



Pedagogical relevance at the secondary education level

Madhurima Chakraborty

M.Ed, School of Education, Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Secondary education being a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy has propelled the education commissions and committees in India to pay heed to the hitches that had stopped it from reaching excellence. One of those hitches is the pedagogical knowledge and skill which differs a teacher from any resource person who might be opulent in content knowledge but lacks the technique and ways to dissipate it among the target audience or the learners in classroom context. Moreover pedagogy is not just a text to be subsumed but an approach, a practice, an idea and also a way to understand the learners. The relevance of pedagogy has stolen the limelight with The Organisations for Economic Co-operation and Development launching its 21st century skills, thereby making pedagogy a field to explore. The paper therefore aims at providing a lucid comprehension of the need and relevance of pedagogy at the secondary level.

Keywords: secondary education, pedagogy, relevance and OECD skills

1. Introduction

Secondary education occupies a very strategic position in the educational pattern of the country. It is the link between primary education and higher education. Primary education is intended to provide minimum requirements for survival or minimum levels of learning, whereas secondary education enables an individual to become a participating member of the complicated society.

Secondary Education is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work. Classes IX and X constitute the secondary stage, whereas classes XI and XII are designated as the higher secondary stage. The normal age group of the children in secondary classes is 14-16 whereas it is 16-18 for higher secondary classes. The rigor of the secondary and higher secondary stage, enables Indian students to compete successfully for education and for jobs globally. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to strengthen this stage by providing greater access and also by improving quality in a significant way. With globalisation and liberalisation it is essential for the school leavers to acquire knowledge and skills and therefore significant emphasis is now given on secondary and higher secondary level in order to improve their vocational knowledge and skill.

After independence our country achieved remarkable changes in the field of secondary education. The Government of India, soon after attainment of independence appointed a number of committees and commissions to review the system of secondary education. The various committees recommended certain suggestions for the improvement of secondary education both quantitatively and qualitatively. Tara Chand Committee in 1948 suggested the multipurpose type of secondary schools without discouraging the uni-purpose schools. On September 23, 1952 the Government of India appointed the Mudaliar commission to look into the various

problems of secondary education in the country aiming at the organization and content of secondary education, the structure, inter-relationships between different secondary schools, co-education, curriculum, physical education, methods of teaching and more.

The National Policy on Education (2016) emphasizes on building of values, awareness, knowledge and skills among the students and citizens as Indian society is characterized not only by multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious diversity, geographical differences and regional disparities, but also by inequalities of income, wealth, opportunity and access to resources. Education should be seen as a powerful route to reduce regional and social disparities, and enabling choice and freedom to the individual to lead a productive life and participate in the country's development. Secondary level is such a phase where all those stipulated objectives of Education can be inculcated within the learners before they move into the world of work.

Whether it is Mudaliar Commission or National Policy on Education, right from the beginning till now all the committees and commissions dealing with secondary education has emphasized on the importance of methods of teaching and the pedagogy adopted by the teachers to transact knowledge and content to the learners. First the concept and importance of 'pedagogy' is needed to be crystal clear in order to understand the need of its 'relevance'.

2. Meaning of pedagogy and its importance

Pedagogy, literally translated, is the art or science of teaching children. The word comes from the ancient Greek 'paidagogos', a compound comprised of "paidos" (child) and "agogos" (leader). In modern day usage, it is a synonym for "teaching" or "education," particularly in scholarly writings. Throughout history, educators and philosophers have discussed different pedagogical approaches to education, and

numerous theories and techniques have been proposed. Educators use a variety of research and discussion about learning theories to create their personal pedagogy, and are often faced with the challenge of incorporating new technology into their teaching style. Successful education for all depends on teachers being able to embrace both the art and science of pedagogy, acting as "parents" who understand the needs, abilities, and experiences of their students while also being trained in the best methods of communication and presentation of appropriate materials.

Therefore, pedagogy becomes an essential aspect of the secondary education where the students are about to get moulded into responsible, aware, knowledgeable citizens with values as 'the way of teaching' would definitely influence 'the interest of the learners in learning.'

According to the Annual Education Statistics 2016, the growth rate of students in the secondary level has increased at the rate of 78.5% approximately in the year 2016, which was 62.9% approximately in 2010, immediately after Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan was launched. The transition from primary to secondary is recorded as 82.14% approximately. There is a huge role to be played by pedagogy of teachers in increasing the enrolment, apart from the infrastructure, the facilities provided, distance of habitation from schools and the like.

The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 says that there is a need to critically review the secondary teacher education system. The one year second Bachelor's degree (B.Ed.) model seems to have outlived its relevance. With the proliferation of B.Ed. colleges, particularly with privatization and commercialization, B.Ed. programmes have become weak in both theory and practice. Even the few institutions which keep struggling to make this programme meaningful find it difficult to overcome the structural constraints that the short duration of the programme puts up. So a two year B.Ed program is required to make teachers skilled in pedagogy, which has already been implemented since 2015.

