

**Teacher Preparation for Constructivist Learning in Schools**

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**Abstract**

India, with its great heritage of knowledge, could preserve the treasure of knowledge and wisdom since the Vedic Period roughly estimated and expected to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium. Though, the transmission of knowledge was apparently done through behaviouristic approach; that the students living with the teacher and taking parts in various household chores and social and religious activities, indicate the emphasis on activity based constructivist learning, humanistic learning and cognitivistic learning. The new policies of education emphasize the constructivist approach which we had been abandoned since the colonial period. This research article studied a single school for its preparedness of their teachers for professional development activities to effectively practice constructivist approaches in their classrooms. The aforementioned area required the investigator to know the teacher's knowledge about constructivist approach and also the current practices in the school that facilitate constructivist learning. The data were collected using questionnaires and analysed using simple statistical methods. This was an action research conducted to collect the current status of constructivist practices for providing training to teachers as an extension activity. This would help in developing hypothesis for the future researches and also take actions for immediate solutions in some areas.

<b>Key Words:</b>	NCTE      National Council for Teacher Education, New Delhi, India
RTEA	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education(a two year teacher education programme)
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India.
Gurukula	The dwelling of Guru (teacher) during the Vedic Period of India
Shyshya	A student during the Vedic Period of India

**Introduction**

India, with her great heritage of knowledge, could preserve the treasure of knowledge and wisdom since the Vedic Period roughly estimated and expected to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium. The accumulated knowledge had been handed down to the succeeding generations till the dawn of colonial India in a formalized way to the students (Shyshya) orally by a teacher

(Guru) in 'Gurukula' (residence of the Guru) in the form of hymns and rituals.

Though, the transmission of knowledge was apparently done through behaviouristic approach, the practices of cognitivist and coconstructivist approaches to learning were not unheard of. The students living with the teacher and taking parts in various household chores and social and religious activities, indicate the emphasis

given on activity based learning, humanistic learning, cognitivist and constructivist learning in which the teacher facilitated learning.. After the colonisation of India, the *Gurukula* system was left abandoned and the adoption of westernised scientific educational approaches was taken place.

Education is a process of enculturation and acculturation through which the felt necessary existing knowledge is preserved and transmitted to the new generation and opportunities are given and welcome to the creation of new knowledge according to the current context. This transmission or creation of knowledge and skills is not an exception to the field of ‘teacher education’ too. Thus, it is pertinent for the prospective and in-service teachers, either trained or untrained, to keep updating their professional competencies through various in-service and pre-service programmes.

This paper analyses the status of teachers from a school for providing a short in-service professional development programme on constructivist approach to learning as per the need and available time for the training.

### **Background**

This analysis was done at the backdrop of the new scenario of a Teacher Education Policy that came into effect on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 in the form of a regulation, titled “The National Council for Teacher Education(Recognition Norms and Procedure) Regulations, 2014” and another preceding legislation “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. As per the latter, it became mandatory for all the teachers to be trained and brought an innovation in the examination system by which a single

examination would not be the criterion for qualifying the school students to the next higher class was done away with but instead a continuous and comprehensive evaluation system was introduced with the motto of ‘assessment for learning’ and not for ‘assessing of learning’.

This Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) would demand a teacher not alone to be trained in the area of ‘assessment for learning’ contrary to ‘assessment of learning’ but also to construct knowledge and skills as against memorise, understand, retrieve and apply in a straight jacket way. Subsequent to the implementation of the RTEA, 2009, the NCTE Act, 2009 was regulated in 2014 and according to which, all the teachers, teaching at various levels, were to be trained for equipping with the new challenges and approaches to education. The National Council for Teacher Education (Determination of Minimum Qualifications for Persons to be recruited as Education Teachers and Physical Education Teachers in Pre-primary, Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary, Senior Secondary or Intermediate Schools or Colleges) Regulations, 2014, (came into effect from 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2014), specifies the required qualifications of teachers at various levels. The course duration, curriculum and mode of transaction of teacher education programmes were also changed keeping in view of constructivist approach to learning.

But, in Nagaland, a host of teachers, in schools both private and government were found still teaching without being trained either pre-service or in-service. They would be in need of professional development activities but there found

many practical problems cropping out that disabled and discouraged them from undergoing such training activities. This paralysed the State from strictly implementing the basic qualification requirement for teachers teaching at various levels of school education.

### **Statement of Problem**

In this background, it was desired to study the awareness of the term ‘constructivism in education’ or ‘constructivist approach to education’ in education that would indicate at the least the minimum level of awareness of the term which had been talked about or discussed about. That was to be followed by further investigation on the current constructivist practices in the teaching –learning activities. This study also investigated the various professional development activities undergone by the teachers to understand to what extent the mandatory requirement of training in new approach had been provided by the government, teachers’ attitude towards professional development activities, opportunities available and problems faced in undertaking or undergoing the pursuit of those professional development activities.

### **Methodology**

As an extension activity, a ‘practice teaching school’ was selected and all the teachers teaching at various levels and available were taken as the sample. Thus the sampling method employed here was ‘purposive sampling method’. This study surveyed 35 teachers and the data were collected from them using questionnaire developed by the investigator and the analysis was done using simple statistical tools.

