



## **Innovative Practices in Teacher Education: An Overview**

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### **Abstract**

*The quality of educational process largely depends upon the quality of teacher. Though teaching is being considered as a science and a skill, basically it is a sublime art. It is the teacher, who unconsciously designs the growing plastic mind of the child entrusted to him. Thus, teaching is not a mechanical process. Indeed, it is an intricate, exacting and a very challenging one. With good leadership and appropriate teaching methodologies, the teacher's effectiveness can be enhanced. Challenges in educational system have no permanent and fixed answers because of the changeable nature of human society. The teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will have to deal with a world different from that of 20<sup>th</sup> century in respect of pedagogical and technological advancement. So, no teacher education programme can prepare teachers for all situations that they will encounter. Teachers themselves will have to make the final choices from among many alternatives. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to constantly reevaluate their choices. This can be achieved through introducing or promotion of innovative ideas and practices in teacher education. Since teachers are of central importance in improving the quality of education; hence, the promotion of innovative practices in teacher education is of utmost importance. This conceptual paper is designed to elicit discussion on new ideas and innovative practices in teacher education. The paper will focus on new ideas and innovative practices like cooperative learning, brainstorming, constructivism, blended learning, reflective teaching etc.*

**Key Words:** *Innovative practices, cooperative learning, constructivism, blended learning, reflective teaching.*

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**Introduction:** The progress of a nation to a great extent depends upon the quality of its teachers and for this reason teaching is being considered as the noblest of all professions. The teacher, therefore, occupies a pivotal position in the educational system as well as in the society. But teaching is not a mechanical process. It is an intricate, exacting and a very challenging one. Though teaching is being considered as a science and skill, basically it is a sublime art; because the teacher unconsciously designs the growing plastic young mind of the child. Like an artist the teacher is also responsible for shaping or reshaping the behaviour of the young ones in a socially desirable way. Thus, the teacher cannot give any shape to the young living being he comes in contact with; rather he has to be a very careful artist.

Throughout history, people called teachers have played many different roles and they continue to do so today. But, today's world is passing through rapid changes and great advancements. In such a climate, even education system cannot resist change. As a result, the imperatives of new times, new demands and new visions assign more challenging role and responsibility to the teacher.

Now a day, advanced technology has effectively revolutionized human society. An unexpected byproduct of this revolution has been the emergence of a generation of children weaned on multidimensional, interactive media sources, a generation whose understanding and expectations of the world differ profoundly from that of the generations preceding them. If we are to give these children the education necessary to succeed in our technologically intense, global future, then a new form of educational practice that builds on children's native learning abilities and technological competence must replace our existing methods.

Since, challenges in educational system have no permanent and fixed answers, so, teachers themselves will have to make the final choices from among many alternatives. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to constantly reevaluate their choices. This can be achieved through introducing or promotion of innovative ideas and practices in teacher education.

**Meaning and Concept of Innovative Practices In Teacher Education:** There is a wide variation among countries with regard to what they believe constitutes an innovation, reform or development in the teaching learning process. For example, the use of colored chalk and basic audio-visual materials may be regarded as being an educational innovation in some developing regions, whereas in other more affluent countries innovations may refer to the development and use of sophisticated technologies and methods, practices etc. In our country also, this electronic technology has dramatically penetrated into every area of our society and every aspect of our social and cultural lives. Today's children have grown up with remote controls and they spend more time in computers, internet, playing video games etc. than reading books; even toys are now filled with buttons and blinking lights.

In such a condition, it is very important to focus on **“How can we educate this New Generation?”** .To answer this, a supportive environment, one in which they can create their own ideas; both individually and collaboratively, must be provided.

Etymologically, the word **“Innovation”**, is derived from the Latin word **“Innovare”** which means to change something into something new. It is a promotion of new ideas and practices in education and training.

There has been seen a tremendous shift in the ways and means of education services over the years. Research and innovations play an important role in improving the quality of teachers and the training imparted to them for all levels of teaching. They demand to introduce new ideas and practices in classroom transaction and other curricular and co-curricular activities. The teacher's effectiveness can be enhanced with good leadership and appropriate teaching methodologies. No teacher education programmer can prepare teachers for all situations that they will encounter. Teachers themselves will have to make the final choices from among many alternatives. The purpose of teacher education is to prepare teachers who have professional competencies to lead the nation forward through their manifold roles.