Based on the importance of 'pedagogy' that can be assumed from the different reports, frameworks and commissions dealing with it, researches on 'Teacher Education' in developing countries which also include India splits the concept of pedagogy into four essential components. Those are pedagogical approaches, pedagogy as practice, pedagogy as ideas, and pedagogy and equity.

- **Pedagogical Approaches:** The three pedagogical terms most commonly used in the studies to describe or promote specific approaches were learner- or student-centred, child-centred and activity-based learning. Therefore the students are the primary concern of the classroom teaching where the teacher is supposed to focus on the theory of constructivism making the students think and participate in the learning process through activities following the instruction of the teachers.
- **Pedagogy as practice:** It involves the learning theories to be practiced inside the classroom in order to achieve the stipulated goals of learning. When the theories talk about classroom to be student-centred, the procedures that can be adopted by the teachers are:
 - Examples and questions drawing on students' previous

knowledge and experience;

- Problem solving and higher order thinking skills boosted;
 - Instructional aides to be used;
 - Good relationships and interaction between teachers and students to occur;
 - Pair and group work to be initiated.
- **Pedagogy as ideas:** Pedagogy comprises what teachers do in the classroom, but also their ideas, knowledge and attitudes in relation to the learners, the teaching and learning process and the curriculum. A total of 123 studies reported some form of positive finding in terms of teachers' ideas and knowledge. Teachers at secondary level were reported as having increased enthusiasm, knowledge and confidence as a result of effective interventions. For example, Agyei and Voogt (2011) and Li and Walsh (2011) reported more confidence in ICT skills. Other studies claimed that teachers had gained better knowledge of their learners and were more able to view students' learning as linked to their teaching and teacher learning (Balakrishnan, 2007, Dayoub and Bashiruddin, 2012, Johnson *et al.*, 2000).
 - **Pedagogy and equity:** Whether the disparity with respect to disability, gender, class, section of society, castes or socio-economic status, studies have proved that a change in teachers' attitude towards the considered to be inferior section of the society would bring about a positive outcome in regard to the students learning. A study revealed that lack of teacher support and agency was identified as a barrier to inclusion (Croft, 2010, Mukhopadhyay and Moswela, 2010, Singal, 2008).

3. Relevance of pedagogy and 21st Century oecd skills

Pedagogy as discussed is the most important aspect of teaching as it is even capable of building a huge gap between the written textbook content and the transaction of that content to the learners. As discussed before the four main components of pedagogy: pedagogy of practice, pedagogy of ideas, pedagogy and equity and pedagogical approaches focuses on the transaction of the content of the textbook, the knowledge of the teachers, the building up of various skills and values in learners, the attitude of teachers towards learners and the like. Therefore, more than the written content of the textbook the performance of the teacher in the class making the class student-centred gains priority. The author of a particular textbook need not meet the components of pedagogy generalising the written work, but a teacher cannot generalize as the target learners are always different, and therein lay the importance of relevant pedagogy. The teacher needs to give importance to individual learners and also the community to which they belong.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has recently launched the OECD Skills Strategy responding to formal education, to the skills people actually acquire, enhance and nurture over their lifetimes. Its 21st century Curriculum and Instruction foresees that,

- Schools must move beyond a focus on basic competency in core subjects to promoting understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21st century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects: Global

awareness, Financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, Civic literacy, Health literacy, Environmental literacy

- Schools must enable innovative learning methods that integrate the use of supportive technologies, inquiry- and problem-based approaches and higher order thinking skills
- Schools and curriculum development agencies must encourage the integration of community resources beyond school walls
- The 21st century professional development of the teachers foresees that,
- Teachers should seize opportunities for integrating 21st century skills, tools and teaching strategies into their auditorium and classroom practice
- Teachers should strive to balance direct instruction with project oriented teaching methods
- Teachers should illustrate how a deeper understanding of subject matter can actually enhance problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity
- Teachers cultivate their ability to identify students' particular learning styles, intelligences, strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers develop their abilities to use various strategies (such as formative assessments) to reach diverse students and create environments that support differentiated teaching and learning.
- Teachers support the continuous evaluation of students' 21st century skills development.
- Teachers encourage knowledge sharing among various communities, using face-to-face, virtual and blended communications.
- Teachers use a sustainable model of professional development.

The 21st century learning environment creates learning practice, human support and physical environments that will support the teaching and learning of 21st century skills. This kind of environment also,

- Supports professional learning communities that enable educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 21st century skills into classroom practice.
- Enables students to learn in relevant, real world 21st century contexts (e.g., through project-based or other applied work).
- Allows equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies and resources.
- Supports expanded community and international involvement in learning, both face-to face and online learning.

