

## **Excellence in Teacher Education Roundtable-2: Regulation of Teachers and Teacher Education**

**Centre for Education, Innovation and Action Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,  
Mumbai**

March 14 and 15, 2019

### **Summary**

The roundtable provided a forum for sharing of experiences on the regulation of teachers and teacher education in India and a few other countries; identify the crucial issues and enduring questions that frame the complex task of regulation, what do we agree on and disagree with both in terms of recognising what is problematic in the sector and directions that regulation of the sector could possibly take. Drawing from the discussions, tentative plans for research and policy was put forth by a panel for further deliberations.

#### **1. International Experiences**

Academics from three South Asian countries Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan were invited to present what prevails in teacher education in their countries. Representatives from South America and Africa were also invited to understand how regulation is approached in these continents.

In both Bangladesh and Pakistan, schooling is stratified and shadow education is a big industry. Teacher education in Pakistan is decentralised and there are 270 teacher education institutes in four provinces across Pakistan. While pre service teacher education is funded by external aid agencies in Pakistan, there is no provision for initial teacher preparation in Bangladesh. Subject based trainings are organised at the cluster level for in-service teachers and instructors to conduct the trainings are selected through a national test.

The situation in Bhutan is very different. Two teacher education colleges are able to meet the teacher requirement in the country. A 4-year concurrent programme of initial teacher education is being offered for over two decades, but currently the Government is reconsidering this since students' strength is dwindling and they are finding that increasingly students are reluctant to commit for four years. Reforms in school education and teacher education are going hand in hand in Bhutan. As to evaluation of teachers, both Bhutan and Pakistan have evolved standards to assess teachers.

Mexico has also invested in a dedicated, autonomous institute for evaluation. Evaluation of teachers is through a three-pronged approach of using quantitative data of the population, qualitative data based on sampling and self-evaluation by teachers. Diagnostic testing is a component of professional teaching standards.

As to Africa, both teacher professional standards and a teacher qualification framework have been developed. The continent is moving towards a common understanding of quality in terms of curriculum of teacher education programmes and what is expected from the teachers that these programmes prepare, while at the same time attempting to value the diversity among the African nations.

#### **2. Indian Experience**

One of the challenges in the Indian context emerges from the fact that the teacher education institutes (TEI) are largely in the private sector. Of the 16500 TEIs in the country, 8600 are affiliated to Universities and the remaining are stand-alone institutes offering a diploma in education. Therefore concerns of regulating the private sector largely drive the efforts of the regulatory body, the National

Council of Teacher Education (NCTE). The NCTE was set up by an act of the Indian Parliament. Education of children with disabilities is regulated by another statutory body, The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). The RCI regulates all special education programmes as well as provides renewable license to organisations and individuals working with persons with disabilities. Another issue has been the attempt to provide on the job training to the large numbers of untrained para teachers appointed in many states, especially in North India. These issues have melded with new public management discourses around teacher accountability and performativity. A teacher eligibility test has been mandated since 2011 for prospective teachers and is conducted both at the National and State level. A private organisation, Centre for Teacher Accreditation has independently evolved a standards framework to assess teachers through written tests.

The presentations and the discussions that followed brought out the need to exert caution in the use of standards as the solution to addressing quality issues of teaching and teacher education. Standards need to take into account social justice concerns and reflect on systems rather than as rewards/punishments of individual teachers. The group acknowledged that while standards start out as an aid to improve quality, they soon fritter down to control.

### **3. Problematising regulation of teachers and teacher education**

The deliberations over two days brought out some of the tensions in conceptualizing regulation of teachers and teaching.

- i. Should teacher education be regulated at all? Who or what is regulated? Is it the teacher, the teacher education institute, or the programmes? At what stage should an institute be regulated? Should there be a conceptual framework for regulation? What aspects are to be regulated? At what level should regulations be framed - at the national, state or university level? Who decides the norms and standards for regulation? Can there be self-regulation? Does regulation imply better quality? How do sectors that are unregulated maintain quality?
- ii. What is the purpose of accreditation? What are the essential components that need to be accredited? What evidence do we have on accreditation?
- iii. What is the role of an affiliating university? What are its functions? Can a university take up the role of a regulator?
- iv. What is the difference between a liberal arts programme and a teacher education programme?
- v. How much do we know about creating a synergy between a teacher education institute/department of education and schools? What is its nature? What models are available?
- vi. Who should become a faculty of education? Should requirements such as school based experience or two Mastersdegree be categorical for all faculties? Will such requirements not preclude inter-disciplinary studies that the teacher education requires?

### **4. Concerns**

- i. The poor quality of higher education in general, reflected in the weak disciplinary knowledge of student teachers
- ii. Focus on inputs going into minute details in regulating the setting up of new teacher education institutes and offering of programmes. There is little basis for stipulations such as a specific size of classroom, number of books required etc.
- iii. An inspection model adopted by the regulatory body that seeks to control rather than facilitate improvement
- iv. Over-emphasis on the 'standards' aspect has essentially thwarted the non-standard creative component in teacher education.