### **Some Innovative Practices In Teacher Education:**

Following are some of the innovative ideas that need to be focused:

- 1) **Team Teaching, Cooperative or collaborative learning process:** When teacher and students have to work under so many constraints, then the practice of **“Team teaching or cooperative or collaborative teaching”** is always a good option.

Team teaching or cooperative learning process is a team work where members support and rely on each other to achieve an agreed-upon goal. Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

- 2) **Reflecting Teaching and Reflective Teacher Education:** Reflection on one's own work is a key component of being a professional and is essential to teacher education. Teachers must examine their belief, assumptions and biases regarding teaching and learning and determine how those beliefs influence classroom practice. Reflection is a natural process that facilitates the development of future action from the contemplation of past and current behavior. Reflection refers to the ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into careful consideration the personal, pedagogical, societal and ethical contexts associated with schools, classrooms and the multiple roles of teachers.

- 3) **Constructivism and Teacher Education:** The concept of Constructivism has evolved from cognitive psychology. Constructivist paradigm is based on the contributions of Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, Dewey, Tolman and many others. Thus, it is a synthesis of many dominant perspectives on learning. It is believed that the key element of constructivist theory is that people learn by

actively constructing their own knowledge, comparing new knowledge with their previous understanding and using all these to come to new understanding.

Constructivist learning is based on student's active participation in problem-solving and critical thinking regarding a learning activity. Students construct their own knowledge by testing ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledge and experience, applying them to new situations and integrating new knowledge gained with pre-existing intellectual constructs. The teacher is a facilitator or a coach who guides the student's critical thinking, analysis and synthesis abilities throughout the learning process. The teacher is also a co-learner in the process. Hence, teachers should facilitate cognitive change by presenting difficulties through specific tasks that pose dilemmas to students. In this context, problem-solving teaching procedure is defined as a process of raising a problem in the minds of the students in such a way to stimulate purposeful, reflective thinking in arriving at a rational solution.

- 4) **Blended-Learning and Teacher Education:** Blended-learning describes an approach to learning where teachers use technology, usually in the form of Web-Based instruction, in concert with and as a supplement to live instruction, or perhaps utilize components of a learner-centred Web course with components that require significant instructor presence and guidance. The strength of a blended-learning approach is that it provides a means to ensure learners are supported and guided as they undertake independent learning tasks. Use of the Web in such settings provides many affordances for the teacher and students in the form of communication channels, information sources and management tools. These aspects appear to make blended-learning particularly well suited to teacher training students, especially those in large groups where direct instructor support may be difficult to deliver.

Blended-learning commonly describes learning that combines traditional teaching and learning approaches with information and communication technologies. It is anticipated that blended-learning will enhance the student learning experience, at the same time it also demands that the teachers should be trained as online facilitator.

- 5) **Soft Skills and Teacher Education:** Development of human capital is an important asset since it drives the development of a nation. Quality human capital comes from quality education process through carefully designed and well-planned education system. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects and hard skills which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity. Soft skills refer to personality traits, social gracefulness, and fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills are broadly applicable in teacher education programme, thus the curriculum of teacher education could contribute to the development of a holistic human capital that can foster economic, social and personal development. Infusing the soft skill in the curriculum of teacher education is the need of the profession for it to be successful.

**Conclusion:** Thus, it can be concluded, in today's era information and knowledge stand out as very important and critical input for growth and survival. Rather than looking at education simply as a means of achieving social uplift, the society must view education also as an engine of advancement in an information era propelled by its wheels of knowledge and research leading to development. Innovation is the path to progress for any nation and the future of the nation is in its classrooms. It is not necessary that each innovation is structured and invented; it could be even a crude, unstructured, informal method adopted by the teacher for the sake of meaningful learning of the students. Hence, we need to respect such innovations as well and promote innovative methods and new ideas and practices of teaching in our schools, college, universities and other institutions.

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