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Teacher Education for University Teachers: Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract

In this age of globalization every nation is struggling to keep pace with the upcoming demands to maintain quality. The progress of a nation largely depends on its citizens who are the products of its education system. This study is an attempt to unfold the status of university teachers of Bangladesh. Data collected through document review and in-depth interview of the university teachers that was analysed qualitatively. Researchers found that, most of the countries assiduously work for reshaping their teacher education while Bangladesh is focusing on needs for university teachers. However, most of the teachers express their opinion regarding emergence of teacher education and they agree that a good student might not be a good teacher always unless and until quality teacher education is there.

Keywords: Teacher Education, University Teachers, Teachers' Professional Development

1. Background of the Study

There is a universal quest for teacher quality, and obviously to ensure this, a demand for quality teacher education. But knowing the importance of teacher education many countries are not acting in right earnest. Though most of them agrees that teachers need proper education and training to deliver quality education. Regarding this, Prime Minister David Cameron and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's of England while writing a foreword for the new Schools White Paper (2010) expressed that, "the first, and most important, lesson is that no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers". Along with this they argued that the most successful countries, from the Far East to Scandinavia, are those where teaching has the highest status as a profession; South Korea recruits from their top five per cent of graduates and Finland from the top 10 percent.

Teaching is not about delivering information to the pupils rather it helps the pupils to discover their hidden power, intelligence and prosperity. So, in teaching how is more important than what. The purpose of education is not only preparing students for the world market but also preparing them for their future life. The impact of any educational system can only be as powerful and effective as the teachers or the educational leaders who actually perform this profession. The lives of all learners are shaped by the teachers (Doyran, 2012). Every student is different from others and education helps everyone to know him/herself. So, in this ever changing world teachers have a critical role to play. Only providing information and sharing knowledge is not enough to make the students ready for their future life also need to help them to unfold the hidden meaning of life and become complete. For this reason, teachers should know the ways and should explore the how. This is why teacher education is worthy for quality education in every corner of this earth and the thrust for change in teacher education is worldwide. The irony lies in the fact is that in Bangladesh, everyone is though concerned about quality education but no one seems to be about quality teacher. Not only has it made the university departments and schools of education anxious, but it is also a matter of concern for those who think something more than mere training which is needed for tomorrow's teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2006, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, Howey & Zimpher, 1989; Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999; Tatto, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

The main objective of this study was to explore the present status of teacher education for university teachers in Bangladesh. To achieve this objective, following three specific objectives were drawn:

- a) to explore the worldwide dilemmas about teacher education
- b) to analyze the teachers recruiting system at university level in Bangladesh
- c) to identify the teachers perception towards TE in Bangladesh

2. Teacher Education: What and How?

The American Commission on Teacher Education rightly observes that there is a high connection between quality nation and quality teacher education. Quality of a nation depends on the quality of its citizens and the quality of citizens depends on the quality of education they get, then

quality of education depends on quality of teachers and obviously quality teachers requires quality teacher education. Conversely Darling-Hammond (2006) mentioned that 'almost anyone can teach reasonably well—that entering teaching requires, at most, knowing something about a subject, and the rest of the fairly simple “tricks of the trade” can be picked up on the job’. On one hand, the national council for teacher education of India (1998) has defined teacher education as a combined program of education, research and training of teachers of different education levels, on the other hand, Good (1959) defined Teacher education as all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities as a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively.

Moreover, teacher education is a professional development program for teachers that would enable and empower the teachers to meet the requirements of their profession and enable them to face the challenges therein. Furthermore, where the major thrust of any higher education institution is to provide every student with access to competent, caring and qualified teaching that will allow the students to learn meaningfully (Davis, William and Griffin, 2003) there the teacher education should incorporate proficient teaching skills, sound pedagogical knowledge and professional skills. Subsequently students' intellectual achievement at all levels largely depends on what their teachers teach; how these are taught and the faithfulness with which the teaching job is conducted (Ejiogu, 1990; Olorundare, 2003).

