Activities for Enhancing Professional Competencies among Teachers and Teacher Educators

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Abstract
NCTE has drafted a curriculum framework for two-year B.Ed programme. This curriculum framework is quite comprehensive comprising both theory and rigorous field engagement with the child, school and community. All the courses have in-built field based units of study and projects. Teacher educators are required to transact this course through a variety of approaches such as case studies, group presentations, projects, discussions on reflective journals, observations of children, and interactions with community in multiple socio-cultural environments. This curriculum framework has emphasised on enhancing professional competencies among teachers and teacher-educators through activities. This curriculum framework has suggested activities for each course so that student-teacher may get actively involved in teaching learning and reflect on their experiences. In this way, the student-teacher will apply constructivist approach and contribute in construction of knowledge instead of mere note memorisation of content; the student-teacher will be able to understand the learner, text books & children's literature, assessment in a holistic manner in the existing socio-economic, political context. They will be able to understand that teaching is not confined to just delivering a 40 minute lecture but broadly to work for the holistic development of child and make him/her a critical and creative thinker.

Keywords: Activities, B. Ed. courses.

Introduction
National council for Teacher Education (NCTE) through its curriculum framework: Two-year B-Ed. programme (2014) has divided the B. Ed. curriculum into 11 courses which comprises theory and projects plus 4 EPC (Enhancing professional competencies) courses and one internship program. These courses are spread over two year duration. NCTE has suggested various course-wise activities in a very comprehensive way. These activities if planned in a proper way and implemented properly can help in enhancing professional competencies among teachers and teacher-educators. The purpose of this paper is to identify course-wise activities as suggested in curriculum framework (2014) in the local and regional context. Thus the course-wise list of activities is given below:

Course-I Activities
The aim of this course is to enable the student-teacher to understand childhood, child development and adolescence (Sharma, 2003). It aims to develop understanding about children of different age groups, through close observations and interaction with children from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Saraswathi, 1999) Its main focus is to know how different socio-political realities construct different childhoods, within children's lived contexts: family, schools, neighbourhoods and community. This course will include issues of marginalisation, of difference and diversity and stereotyping. These ideas would underline children's lived experiences; for instance, living in an urban slum, growing up as, a girl and growing up in a dalit household (Mishra, 2007; Nambissan, 2009; Parry 2005;
Rampal and Mander, 2013). To achieve the aforesaid goal, teacher educators should plan and implement the following activities:

- Observing and gathering information from various sources about the impact of culture, urbanisation and economy on the adolescence of a child.
- Field based activities to understand lived realities, assumptions of notions of childhood, work and childhood, children in difficult circumstances.
- The student-teachers may be provided opportunities to engage with lived realities through biographies, stories, own experiences of student-teachers, observations about children by parents and-teachers, children's diaries, testimonies and the media.
- The children may be observed in their natural settings, especially at play (or in a community setting), and to interact with children using activities as a base to establish rapport.
- The teacher education should assess the activities of student-teacher by observing the capacities of student-teacher to look at, understand and interpret notions about children and childhood, about growing up in realistic contexts. They should be able to interpret how gender, caste and social class may impact the lived experiences of children.

**Course 2 Activities**

This course focuses on two-broad themes:

1) Diversity, Inequality and Marginalisation in society and the implications for education.
2) Policy frameworks for public education in India.

- Students may be asked to collect information from a school or a community surrounding that school regarding diversity, inequality and marginalisation. They can also find out the impact of above said variables on educational achievement. They can also find out whether education brings unity in diversity, or reduces the gap of inequality and mitigate marginalisation.
- The student can prepare assignment on comparative study of different policies on education in India and their impact on reducing inequality & marginalisation.

