

Think Tank–Teacher Education

A Brief Note

(A Collaborative Initiative of the Department of School and Mass Education,
DTE and SCERT and Unicef Odisha)



Department of School and Mass Education
Government of Odisha



**DIRECTORATE OF TE & SCERT
ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR**

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Think Tank–Teacher Education Odisha



The essence of a programme of teacher education is 'quality' and in its absence, teacher education becomes not only a financial waste but a source of overall deterioration in educational standards. A programme of highest importance therefore is to improve the quality of teacher education.



- Kothari Commission (1964-66)

1.1 Context

Reform of school education depends, first and foremost, on restructuring teacher education, its foundation. With concern for and commitment to quality education for all children at the centre stage, the heart of the matter is to create a teaching workforce adequately and appropriately trained to meet the challenges of an ever evolving classrooms. Every child has an inalienable right to be taught by qualified, competent, caring and committed teachers. No more can we put up with teacher incompetence in classrooms. Therefore, the teacher education system is expected to turn out teachers with required professional competence, commitment and attitude to learn, unlearn and relearn in order to stay relevant in the midst of rapidly changing contexts. However, teacher education as a subsector of education has a tendency to remain remarkably stable, resisting sometimes the pervading changes. The school education system is in need of an army of teachers who resolutely believe in lifelong learning. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 appropriately states: “Learning to learn and willingness to unlearn and relearn are important as means of responding to new situations in a flexible and creative manner.” Teacher Education programme, with its inseparably linked pre-service and in-service components, provides the foundation for quality school education. The teacher education system is, therefore, in need of irrepressible reform and restructuring.

Teacher education programme has an extended operational continuum. It consists of: (i) pre-entry selection of candidates for admission to teacher education institutions; (ii) exposing the new entrants to pre-service teacher education course; (iii) providing continuous professional development (in-service) programmes for working teachers; (iv) providing onsite nurturing and mentoring opportunities for teachers; and (v) creating an urge in teachers for lifelong learning. Thus, teacher quality as a professional depends almost entirely on the teacher education programme. Therefore no investment, other than the investment in teacher education, can yield substantial dividends. Reforming the teacher education system lock, stock and barrel is of critical importance.

2.1 Genesis of Think Tank–Teacher Education

The critical mass of dissatisfaction and discomfort, accentuated over years of relative neglect, with the teacher education system has been a compelling force for its restructuring. The inadequacy and inappropriateness of the existing teacher education programmes is explicitly evident from the following brutal facts of reality:

- Declining levels of learner achievement at the school education stage, more particularly at the

elementary stage, largely attributed to ineffective classroom processes, the teacher being the frontline provider of instruction.

- Existence of an inhospitable institutional culture, content and processes of teacher education programmes, responsible for teacher preparation and teacher development as professionals – teacher education institutions are yet to develop into living learning organizations.
- Mismatch between the knowledge, skills and competencies learners require and those of the teacher education institutions (TEIs) equip their student-teachers with, leading to incompetence in classroom.
- The disturbing observation of the MHRD, Government of India-appointed Joint Review Mission on Teacher Education (2013) to “constitute an Expert Committee” for planned and coordinated development of Teacher Education system of the state which, in fact, had its Tipping Point effect.

3.1 Putting Think Tank-TE in Place : Some Enabling Conditions

The following developments facilitated the constitution of a Think Tank – Teacher Education in the State:

- The recommendation of the Joint Review Mission on Teacher Education 2013 to constitute an Expert Committee to draw up an actionable plan for restructuring the teacher education programme of the state in an immediate term, short-term, medium-term and long-term perspective.
- Government of Odisha in the Department of School and Mass Education proactively responded to this recommendation for restructuring the states existing teacher education system.
- Unicef Odisha's commitment (financial and technical support) to restructuring the teacher education system of the state in consideration of the crucial importance of teacher education for quality education of children of the state.

4.1 Constitution of Think Tank-Teacher Education

In conformity with the Terms and Conditions of the Government Resolution, the Think Tank-Teacher Education members were drawn from a pool of distinguished experts in Teacher Education and School Education. At present, it consists of 28 members, who include Vice Chancellors (present and past), Directors / Chairpersons of institutions of national importance and members with authentic relationship with the state's system of education. They represent specialisation in various domain areas of Teacher Education. Some of the most prominent members are : Prof. R. Govinda, Former Vice-Chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi at present Professor in Centre for Developing Society, New Delhi, Prof. Vasudha Kamat, Former Vice-Chancellor, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, Prof. Shyam B. Menon, Vice-Chancellor, Ambedkar University, Delhi, Prof. Mohan B. Menon, Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Penang, Malaysia, Prof. H.K. Senapaty, Director, NCERT, New Delhi, Prof. Sashi Nair, Ajim Premji Foundation, Balgalore, Prof. Padma Sarangapani, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai etc.