There is no doubt that teacher education is necessary for improvement of teachers' proficiency in teaching but everywhere there is always a quest for how the Teacher education is organized in a way that could promote teachers being reflective in their teaching (Jones, 1998; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Ball, 2000; Wise and Leibbrand, 2001). Similarly, Ball (2000, p. 244) mentions “We must understand better the work that teachers do and analyze the role played by content knowledge in that work” while Korthagen and Kessels (1999, p. 4) suggest to link theory and practice in a blended process that leads integration within the teachers. When teachers are on-job but need teacher education then the experienced teachers can guide them as Janet Draper, Fiona Christie and Jim O'Brien discuss a new probation arrangement for teachers in Scotland, in the form of a new induction scheme, which saw new teachers entitled to a one year training post

with a 70% workload, 30% of working time for professional development and 10% of an experienced teacher's time for support. It can be the best way for teachers to improve what they do is for them to reflect on their practice and work with other teachers to help them understand what is needed for high achievement. However, Cochran-Smith argues that the image of teachers as professionals who learn from practice and document the effect of their teaching on students' learning is a clear part of the discourse of the new teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2001b).

In this era of modern technology everything is changing dramatically and education is on the top of them. Technology has changed the definition of teaching materials already. In the past we used to think of the teacher with a piece of chalk and few text books whereas the image of a modern teacher is with laptop, smartphone and many other learning gadgets. Along with this, the classroom scenario, assessment system, students database management system and library in the last two decades have just transformed into a new one where technologies play a vital role. This is challenging for many teacher educators who may have been comfortable with the old way of doing things and now found many of their students well in advance of their own knowledge as well. Therefore, teacher education programs must help the teachers in meeting these challenges with the upcoming ones. Otero et al. (2005) claims that teacher education programs will guide the teachers in a way that they must become proficient at technology use and must come to understand content-specific, pedagogical uses of technology for their own instruction.

3. Methodology

The qualitative method was used to explore the main objective of this study. The qualitative data was collected through related document review and one-on-one interview schedule. From that the document analysis is the prime strategy to explore the research objectives (a & b) world dilemmas about teacher education and teacher recruiting system at university level in Bangladesh. Furthermore, one-on-one interview approach was applied to know the teachers' perception about teacher education. A total number of 8 university teachers (2 lecturers, 2 assistant professors, 2 associate professors and 2 professors) were selected purposively as the sample of the study. The document review checklist and interview schedule were used for data collection of this study. In this study we used some alphanumeric code such as TI used

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for 'teachers' interview' in data analyses section. The collected data was analysed qualitatively. Moreover, the major themes were incorporated with some specific themes based on research objectives. The researchers tried to make it sure that the accuracy of data could be maintained.

4. Contemporary Worldwide Dilemmas about Teacher Education

The role of a teacher will not be same as it was before and the notion of teaching is changing with the upcoming challenges of globalization. Different religious and cultural understandings must be considered when teaching in the classrooms because a teacher can no longer assume what seemed to be right to one student, will have the same meaning for students from other communities. This has brought about the need for a substantial shift in teacher attitudes about the practices and substantial changes in terms of the teacher education program offered by universities (Townsend & Bates, 2007).

Increasing globalization and diversity and a focus on standards and accountability for teacher education come at a time when many western nations are facing a teacher shortage of unprecedented proportions (Darling- Hammond et al., 1999; Oakes, et al., 2002). So at a time when there are higher and higher demands for the graduates of teacher education institutions, the need for putting bodies in front of classrooms has led to lowering of entry standards for people who enter through other means. This scenario is common for the Asian countries as also in Bangladesh. In the recent years the whole world is working together to eradicate illiteracy and the number of students are increasing as a result of these efforts. To teach this increased number of students and to meet this challenge nationally and internationally under-qualified teachers are disproportionately assigned to teach minority and low-income students (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, 1997). However, it is prerequisite to make sure that such teachers have the skills required for the job, regardless of the fact how they came into the profession. It is not just finding any teacher that is important, but finding the right teacher, with the right skills for the right situation. However, concern was expressed that teacher education institutions may not be up to the mark, mostly because of their resistance to change. These institutions are failing to keep pace with the changing society (Cochran-Smith 2001a; Fullan, 1998; Goodlad, 1990; Imig & Switzer, 1996). So the issue of recruiting