**Course 3 Activities**

This is a core course and draws its theoretical frames from psychology, philosophy, sociology, and language Learning. It offers a site for prospective teachers to reflect on and critique notions of learning and teaching that they have formed from their own experience, and to move beyond them (Olson & Bruner, 1996). Learning encompasses many dimensions: Knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, attitudes and habits. Student-teacher will understand theories of learning as conceptualised currently within psychology and cognitive science (Mukunda, 2009); Piaget, 1997; Vygotsky, 1997). Learning will emphasise on centrality of curiosity, interest, active engagement and inquiry at all levels. Student-teacher will engage theoretically and through observation with the notion of learning as construction of knowledge (NCERT, 2005; Philips, 1995). Reflection on learning will therefore have the following broad components:

- Understanding learning: socio-cultural and cognitive processes
- Understanding the learner
- Learning in and out of school
Activities
I. The student-teacher will investigate the differences and connections between learning in school and learning outside school (Rampal, 2003; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacassa, & Goldsmith, 1995).
2. Student-teacher will find out what powerful learning in a classroom can be. They will also be able to develop analytical tools to understand that learning.
3. Student teacher will analyse teaching as a profession, reflect on their beliefs and practices
4. Student-teacher will visit schools and other field sites to analyse a variety of records of learning and teaching.

Course 4 Activities
The goal / focus of this course comprised of three broad areas:
1) Understanding the language background of students. The aim is to create sensitivity to the language diversity that exists in the classrooms.
2) To understand the nature of classroom discourse through oral language in a classroom that promotes learning in the subject area.
3) To understand the nature of reading comprehension in the content areas.

Activities
• The student-teacher will find out reading comprehension ability among school students and give the appropriate solutions.
• The student-teacher will find out the language background of students and how their mother tongue/language is affecting their learning abilities in reading & writing skills.
• The student-teacher will be given activities related to note making, summarising, making reading-writing connections, process writing; writing with a sense of purpose-writing to learn and understand and analysing children's writings to understand their conceptions.

Course 5-Activities
This course will enable student-teachers to reflect on the nature and role of disciplinary knowledge in the school curriculum, the paradigm shift in the nature of discipline, with some discussion on the history of the teaching of subject areas in schools (Montuschi, 2003; Porter, Porter & Ross, 2003). School education is based on certain disciplinary areas like Language, Maths, Social Sciences and Sciences etc. Disciplines and school subjects are products of history and geography-they emerged in particular social, political and intellectual contexts, especially over the last two centuries, and have been constantly redefined and reformulated (Goodson & Marsh, 2005).

Activities
1. Student-teacher may be given an assignment on 'theory of content'-how the content was selected, framed in the syllabus, and how it can be transformed so that learners construct their own knowledge through it.
2. Student-teacher will complete a project by investigating the role of experience of children, their community, their natural curiosities or even the methods of study of the subject on the development of content for the subject.
3. A project on examination of text books, curriculum and syllabus from learner point of view and need of including practical knowledge, community knowledge, intuitive or tacit knowledge etc.

6. A project on-how can school subject address issues of social reconstruction.

**Course 6- Activities**

The goal of this course is to examine how we learn and challenge these gendered roles in society, through a variety of institutions such as the family, caste, religion, culture, the media and popular culture (films, advertisements, songs etc.) law and the state (Menon, 2012). As future teachers, we should understand and examine the role of schools, peers, teachers, curriculum and textbooks etc. in challenging gender inequalities or reinforcing gender parity. The course will also study representation of gendered roles, relationships and ideas in textbooks and curricula (Nirantar, 2010), examining how schools nurture or challenge creation of young people as masculine and feminine selves. The course will critically examine the role of media in propagating popular beliefs, reinforcing gender roles in the popular culture and by implication, at school.

**Activities**

1. Student-teachers will collect information regarding the roles and responsibilities in schools and classrooms, rituals and school routines, processes of disciplining distinctly as for girls and boys, and in the classroom interaction.

2. Student teacher will undertake analysis of media which propagates popular beliefs and reinforce gender roles.

3. Student teacher will attend and themselves undertake sessions of open verbalisation with school students, voluntary cum friendly involvement in discussions, group work, brainstorming, audio-visual engagement, together with the co-participation of school (teachers, counsellors and other resources), home (parents and siblings) and society (NGOs, other expert group, etc.

