

A FLEETING LOOK ON TEACHER TRAINEES' OPINION TOWARDS ORGANISING A TRAINING PROGRAMME THROUGH DISTANCE MODE: A CASE OF CHHATTISGARH

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Abstract: Indian education system is identified distance mode of education as one of the most significant way to disseminate knowledge as well as to gather knowledge. It is also accepted as a vital mode of learning in the field of in-service teacher education programmes. Trainees are the targeted population of these programmes, therefore in structuring such a programme they can be consulted and their opinion should be considered to make changing decision related to all components of such type of teacher education programmes. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the in-service teachers' opinion towards structuring of Teacher Education Programme through Distance mode. This is a qualitative study and conducted on those in-service teacher trainees who were enrolled in Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) through distance mode. Total 300 trainees were chosen randomly for the study. To get the opinion a questionnaire was used which comprised one open ended question in which trainees were free to give their opinion about the different components of the teacher education programme. The contact classes, self learning materials, support services, qualities of resource persons and future plans that can be used in the future for structuring such a programme were considered for the analysis.

Keywords: Distance Education; In- service teacher education programmes; opinion of trainees

I. INTRODUCTION:

Indian education system has its' own glorious past and it's both learning mode i.e. face to face mode and distance mode keep same importance to enhance it's quality. To cope up the need of contemporary period and demand of the society, Indian education system is also accepted that distance mode of education as one of the most significant way to disseminate knowledge as well as to gather knowledge. Many policies and plans were made time to time to develop the quality of education system and strengthening its different fields especially teacher education. Teacher education programmes always been considered as important professional programs for education of teachers. After the implementation of Right to Education Act-2009 (RTE-Act), demand of trained teachers became more imperative to maintain the quality of school education. The maintenance of standard and quality in teacher education programme has become more challenging in view of the demand for training from large number of teachers. The demands for large number of trained teachers have always attracted the attention of policy makers and they accepted the intervention of distance education for providing teacher education. It is also accepted as a vital mode of learning in the field of in- service teacher education programmes too. Perraton(2003) also said that this is the area where distance education has been used extensively to provide pre-service Teacher Education, upgrading of academic qualification, in-service continuing professional development in subject content areas and instructional methods.

Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) has been visualized a major area of intervention in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which focusing on training of those untrained elementary teachers who were recruited without professional qualification. Department of school Education and Literacy, MHRD-2012, identified seven states i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand and West Bengal with least resources for teacher education. These Seven states including Chhattisgarh have prepared strategies to enable the existing Untrained Teachers to get the Diploma in Educatuion (D.Ed.) through distance mode. In Chhattisgarh Teacher training through open and distance learning (ODL) mode started from 07.05.2012 with the permission of NCTE and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) entrusted with the responsibility to implement this programme throughout the state successfully.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY:

Teaching can be identified as an occupation which provides highly dedicated intellectual services. So it needs a specialized intellectual training to represent high degree of creativity. Though learning by teachers does not end with acquiring various universities degree but for their professional development, continuous training and growth in their knowledge is also requisite. Teachers' to be more experts, which have the required knowledge and the skills for their working field, will be possible through providing different types of educational and professional programme in these field. Distance education can help the teachers to fulfill the demand of their continuous learning. Then, there occurs another question: how to structure this kind of

programme. Programme stakeholders' opinion will be valuable in structuring such a programme (Gune, 2009). Trainees are the targeted population of teacher education programmes, therefore in structuring such a programme they can be consulted and their opinion should be considered to make changing decision related to all components of such type of teacher education programmes.

In this connection, Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) was an immense step taken by the Chhattisgarh government to provide training to those untrained teachers who were recruited without any professional qualification. It was found during survey of D.El.Ed. Programme that trainees had so many difficulties during this programme and they had different prospective regarding management, characteristics and implementation of such programmes. Hence this study is carried out to know, how to establish the characteristics, managements and scope for the further implementation of such programme based on the trainees' opinion. By this study researcher want to know the answer of some research questions by trainees' perspective, such as:

1. How should contact classes be organized?
2. How should the Self Learning Materials be designed?
3. What type of support services should be their?
4. What should be the quality of Resource persons and how should the co-ordination be between Resource persons and trainees?
5. What should the properties and quality of the teacher education programme to be?
6. What should be the future plan?

The first, second, third and fourth questions are related to managements, fifth question is related to characteristic of the programme and last one is related to the scope for the implementation of such programme in future.

III. METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Method:

This is a qualitative study based on the survey method. The questionnaire was used to obtain the participants' experiences, opinion and expectations in an optimum way towards structuring an in- service teacher education programme through distance mode.

3.2 Sample:

The sample of the study comprised those in-service teachers who were enrolled as trainees in Diploma in Elementary Education programme through distance mode. Total 300 trainees were chosen randomly for the study.