### **5. Aspects of consensus**

There appeared to be consensus that the process of regulation must be separated out from the regulator. The current regulatory body was set up under specific historical context. It did manage to curb the highly problematic practice of awarding of teacher education degrees through

‘correspondence’ programmes but later could not withstand the onslaught of privatization, post liberalization of the country’s economy. The group felt there is now a need to move away from regulation to facilitation. Also, institutes evolve over a period of time and regulation must recognise this growth potential, instead of a now or never approach in allowing institutes to come into existence. While regulation comes under the purview of jurisprudence, practitioners and researchers can contribute to the formulation of what needs to be regulated, how and by whom so as to ensure teacher education institutes, the programmes they offer and the teachers they produce are able to meet essential quality parameters. As the meaning of quality is multi-faceted, wider consultations and dialogues with multiple stakeholders is necessary to identify core elements of quality that must be ensured in teacher education. It is important to recognise that regulation of teacher education cannot be conceptualised apart from regulation of other aspects of education. In education, it is essential not to separate out inputs, processes and outputs but treat them holistically. The group was categorical that a reductive, technicist view of standards has to be avoided.

## **6. Differences of opinions**

- i. It is better to retain the term regulation instead of facilitation since it prevents marketisation.
- ii. Leaving regulation to professionals can be problematic as they will act in their self-interest rather than the larger public good that education is expected to fulfill.
- iii. Existence of a teacher education institute has wider ramifications and therefore its inception has to be regulated.

## **7. Tentative Plans for Research and Policy**

### ***7.1 Re conceptualising the regulatory body***

- i. There is a need for the regulatory body to take on the role of a facilitator. Dialogues and wide ranging consultations are needed on the nature of a guiding force for such a regulatory body and whether regulations should necessarily be standards driven. There are multiple stakeholders in teacher education programmes, beyond private colleges. There is a need to include their voices as well. It is essential for a regulatory body to understand the complex nuances of teacher education.
- ii. NCTE is now engaged with issues of demand and supply of teachers across the country. A disaggregated data across regions, subjects and levels is not available. This will be imperative for a better planning of programmes and intake, both in the short and long term. Also India exports teachers to Africa, the Middle East and a few neighbouring nations. The regulatory body thus needs to engage with developing teacher education to international standards.
- iii. It is not feasible to have all functions within one regulatory body. Multiplicity of regulatory bodies can create confusion, if there is inadequate co-ordination. Hence the possibility of arrangements for a multiplicity of functions within the same body has to be worked out.

### ***7.2 Reforming the regulation process***

- iv. Regulatory processes cannot be the same in different parts of the country. The large size of teaching workforce and the diversity among them must be taken into account in any scheme of regulation. The workforce should not be treated as a monolith. Mechanisms have to be evolved to give teachers feedback and not only pass judgements on their performance. Education sector needs to be nurtured further in developing countries rather than punitive regulatory mechanisms.
- v. Systemic support for teachers is required. There should be a robust professional framework to provide it. The framework must be flexible and meet both the developmental context of India and the country’s aspirations as a global knowledge hub. Regulation of teachers and teacher education needs to support an evolutionary notion of quality.

- vi. Regulation is never benign. Fundamental questions need to be constantly posed about who, what and why of regulations from time to time.

### ***7.3 Prioritising the research agenda***

- vii. There is need for robust research to build a contextual understanding of the practice of teachers and teacher education in India. Some specific areas of research that were suggested:
- viii. What is the role of regulation in ensuring quality? What has been the impact of regulation on teacher education in other countries? How do the regulatory bodies in different professions function and what is their impact? How do sectors that do not have regulation ensure quality?
- ix. How are the various aspects of regulation and accreditation being implemented across the country? What are the perceptions of various stakeholders on teacher education and its regulation?
- x. What is the systemic and institutional readiness to prepare teachers who are responsive to needs of present day students and schools?
- xi. What is involved in creating a synergy between a teacher education institute/department of education and schools? What are the models available?
- xii. How much do we know about the knowledge and practice of teaching? What is being communicated in teacher preparation programmes? What sense are student teachers making of their preparation? How does a teacher's knowledge and practice evolve?

Robust data gathering mechanisms and improved data management systems are required across levels. The country also requires focussed research agenda for the short term and long term to inform policies and practices in teacher education. The agenda has to be evolved through consultations among various stakeholders.

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The roundtable helped articulate issues and problems in the regulation of teacher and teacher education. These are complex and preclude arriving at quick solutions. The roundtable was not meant to come up with a set of 'solutions' or strive for a simple consensus, but to engage with the complexities through an academic discourse involving policy makers, academicians and practitioners. It is planned to organise further discussions based on what emerged from this roundtable. Academic discussions on high stakes issues like regulations needs to be kept alive, without the pressure of having to make decisions or arrive at compromised consensus. Such discussions with wider networks and through the setting up of vibrant communities of practitioners will allow complex issues to be analysed through multiple prisms of perspectives and experiences. Ultimately, they would contribute to the strengthening of the sector through a more nuanced understanding and a greater sense of belonging coming from active participation.

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### About the Excellence in Teacher Education Round Tables

The Round Tables are organised under the Initiative for Excellence in Teacher Education of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, with support from the Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching and the Tata Trusts.

The first round table was on the theme of “Round Table on In-service Teacher Professional Development: Perspectives and Possibilities ([Link to the round table report](#))

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