Therefore, the 21st century OECD skills provide a clear structure for the development of the pedagogy or the adaptation of a prevalent pedagogy by the teachers. The usage of technology in teaching becomes an essential component to cater to the needs of the digital era. It also talks about the involvement of the communities inside classroom that would enhance the learning of the individuals and they can also connect their classroom learning with their immediate

environment. The individual needs of the learners are given importance based on which the pedagogy has to be designed rather than suppressing and ignoring the individual differences by making the class teacher centred. The teacher is expected to be the facilitator giving priority to the learning needs.

4. Changes and up graduation of the teacher training program

The Indian education system is seen to be facing quality crisis-starting from primary schools to universities, the dominant view is that students are not learning as much as they ideally should and they are prone to rote learning and memorisation at all levels. Exceptions are always there but the main issue that confronts us today is that majority of our educational institutions do not pay adequate attention to pedagogy. In the attempts to deal with improving transaction and the experiences children have in schools; the government has primarily focused on the delivery system and inputs. The focus is on the teacher's role and what she does rather than engaging with children, how they are learning, what they are learning and the effort they make in the classroom. Globally it is unanimously accepted that no pedagogical discourse is possible without seriously engaging with what is to be learnt, what are the assumptions about learners and learning processes. Equally notions about what does it mean to learn and the transactional experiences of children are ignored in most teacher education programmes. In the last two decades various attempts to evolve a set of principles that moved away from teacher centred and information focussed transactions have been multi-pronged.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had been assigned various types of specific and comprehensive tasks covering almost all aspects of teacher education and school education. The National Policy on Education (1986) and its revised version (1992) states, that the status of teachers reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society. It is said "No pupil can rise above the level of its teachers." The government and the community should endeavour to create conditions, which will help, motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lines. Teachers should have the freedom to innovate. They should be able to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities relevant to the needs and capabilities of and the concerns of the community. On teacher education, the policy makes very significant statement _ "Teacher education is a continuous process, and its pre-service and in-service components are inseparable. As the first step, the system of teacher education will be overhauled." In this direction, District Institutes of Education (DIETs), College of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) have been established to upgrade teacher training institutions. There were demands by teachers, teacher educators and educationists to have a separate authority for teacher education to maintain quality. In this direction, the establishment of a statutory, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is indeed laudable.

"In recent years both school education and society have witnessed unprecedented technological advancements, communication revolutions, periodical reforms in school curriculum, introduction of competency based and value

oriented education, adoption of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) strategy as envisaged by National Policy on Education (1986, modified in 1992), major reforms in textbooks-cum-workbooks and other teaching-learning aids, promoting activity-based and joyful learning, introduction of self-learning and group learning activities besides teacher directed learning, offering non-formal and alternative education systems, initiatives like Operation Blackboard (OBB), Special Orientation Programme for Teachers (SOPT), Promoting Primary and Elementary Education (PROPEL) and a host of other developments. Clearly all these and many other changes occurring in quick succession in school and society, coupled with new challenges to be faced in the initial decades of the 21st Century, which also makes the dawn of a third millennium, have profound implications for the renewal of curricula, content and processes of teacher education. If teacher education has to remain effective and functional, its curriculum and related aspects should be revitalised and renewed immediately."

The specific objectives of the two-year (four semesters) B.Ed. (secondary) course are to: enable the prospective teachers to understand the nature, purpose and philosophy of secondary education; and develop among teachers an understanding of the psychology of their pupils, to help them to understand the process of socialisation; to equip them to acquire competencies relevant to stage specific pedagogy, curriculum development, its transaction and evaluation; to enable them to make pedagogical analysis of the subjects they teach at the secondary stage, develop skills for guidance and counselling and foster creative thinking among pupils for reconstruction of knowledge. Therefore, the curriculum and the contents have to be first oriented to the teachers, for them to have critical understanding of it in order to design the relevant pedagogy.

5. Conclusion

Secondary education being a crucial stage in the education system of India and also other countries, it is very important to pay attention to the techniques and methods adopted by the teachers to transact the content and knowledge in the classroom. The transaction is expected not to promote rote learning but follow Vygotsky's constructivist learning approach where the creative faculty of the students, their higher order thinking skills and imagination is upraised. The teacher is supposed to play the role of the facilitator and not a dictator. Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* throws light on the curbing of the scopes provided to the learners to evolve. He devised and tested an education system and a philosophy of education whose educational thrust centres on the human potential for creativity and freedom in the midst of politico-economic and culturally oppressive structures. Educational practice need not be seen as 'extension' but as 'communication' where extension is negative in nature and communication positive in nature so that it can create consciousness about the right kind of education, by way of avoiding authoritarian teacher-pupil models, based on actual experience of students, their shared learning experiences, each individual can develop a new awareness of self and begin to look critically at the world through dialogical relationships with others.

The various Teacher Training Institutes following the in-

service and pre-service programmes focuses on pedagogy content knowledge in the current scenario. But in terms of execution the crisis that has been noted is that the training received is not channelized or applied once a teacher moves into the field or the classroom. The application of theories learnt to refine and redefine the pedagogy of a teacher based on the target learners is essential for making it relevant to the student, their community, the current scenario of the environment and also the nation.

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