3.3 Tool:

To get the opinion a questionnaire was used which comprised one open ended question in which trainees were free to give their opinion about the different components of the teacher education programme. The contact classes, self learning materials, support services, qualities of resource persons, co-ordination between trainees and resource persons and future plans that can be used in the future for structuring such a programme were considered for the analysis.

3.4 Data Collection:

The data were collected through questionnaire. Questionnaires were administered over selected candidates. First researcher oriented the trainees' about her purpose and then told them to give their opinion on concerned dimensions.

3.5 Data analysis:

Content analysis technique was used to examine the data in depth. First data were separated into meaningful segments. Then codes were derived for those segments. After that relation were determining between the codes to identify theme code. These theme codes were established the relation between the identified themes and research questions. At last data were arranged according to the themes and codes. For the data analysis experience, expectations and opinion of trainees' were considered.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

4.1 Personal Contact Programme

The trainees' opinion about how should contact classes be organized, can be evaluated from three angles: residential session, organization and duration. Trainees expressed improvement in number, organization and duration should be considered when contact programmes constitute.

4.1.1 Residential session

The short residential session was a major drawback acknowledged by the most of the trainees because few numbers of classes laid the incomplete course. In this consequences trainees' said that number of PCPs should be increased so that they get more chances to interact with resource persons.

4.1.2 Organization

More over trainees explained their disappointment with discontinuity of contact programmes. As PCPs were organized on every Sunday each month which create a gap/discontinuity, therefore trainees suggested that PCPs should be continued and organized in one go manner either in summer or winter vacation or in any long festival vacation.

4.1.3 Duration

Majority of trainees expressed their unhappiness with the duration of contact programme that was seven hours, from 10:30 am to 5:30 pm. As contact programmes were always on Sundays it became anxious for them to attend classes. That's why they indicate that duration should be decreased in hours so that they get time for their selves also.

4.2 Self learning materials

The participants' opinion about how the Self Learning Materials should be designed can be classified into five categories: Availability and adequacy, nature of learning materials, course content and scope, modification.

4.2.1 Availability and adequacy

Trainees' were in favor that the adequate number of SLMs should be provided on time most probably on the first day of training. This will help them to know about the pattern of content in advance.

4.2.2 Nature of learning materials

Most of the trainees lamented about the printed form of SLMs. Trainees' strongly believed that there should be the availability of online study materials too. Online study materials will be easy to access and also fulfill the shortage of print materials.

4.2.3 Course Content and scope

Skill based and local need based courses were stated as imperative. Communication and technology fields, practical approach based courses were emphasized.

4.2.4 Revision and Modification

Trainees indicate that revision and modification of content should be done frequently. They have also to say that SLMs should be modified time to time so that they can get updated knowledge which become helpful to cope up the field problem where they at present work. They also said that revision is done by the professionals and subject experts.

4.3 Support services

It can be said that there were four main categories about support services: Infrastructure, library, learning resources, basic facilities

4.3.1 Infrastructure

Sufficient infrastructures create the learning environment especially in distance education field and it also helps the learners to stay at study centers. Trainees lamented that there should be adequate number of well furnished class rooms and proper sitting arrangement for proper and smooth process of teaching & learning.

4.3.2 Library

Trainees are highly emphasized on library facility. They said that there should be provision of a good library and adequate stationery. More than half of stakeholders stressed the need of library with good number of reference books, journals and magazines etc.

4.3.3 Basic facilities

More than 50% of trainees expressed need for toilet facilities especially for female and fresh drinking water should be available at each study centre judging both as basic requirements. On the other hand proper connection of electricity, electric appliances like fans and backup machines are also suggested by the trainees for the study centers. Beside this majority of trainees were in favor of transportation as well as accommodation facilities especially for those who belong to far distance and remote areas.

4.3.4 Learning resources

Requirements of innovative resources like Over head Projector, Computer and internet connectivity and different types of teaching aids were highly stressed by trainees to make classroom teaching more interactive and also for gathering new as well as update information about teaching methods and techniques. Whereas along with these facilities Computer Lab, Wi-Fi and broadband connectivity also suggested by trainees so that they acquire new knowledge about their content and Pedagogy.

4.4 Resource persons

The trainees' opinion about what should be the quality of Resource persons and how should the co-ordination between Resource persons and trainees can be asessed from three angles: knowledge and experience, teaching strategies and co-ordination between Resource persons and trainees.

4.4.1 Knowledge and experience

Knowledge, experiences are the determining factors while recruitment of resource persons in teacher education programme through distance. The trainees expressed that resource persons must have good concept about their subject and skilled in their teaching. Along this, Resource persons should be well qualified, competent and also have sufficient teaching experience.