and teaching new teachers is much more complex than it was a decade ago all over the globe.

5. Teacher Education in Bangladesh Perspective

In Bangladesh, 34 public and 52 private universities are providing higher education. More than 2 million teachers are working in these universities. In all, a total number of 9962 teachers are working in public universities from which 8031 are male and 1931 are female. Furthermore, a total number of 10683 teachers are engaging teaching profession in private university from that 7899 teachers are male and 2784 teachers are female (BANBEIS, 2013).

Table 1: Number of university teachers at a glance

Type of Institutions	Number of Institutions	Number of teachers		
		Male	Female	Total
Public	34	8031	1931	9962
Private	52	7899	2784	10683
Total	86	15930	47715	20645

Current education policy (2010) of Bangladesh emphasizes on one of the modest approaches for training teachers: on-the-job training whereas teacher education and teaching experience is considered useful for teaching. A very few countries are still struggling with this issue and Bangladesh is one of them. However, not only it makes the university departments and schools of education feel concerned, but it is also worrisome for those who think something more than mere training which is needed for tomorrow's teachers. In Bangladesh, there are Primary Training Institutes (PTI) for the primary teachers and Teachers' Training Colleges (TTC) for primary and secondary teachers but there is no specialized institutions for the university teachers. Surprisingly, university teachers do not need to have a degree on teaching or teacher education to teach the universities of Bangladesh and they are not encouraged by the authority either. Hopefully few private universities of Bangladesh have started working on teacher education for uplifting their own teacher quality. Then again, one of the crucial issues of the past dozen years is that teacher educators have been marginalized by the process of educational change and remains excluded from the policy debates regarding teachers' professional development in Bangladesh. While they have been engaged in discussions regarding the quality of education, that discussion has occurred outside or away from the teacher education community.

Teacher education is currently facing a number of challenges, with perhaps the most intense focus being on the issue of teacher quality. Many people welcomed this call for an improvement in the quality of teachers, but there are inherent dangers too (Townsend & Bates, 2007).

6. Teacher Recruitment System at University Level

In the university level, four types of teachers are recruited as academic staff. The university authority set some criteria for these posts. Criteria vary from institution to institution. Here the criteria for recruiting teacher of University of Dhaka are described as it is one of the prominent universities of Bangladesh. For the position of lecturer, university requires that candidates must have first class or at least CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honors & Master's degree. Furthermore, candidate must have first divisions or at least GPA, 4.25 out of 5.00 in Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) & Higher Secondary School Certificate (H.S.C) Examinations. When other qualification is equal then preference may be given to those who have higher degrees (University of Dhaka, 2014). For the post of assistant professor level, candidate must have minimum first class or CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Honors and in Master's degree. Moreover, they should have first division or at least GPA, 4.25 out of 5.00 in S.S.C. & H.S.C Examinations. They should have at least 03 (three) years of teaching and research experience in a university together with research publications in standard journals. The above requirements may be relaxed in the case of those who have Ph.D. degree (University of Dhaka, 2014). For associate professor, Candidates must have high academic qualifications preferably with a PhD. or equivalent degree. They should have at least 7 (seven) years teaching and research experience in a University or an Institute of Advanced Research. They should have original research works published in recognized research journals (University of Dhaka, 2014). Finally for professor level, candidate must have distinguished scholars with a PhD. or equivalent degree. They should have at least 12 (twelve) years teaching and research experience in a University or an Institute of Advanced Research. They should have original research works published in recognized research journals (University of Dhaka, 2014). As we quoted in earlier section that requirement varies among the institutions e.g. Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh requires good academic result (CGPA 3.6 out of 4.00) in honors and (CGPA 3.5 out of 4.00)

master degree whereas there is no specific requirement for SSC and HSC (The Daily Star, 26 September 2014).