4. Student teacher will investigate – how positive notions of sexuality can be developed among young people. They will investigate the perceptions of safety at school, home and beyond. They will identify the sexual abuse/violence and its verbalisation and will be able to find out the ways of combating the societal outlook of objectification of the female body, and so on.

5. The student-teacher will explore the roles of the family, caste, religion, culture, media and popular culture, law and the state to face the challenge of gender inequalities.

**Course 7- Activities**

Student-teachers are required to understand the epistemological and pedagogical bases of their own chosen school subjects. Pedagogy should be understood as integration of knowledge about the learner, the subject and the societal context. Critical pedagogy consciously embeds within the teaching-learning process, an approach to draw upon social realities to address issues of justice and equity (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2011).

**Activities**
1. Student-teacher will prepare units and lessons through thematic approach in a holistic manner.
2. Student-teacher will identify the concepts which the children bring to the classroom from their environment and experience, given their diverse backgrounds and interests. They will investigate how learning takes place among children in particular contexts and the scaffolding a teacher and peers can provide.
3. Student-teacher will critically examine teaching-learning process that incorporate enquiry, discovery, conceptual development, activity based learning etc. within the classroom.

Course 8 - Activities
This course focuses on three concepts, namely activity, discovery and dialogue, with reference to Gandhi & Tagore (Sabyasachi, 1997), Dewey (2004), and Plato (2009), Freire (1998, 2000) respectively. This course will also try to understand education in relation to modern values like equity and equality, individual opportunity and social justice and dignity, with special reference to Ambedkar. Keeping in view, the above mentioned objectives of this course, the student-teacher will be required to perform the following activities:
1. The student-teachers will critically analyse various samples of textbooks, children's literature, and teacher's handbooks etc.
2. The student-teachers will debate the ways in which curriculum is driven by assessment and market interest.

Course 9 - Activities
The course is designed keeping in mind the critical role of assessment in enhancing learning (Shepard. 2000; Stiggins, 2005). In contrast to the traditional notion of assessment as an act to be performed at the end of teaching, using a paper-pencil test (Glaser, Chudowsky, & Pellegrino, 2001), the course situates assessment within a constructivist paradigm. Assessment cannot be an end-of-teaching activity but it has to be an ongoing process where the teacher closely observes learners during the process of teaching-learning, record learning landmarks, and supports them by providing relevant feedback. The course discusses the relationship of assessment with self-esteem, motivation, and identity as learners (Sternberg, 2013), with an emphasis on ‘fixed’ or growth mindsets (Dweck, 2006). The aim of this course is therefore to develop a critical understanding of issues in assessment and also explore realistic, comprehensive, and dynamic assessment processes which are culturally responsive (Delpit, 1988; 2012) for use in the classroom, therefore
1. Student-teacher has to critically look at the prevalent practices of assessment and selection.
2. Student-teacher has to explore some innovative assessment process/procedures that lead to better learning and make the students more confident and creative learners.

Course 10 Activities
The objective of this course is to bring about an understanding of the ‘cultures, policies and practices. That needs to be addressed in order to create an inclusive school, as spelt out by Booth and Ainscow in The Index for Inclusion (2000). The course will significantly highlight that inclusion involves: a) The conviction that all children can learn and grow; b) A firm belief in positive and varied outcomes; c) A pedagogy that is ever
evolving and constantly responding to the changing needs of learners; d) An assessment policy that assesses skills and knowledge rather than content and that is open to a variety of assessment methods and time frames; e) An environment that functions with the support and active participation of all-children, parents, community, teachers, administrators and policy makers (Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education), UNESCO, 2009). Therefore, the student-teachers will be required to engage with:

1) Popular narratives of 'disability 'and 'ability 'so as to track the changing definitions.

ii) To Track how learning / achievement is perceived and understood in policy / state documents.

(iii) Student-teacher will identify the 'barriers to learning and participation, and help the schools move towards positive practices, cultures and policies.

(iv) Student-teachers will be required to interrogate their own beliefs and also of school teachers, to see how those influence the implementation of inclusion.

References


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