Strategically, the Think Tank Teacher Education Unit works at the Directorate of Teacher Education and SCERT, Odisha being led by Prof. S.L. Jena as Lead Coordinator.

5.1 Think Tank-Teacher Education: Its Tasks

The Think Tank-TE Members work as a team committed to transforming the teacher education system of the state. The team has five-fold tasks before it :

- Identifying critical issues and concerns of the state's Teacher Education system for reform and restructuring.

- Analysing gaps: where the system is at present and where the system is expected to be in future.
- Taking cognisance of emerging developments in the field of school education and teacher education for their integration into reform move.
- Articulating vision and mission for the Teacher Education system—planning for immediate-term, short-term, medium-term and long-term restructuring of the system.
- Providing support to the Department of School and Mass Education, including Directorate of Teacher Education and SCERT, for policy framing in Teacher Education and School Education.

The Think Tank-TE's approach to reform combines : (i) deficit model approach-acting on the deficits the system suffers from; and (ii) development model approach- envisioning new directions for change.

6.1 Think Tank – TE : Its Operational Mechanisms

- With the approval of the proceeding of the meeting held on 20.09.2013 by the Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha, the Think Tank-TE came into existence in October, 2013. The said proceeding outlines the structure, substance and operative mechanisms for the Think Tank-TE. In conformity with the decisions taken in the meeting, Lead Coordinator and other members, both national and state, were identified.
- The Think Tank-TE Unit has been placed in the Directorate of Teacher Education and SCERT, Odisha, its Director being vested with the responsibility of oversight and academic advice.
- The members of Think Tank-TE used to meet at regular intervals to critically reflect on various aspects of the teacher education system of the state.
- In addition to theme specific Consultations, Think Tank-TE used to hold, as and when necessary, Core Group meetings gravitating on some core issues.
- As a matter of principle, representative stakeholders are invited for participation with opportunities to have their voice, more importantly opportunities to be heard for ensuring ownership of envisaged change.
- The meetings used to focus on identified issues and concerns for discussion. The Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of School and Mass Education, and the Chief, Unicef, Odisha participate in the meetings. On many occasions, Hon'ble Minister, School and Mass Education, Development Commissioner and other dignitaries participate in the proceedings of the meetings.
- The Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Department takes review, from time to time, of the progress of implementation of reform initiatives. Decisions taken in such meetings are acted upon and compliance report submitted to the Department.

7.1 Core Areas of Concern for Restructuring

Five core areas for restructuring of teacher education identified through an intense process of reflective churning. This aside, other reports on the state of school education and teacher education provided insights into the content and process of restructuring. Initial five core areas identified for policy imperatives and implementation notwithstanding, the restructuring process has always been open to emerging concerns and issues as and when deemed necessary. The initial five core areas are :

- Governance of Teacher Education System
- Teacher Preparation and Teacher Development
- Continuing Professional Development of Teacher Educators

- Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Linkages in Teacher Education
- Teacher Education–Research, Innovation, and Information and Communication Technologies

8.1 Presentation of Papers on Five Core Areas : Envisioning Reform

Think Tank–TE members have had detailed discussion on the structure of theme–based papers. The structure included: current issues and concerns, what must be done to address the issues, strategies and policy imperatives aligned to the specific issues and concerns. The presentations were immediately followed by critical observations, perspectives and counter perspectives, leading to consensus building and emergence of an eclectic perspective. Based on a thorough review of revised papers, a Roadmap for Reform of the Teacher Education System of the state was developed. The document entitled: Envisioning Teacher Education in Odisha : A Roadmap for Reform comprised three Parts :

- Part I: Public Opinion on Reforming Teacher Education in Odisha.
- Part II: Issues and Concerns accompanied by corresponding policy imperatives for implementation.
- Part III: Putting Vision into Action - Plan of Action, indicating –(i) Core areas for reform; (ii) Issues and concerns; (iii) Task specifications; (iv) Timeframe; and (v) Agencies responsible for implementation.