4.4.2 Teaching strategies

Teaching strategies of resource persons were identified as imperative. Trainees uttered that resource persons must be followed innovative way of teaching instead of traditional one. Discussion and explanation method must be emphasized because trainees are prior teachers and they have experience about their work also. It is also expressed that resource persons must have computer knowledge as well as they should also be competent in use of multimedia resources.

4.4.3 Co-ordination between Resource persons and trainees

It is an important dimension in distance mode learning because a harmonious understanding between resource persons and trainees help trainees to retain and learn in this learning mode. It is also articulated that resource persons must share their personal stories and experiences for enabling the trainees to develop their skills and motivated towards self learning. Trainees also said that there should be healthy communication between the teachers and students to develop learning environment so that trainees can able to communicate with the resource persons whenever they want.

4.5 Properties and quality of the teacher education programme

Trainees' opinion about the properties and quality of the teacher education programme can be classified into courses and contents, requirements, developments, evaluation and feedback.

4.5.1 Courses and contents

Majority of trainees stated that while structuring of courses and contents for teachers' education through distance the educational level, experience, locality of trainees should be considered deliberately. Multidisciplinary contents and practical approaches should be incorporated. Trainees in such type of teacher education programme are various with the different background, that's why a sound theoretical courses with appropriate practical work should be appreciated.

4.5.2 Requirements

Teacher education programme should be based on the needs and requirements of the trainees so that they get satisfaction and they can study those subjects which they want. Courses and contents should make trainees active and research oriented. All the necessary support services should be available there and managements must ensure their availability at study centers. Some matters must be discussed at the time of structuring of next programme such as: good and bad experiences of the stakeholders especially trainees, learners' need, sharing knowledge of learners' in their area of expertise and also their applicable suggestions.

4.5.3 Developments

Information and communication technology should be incorporated in courses of programme. Trainees also mentioned that there must be Interactive, learner centered, flexible, constructive, interdisciplinary, project based courses should be encompassed to cope up with real world situations.

4.5.4 Evaluation and feed back

Learning outcomes, management process, all procedure and problems met during the procedure should be evaluated. Trainees' opinion should be considered when making decisions related to courses. For the proper function of programme regular feedback from the trainees' should be mandatory. For the proper evaluation and feedback regarding any change about the programme face to face meeting of stakeholders including trainees' should be highly emphasized. Gaining instant feedback about the problems that trainees met during courses and evaluation them would contribute to future plans.

4.6 Future plans

Future plans in teacher education programmes through distance changed in a wide range. Majority of trainees saw the existence of at least one training programmes through distance mode as a necessity. They showed their willingness to acquire higher education too by distance mode. They also expressed their strong opinion towards collaborative and interdisciplinary learning which help them to develop creative thinking skills and competency in use of technology in education fields. Need of individuals and society must be considered in future plans because upcoming generations have different behavior styles, learning styles and trends.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

To meet the teacher education needs using distance education becomes prevalent. This mode has capacity to provide desired and necessary education to in-service teachers without interrupting their teaching work. Development in technology and their uses in training programmes also adorn the quality of distance education. It's feasible and flexible nature is suitable for in-service teachers to acquire desire and required knowledge. Then the problem is how to structure teacher education for in-service teachers through distance. Experienced trainees' opinion can be useful in this field. The findings of the study lead to following conclusions:

The Contact programmes provide opportunity to learners to interact with resource persons. Therefore it is recommended that number of PCPs should be increased and also should be organize in one go manner either in summer or winter vacation or in any long festival vacation. It will help the learners to get more interaction session and also to manage their off-campus and on-campus work.

Self-learning materials are supportive material for the trainees to understand and get knowledge of the theoretical points of this programme. Hence it is very significant to ensure availability of adequate SLMs. It is also suggested that SLMs should practical oriented with lots of examples, based on self pedagogy theory and modified as well as updated time to time as per the requirement. It will develop the research skill and self learning habit among learners.

As **support services** construct the learning environment at study centers. So it is mandatory for each Study center that they should provide all the necessary facilities as per the needs of trainees. It will help the learners to learn at their maximum level.

Resource persons are very important component in distance education. So it is necessary that they must be experienced, skilled and subject experts with sound content knowledge. Along with they must create a harmonious and healthy learning environment in which learners will free to express their problems as well their ideas.

The **course and contents** should be shaped according to the need and demand of trainees. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches should be followed in structuring the courses. Innovative and technical fields must be incorporated. This will assist the learners to communicate and deal with other subjects and fields. It will also open the new horizon of learning.

Trainees' opinion should be considered when making decisions related to courses. It will facilitate the planning of further programmes according to the learners need.

Trainees' expectations show that they want to have similar opportunities to acquire knowledge, so distance courses using various technologies and approaches can be designed and delivered in open course system. Future cohorts' need and expectations should be taken into consideration.

At the end *quality assurance* is a major concern which needed in every dimension of such programmes. So advance courses, programme according to experiences, technologies and support services will provide a high quality.

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