Making the above review, it was found that in all positions, candidates must have subject relevant degree with good result. In some cases they must have 3 to 12 years teaching experience and journal articles.

7. Tertiary Level Teachers' Perception towards Teacher Education in BD

In the present era, teacher education at university level is a controversial issue in Bangladesh. Some teachers believe that teacher education is essential for all levels of teaching but some do not agree to this. In addition, some top most private universities of Bangladesh want to ensure high class quality teachers through teacher education (conversant with the pedagogy of higher education) although the public universities do not show any kind of interest on teacher education. But most of the university teachers think that they need orientation on pedagogic issues or teaching learning related training to increase their teaching quality. They want in-service/pre-service training on teaching learning method and one/two year's teacher education degree to enhance their teaching quality. For example a professor from a reputed public university of Bangladesh stated that:

I have been teaching in this university for 23 years but still I can remember my first classroom teaching experience. I joined here as a lecturer and at that time though I had sufficient expertise in my content area but I was feeling blank standing in front of whole class. I knew what to teach but what I did not know was how to teach. Therefore I think teacher education or foundation training for newly joined university teachers is very much essential and helpful for them. (TI₁)

Although some university teachers believe that a good teacher is God gifted and he possesses the teaching skills by birth and so they do not need any kind of teaching related knowledge to conduct a class at the university level. For example an Associate Professor from public university mentioned that

Teaching is an inherent quality which is there by birth. Teaching and learning related training helps a new teacher to conduct a good class in university level but I think it is not essential to be a good teacher. That is why

the university authority does not want teacher education related certificate to apply for a teaching position in my university. Although, a candidate having teacher education related certificate is treated as a good candidate and we give him preference for that post. (TI₄)

On the other hand another Associate Professor thinks that teacher education should be essential for all kinds of teaching profession. He stated that

I think teacher education is more important in recent era. We have no option to ignore teacher education for university level teaching. We emphasize B.Ed. & M.Ed. or Dip-in-Ed. certificate holder candidate in our primary and secondary education but at university level we ignore it technically. In Bangladesh, the university teachers are not encouraged to achieve teacher education and teaching learning related professional degree though some of the developed countries encourage their university teachers to get teacher education degree for effective teaching and quality education. (TI₅)

The newly recruited teachers of the university level mention that they want opportunity for teacher education from university authority. A newly appointed teacher in a university level stated that

I completed my graduation and post-graduation degree from the department of marketing and I join my department as lecturer. I earned good results in all my academic career. Although I face some challenges as a teacher e.g. class management, problem to keep pace with the curriculum, assessment system and facilitating the students properly. Now I think I need another degree / training on teaching-learning method or teacher education. I think it is essential for all fresh teachers of the university and the university authority should arrange this kind of training for newly appointed teacher. (TI₇)

8. Conclusion

Teacher education must continue to adapt some mechanism to prepare educators for work in an ever-changing socio-cultural world. Teacher education should form a stronger continuum and ensure lifelong professional development of the teachers. State and the University

Grant Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh should ensure that each university teacher has access to relevant professional development. University could offer teacher education with an updated, comprehensive teacher education strategy, coordinated among the university's various departments. Teacher education helps teacher to build strong competencies and professional autonomy that makes teaching a valued career. Intensive research on teacher education is needed more to study as to whether teacher education program for the university teachers in Bangladesh should be initiated. In addition, we have to motivate our most able young people to teaching that is independent and respected profession.

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