9.1 Tasks Accomplished

9.1.1 Consultations Organised

- Vision Building for Teacher Education
- Quality in the Context of Teacher Education
- Strengthening Institutional Capabilities
- Restructuring of DTE and SCERT in the light of MHRD, Government of India Guidelines 2012
- Framing of Cadre Rules for Teacher Education
 - o Cadre Rules for Elementary Teacher Education
 - o Cadre Rules for Secondary Teacher Education
- NCTE Regulation 2014 and its Implications for Planning of Teacher Education in the State
- State Policy on Continuing Professional Development of Education Functionaries
- ICT in Teacher Education : Leveraging the Potential of ICT for Teacher Education
- Strengthening Institutional Capabilities of DIETs (Adoption of DIETs)

9.1.2 Materials Developed

- Envisioning Teacher Education in Odisha : A Roadmap for Reform
- Video Documentary on Processes of Vision Building.
- Readings in Quality Education
- CDs on Capacity Building of Teacher Educators and Principals
- Video Documentary on No Detention Policy under Section 16 of RTE ACT 2009.
- Two-year B.Ed. and two-year M.Ed. Syllabus based on NCTE Curriculum Framework 2015.

- Action Taken Report on :
 - o Joint Review Mission on Teacher Education 2013
 - o Justice Verma Commission Report on Teacher Education 2012
- SCERT's Quarterly Newsletter “The SPLASH”.
- Unified Training Calendar for all Training Providing Organization under the Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha.
- State Policy on Continuing Professional Development of Education Functionaries
- Working Paper on Opening Teacher Education to Private Sector – Pros and Cons
- A Quick Survey of DIETs and their Functioning 2017
- Restructuring of DIETs as suggested by MHRD, Government of India.

9.1.3 Reform Initiatives Taken Up

- Bringing all Teacher Education Institutions under the academic and administrative control of the DTE and SCERT
- Changing the nomenclature of erstwhile Government Secondary Training Schools to Government Elementary Teacher Education Institutions.
- Restructuring and Reorganization of DTE and SCERT to make it a Centre of Excellence in Education and Teacher Education.
- Creation of Cadre for Teacher Education :
 - o Cadre for Elementary Teacher Education
 - o Cadre for Secondary Teacher Education
- Getting Practicing Schools attached to Teacher Education Institutions
- Adoption of DIETs by Think Tank – TE Members to develop them as model DIETs with sufficient demonstration effect
- Integration of ICT in Teacher Education
- Professional Development of Principals and Teacher Educators for enhanced professional performance

10.1 Unfinished Tasks

- Creation of posts for DTE and SCERT as part of Restructuring of DTE and SCERT
- Approval of Cadre Rules for Teacher Education

(Both the proposals are held up at the Administrative Department level due to certain observations of the Finance Department.)

11.1 Tasks Ahead

- Getting started the Plan of Action for Adoption of DIETs
- Development of Programme of Action for Implementation of the State Policy on Continuing Professional Development of Education Functionaries.
- Development of State Policy on Teacher Education
- Development of Performance Indicators for Teacher Educators of DIETs

- Mentoring of relatively weak DIETs and ETEIs of the State for improved efficiency and effectiveness
- Establishing and strengthening institutional linkages of DIETs
- Strengthening of Research in Teacher Education Institutions.
- Development of a Framework for Quality Monitoring of Teacher Education Institutions.
- Putting in place Professional Learning Community in Teacher Education Institutions, to start with DIETs
- Leadership Building for Teacher Education Institutions

12.1 Conclusion

The concept of Think Tank – Teacher Education, a move for restructuring Teacher Education system of Odisha, is a unique initiative. Odisha happens to be the first state to launch such a programme. Other Indian states are in the process of having such a reform initiative. One of the defining characteristics of Think Tank – Teacher Education in Odisha is prodigiously leveraging the collective reflections of an Expert Group. The success of such a programme depends, almost entirely, on the continuing support of the Department of School and Mass Education, Unicef, SCERT and the member institutions of the Teacher Education constituency. A few of the unfinished agenda and some emerging ideas for restructuring the system have been planned to be taken up, contingent upon the continuance of the Think Tank-TE Odisha. For any programme to take roots and remain sustainable requires more time. What is important is continuous monitoring of reform programmes put in place. More importantly, what is needed is a firm conviction: “we can do better, we shall do better and we must do better”.