### **Results**

### **Formal and Non-Formal Professional Development Activities**

The single school from which the data collected gave a shocking revelation that less than 1% of the teachers were trained and in the past five years, only a single training programme was conducted two months before the current study was conducted and that training was on ‘Guidance and Counselling’. There was not a single professional development programme sponsored by the department of education nor the ‘teachers in the current study’ could participate in any other professional development programmes in either formal or non-formal mode except the one indicated above. Though, the government’s initiatives were unheard of, the school had fixed some programmes in their academic annual calendar for professional development activities. The school’s self appraisal and development would need appreciation.

### **Informal Professional Development Activities**

Thus, the expectation of approaching education in constructivist approach goes in vain without the teachers being trained to face the challenge of approaching education constructively. Further, irrespective of training – in-service or pre-service, some teachers might have obtained information regarding constructivist approach through informal ways. But, that too gave a disappointing result, as none of the teachers could give the concept of the term ‘constructivism’. But, should it be concluded that their unfamiliarity with or not understanding the concept of the term ‘constructivism’ implies the absence of constructivist practices in the classroom? The data

reveals that constructivist practices were not practiced by the teachers for empowering themselves in activities related to professional development. The reason given, for not having academic socialization programmes in an organised way, was their packed schedule in the school and after school activities such as tuition for filling the gap of economic sustenance or disparities. Despite private tuitions were prohibited by the RTEA, 2009, the teachers were not sensitized towards this provisions of the Act and also prohibiting of private tuitions was not monitored by the government and ignored nor it seemed to be possible as the private school teachers were paid meagrely. Here too, there was no regulation of minimum pay band for the school teachers by the government.

An interesting fact was that none of the private schools was aided by the government except a few schools were appointed with one or two government paid teachers. . Thus, the teachers with a meagre financial assistance were to engage themselves in other activities rather than spending their little saving for pursuing their studies for professional development. This might have resulted into their negative attitude or interest exhibited through their responses to the questionnaire in matters related to pursuing professional development courses by investing money, energy and time.

Many in-service teachers had been appointed many years before the promulgation of the present Act, and many entered into their career with the less required educational and professional qualifications. Undertaking the courses for professional development became a difficult task for them as many of them

either did not acquire the minimum required level or marks for pursuing the studies. For example, when the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 made it mandatory for the secondary level teachers to be trained within a stipulated period, they did not have the minimum requirements of marks as the admission requirement made them ineligible for pursuing B.Ed. programme. In many cases, going for improvement in their degree examinations after so many years elapsed became not possible and less practicable. There found no bridge courses for filling the gaps.

There had been so many science and maths teachers' post vacancies not filled for various reasons and want of qualified people for many years. . Professionally untrained teachers were allowed to appear the Teacher Eligibility Tests conducted by the State to be eligible for teaching posts. So, the government was so desperately helpless in putting the Act into action.

But, there was a great solace that a few born teachers who acquired the attributes through informal learning were found using some of the constructive approaches in their classroom though it might be insufficient and could not completely serve the purpose.

### **Conclusion**

Studying of a single school revealed that a good percentage of teachers were untrained; the professional development programmes undertaken were very less; the teachers had no positive attitude towards undertaking those programmes due to justifiable reasons and the in-service professional developmental programmes organised by the either schools on their own or the government were found to be

very less. The greater responsibilities lay on the government to facilitate the teachers to develop them professionally. It seemed to be a herculean task for the government with various infringing factors. All these factors underplay the efficient promulgation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the provisions of which would require teacher development programmes to enable practicing of constructivist approach. As education is not an exception to the influence of socio, economic, cultural, political and geographical factors, the practices that were done in the mainland of India cannot be easily applied to a State like Nagaland as this would require greater analysis of the current scenario followed by new policies suitable to the context and finance for implementation. Thus, the policies remained rhetoric and yet to become reality.

### **Suggestions**

Thus, impracticability is the result. But, for a temporary relief, as suggested earlier, to a minimum, all the heads of the institutions should have the minimum required qualifications as prescribed by the NCTE's recent regulations and there should be provisions for constant updating. The teachers who do not have acquired the prescribed qualifications should be given preference to undertake various professional courses through distance mode within a short period of time with financial assistance from the schools where they are serving in or by the government with a condition of their successful completion and continuity in service for a stipulated period.

The teachers without the minimum required marks and appointed before the promulgation of the Act should have been given a greater relaxation to undergo various courses. One of the universities should have teacher's training courses, either part-time or full-time as the situation demands, for the in-service teachers without either the necessary approval or relaxation from the NCTE on the basis of the ground reality of in-service teachers without the minimum percentage requirement.

The heads of all private schools should have acquired the minimum required qualifications. The government could initiate some mandatory programmes for the heads of the institutions along with the basic required academic and professional qualification for their eligibility to the post of handling school administration. By creating awareness and empowering the heads to empower their teachers could be a temporary solution.

The Teacher Education Institutions should be involved in conducting mandatory professional development programmes for the schools during a specific period fixed by the Department of Education and the Nagaland University in a combined manner going through the B.Ed. internship programmes.

There should be fee concession for the professional development programmes offered by the IGNOU for the learners from the backward and geographically less accessible states like Nagaland and the intake capacity for the distance teacher education programmes should be increased as the situation demands. Initiatives should be undertaken by the Regional Centre

(IGNOU) to introduce new programmes on teacher education at different levels.

Permission and relaxation could be given to start the teacher education colleges or institutes in other districts where there are

less or no teacher education colleges and institutions.

Above all, whosoever is involved should understand his/her ‘SELF’ and do the service for the ‘SUPREME SELF’ with the greatest involvement!

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