, English language teaching, broadly spread into four basic skills of language-Listening, speaking, reading and writing. In order to execute these four basic skills and their sub-skill, teacher must know all the element of language, they have to have hands on experience with appropriate methods, approaches, teaching and strategies to facilities the target learners in the schools. Mere knowing the definition of concepts, does not help the teacher or education system. Moreover, in adequate training is detrimental to the growth of the learner and it affects society at large. It was also found from the studies on students that most of the teacher widely use grammar-translation methodology, in spite of having their objectives to teach communication skill to the learners. In that way there is serious mismatch between the objective of teaching-learning and actual outcomes.

Now-a-days, we find many learner have access to internet, mobile phones in their hands so exploiting the trend for language teaching is very vital. Mere chalk and talk many not work with many students. Teachers need to identify the learners learning styles and make arrangements to enhance their learning through sound strategies and techniques.

Teaching with obsolete theories and practices:

The other most commonly observed issue with teaching is that most of the teacher teach about the language with grammar translation methods or rote learning methods and bilingual examinational methods. In these schools, the students just pass the exams and get heaps of marks but fail in actual usage of the language. The heaps of marks also indicate that the students are putting lot efforts to learn 'meaningless' learning. The reason might be improper understanding of goal of teaching and learning; not knowing communicative strategies, or need based language teaching. As most of these teacher teach at basic/foundation level of education it certainly effects students' further education or career. We know the case of many Engineering students, who were put a side in spite of having degrees in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana or elsewhere in India. The reason is that many of these students do not have English communication skills.

Even now, I feel our examination is very inadequate to access the learners' proficiency in English, most of the time the assessment is done based on the written test, because there are, many of the teacher opine that writing is a foolproof for overall proficiency, but it is not true. In many of advanced countries, use four varieties of tests to examine four basic skills of language. Which is vital to incorporate in our education. If the teacher training does not provide any training how to access listening skills and speaking skills, trained teacher at the filed level may not think about them. It seriously affect the washback of learning skills.

According to Richards, J.C.(2005). Training involves understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom. It also involves tying out new strategies in the classroom.

The following are goals from a training perspective:

- Understanding domain knowledge/subject knowledge -how the process of English language development occurs
- Understanding the goals of teaching at each level
- Understanding learners and their learning styles
- Learning how to use effective strategies
- Adapting the suitable content for teaching
- Learning how to use methods, approaches and activities in a lesson
- Using classroom aids and resources (Multimedia labs/language labs, etc.)
- Techniques for giving learners feedback on performance etc.

The practical problem involved in one year B.Ed. Course:

- i) Course completion issues due to lack of time constraints
- ii) Inadequate hands-on exposure to student teachers
- iii) Giving less importance to many of the important concepts
- iv) Minimum scope for classroom research
- v) Having very limited exposure with students through the course etc.

Learning scope for the student teachers in B.Ed. programmes

Due to changing requirements for English, innovations in pedagogy of English, and demand for high proficiency in English language, the research in English language education has been exploring new frontiers, discarding its obsolete practices. In order to understand, adapt and deliver the suitable effective teaching practices, student teachers need to have the knowledge of modern methods and approaches of language teaching in addition to the traditional methods and approaches. The knowledge that they acquire through teacher training should help in real time classroom problems. Teacher should also get hands on experience how to deliver need based teaching with innovative practices. It is also very essential to the student teachers to understand the technology language teaching technology and its environment- CALL, Language Lab, multimedia lab and usage of web based resources for effective teaching-learning environment.

Conclusion

Though we have very sound knowledge base for teacher education, the implementation of the curriculum often failed because of short duration of the programme and heavy workload for the day made many of the teacher trainees to rush through all, but not mastering required skills lead to the failure of communication skills at school level among students. Let us hope that through this two year B.Ed. programme may provide the sound understanding of theory and thorough practice of method, approaches, techniques and strategies would acquire required skills to deliver the need based teaching and certainly make sense of B.Ed./teacher training programme for teacher education more meaningful.

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