

Re-engineering Teacher Education

Approaches and Challenges



Editors

Rev. Dr. D. Thomas Alexander SJ

Dr. A. Punitha Mary



AASAAN PUBLICATIONS

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St. Xavier's College of Education (Autonomous)

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PREFACE

Dear Teaching and Research Fraternity, Greetings from SXCE, Palayamkottai!

Oh, Teacher Education! Quo Vadis? (Latin phrase for 'Where are you going?'). Where are the teacher educators? Where should we be heading towards? Are we on the precise road? What should be triggered? What kind of teachers do we mold to face the challenges of today's world? These are a few questions being raised among the teachers, teacher educators, educationists, policymakers, elderly citizens, and stakeholders such as parents and well-wishers. In search of reflective answers, our college ventured into the organization of a national conference of teacher educators, focusing on 'Re-engineering Teacher Education: Approaches and Challenges' on February 2nd and 3rd, 2024. It was consciously made offline to avoid the undesirable academic sluggishness and disasters in online transactions. We aimed to provide a platform on which the above questions may be deliberated, and concrete action plans may be initiated.

Teacher education is a foundation laid for the sustainable growth and development of any nation. If education must prosper and function positively in a society, then improving teacher education is vital and indeed inevitable. Teacher education is expected to contribute towards developing a basic understanding of the principles and practice of teaching and learning. It is to produce well-qualified professionals who can adjust to the changing needs of the students and developmental prospects of modern society. In it, knowledge and skills are developed, thereby building teachers/people to become useful to themselves and to the society they live in.

Which means, the need for overhauling and revamping of the system at a regular interval is a must for innovative and relevant training of prospective teachers, and meaningful classroom teaching-learning activities. Therefore, the keyword 'Re-Engineering,' which means a 'systematic process of analysis, design, and implementation' (Akpan et al, 2016), assumes significant importance if teacher education is to be modernized. Needless to say, the reassessment of teachers, existing pedagogic tools and materials will have to undergo stringent scrutiny of its appropriateness in the classroom transaction. Or we must agree, at least to the understanding that the re-engineering will require the use of both traditional and technological tools and modes, building on and extending traditional social forms of teaching and learning.

The current challenges that teacher education faces today after the advent of LPG mainly are related to the lethargic and easy-going attitude of teacher-educators, less enthusiasm among prospective teachers, a disconnect between pre-service training and post-training classroom activity, slow process of evaluation and revamping of learning content, diminishing professional commitment, rare model ethical behavior, and slow adoption to the rapid change of technological and scientific discoveries and inventions in the educational system. Hence there is a need for stimulating the professional spirit among the teacher educators/teachers, retaining the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers, enhancing teachers' commitment, training and motivating teachers for effective handling of classroom situations at different levels, and equipping them with modern Learning Management Systems (LMS). There is no one-size-fits-all solution; rather, each locality requires its own creativity, redesigning of content suiting local geographical conditions and needs, and adapting to the growing demands of society.

Thus, the two-day national conference on the above central point of re-engineering of teacher education enabled us to collectively, in person, ponder over various sub-themes and had the privilege of 43 papers being presented on the portal of St. Xavier's College of Education (Autonomous), Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Indeed, it was a unique experience to listen to so many speakers, including a thought-provoking panel discussion among administrators, faculty, parents, and students on the existing scenario in teacher education.

We are grateful to all the speakers, paper presenters, and the participants for their wonderful sharing and contributions along with their enthusiastic participation. Thus, we are very proud to publish the collections of the best papers presented at the conference as e-proceedings with an ISBN number. We are sure, this will go a long way to trigger the minds of younger teacher educators and prospective teachers in its way; we hope the responsibility of bearing this torch to further the cause of quality teacher education will continue in the future. I would like to fondly remember the painstaking effort undertaken by Prof. Dr. A. Punitha Mary and other faculty of our college for magnificently organizing the event to the point of relevance, quality, and fruitfulness.

May God bless you.

Prof. Dr. D. Thomas Alexander SJ, Principal,
SXCE, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, TN.
29.02.2024.

Contents

Preface	iii
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Chapter I

Emerging Technologies and Innovations in Education

1. The Melodic Symphony of Education: Considering the Innovative Potential of Suggestopedia in Pedagogy <i>Saritha C Babu & Dr. K.Gireesh Kumar</i>	1
2. Pecha Kucha: An Innovative Pedagogical Approach for Developing English Speaking Skills in Primary Teachers <i>Dr A. Philomine Bala & Dr. M. Antony Raj</i>	6
3. Intelligent Education: A Journey into Artificial Intelligence Enhanced Teaching and Learning <i>Soumya M S & Dr. S. Devika</i>	14
4. Adolescents Online Behaviour <i>A.Sathya & Dr. G. Rexlin Jose</i>	20
5. Developing 21 st Century Skills among Prospective Teachers through STEM Approach <i>M.Viji & Dr. H. Deepa</i>	26
6. Enhancing Higher Order Thinking Skills for Academic Excellence <i>Nisha M S & Dr. Bindu Gouri V P</i>	30
7. Empowering Pre-Service Teachers through Emerging Technologies in Education <i>J. Soosai Mary Nancy & Dr. P. Muthupandi</i>	36
8. Generative AI – The Master of Creation <i>A.Priscilla Valan Assumptio</i>	42
9. Interactive Trigonometry: Unleashing the Power of E-Content in Education <i>L. Mahesh & Dr. A. Michael J Leo</i>	47
10. Empowering Minds and Nurturing Earth: Fostering Ecological Intelligence through Innovative Education Practices <i>Sreelakshmi C & Dr. S. Devika</i>	53
11. Emerging Technologies and Education <i>N. Fathima Chandhini</i>	60

12. Pedagogical Innovations in Education <i>Dr. K.K. Rajendran</i>	65
13. Shaping the Future of Education : Analysing the Potential Impact of Online Learning and E-learning Systems <i>Dr. G. Annlet</i>	73
14. Pedagogical Methods and Innovation <i>R. Shanmugapriya & Dr. H. Deepa</i>	81
15. Enriching the utility of select e- learning materials through demo classes among Primary School Teachers <i>Dr. M. Gnana Soundari</i>	87

Chapter II

Role and Responsibilities of Teachers in the Digital Era

16. Cultivating Digital Pedagogues: Navigating Digital Landscapes for Enhanced Learning <i>Feba Ann Thomas</i>	92
17. Divulging the role of Educators in Imparting Life Skills <i>Jyothish John Kizhakkethalackal & Dr. H. Deepa</i>	99
18. Multifarious Qualities and Multifaceted Responsibilities of Teacher Educators <i>V. DelwinMary & Dr.A. Punitha Mary</i>	104
19. Value orientation in Teacher Education <i>Baskar.Y. & Dr. A. Michael J. Leo</i>	109
20. Inculcation of Values through the Process of Learning <i>Michael Lathis G & Dr. A. Punitha Mary</i>	114
21. Role of Social Agencies In Value Inculcation to Learners <i>S. Rajamanickavasagan & Dr. A. Punitha Mary</i>	119
22. The Role of Teacher in Nation Building <i>M.Sajitha</i>	125
23. Fostering learning skills through multiple intelligence <i>Sangeetha G S & Dr. Deepa R P</i>	128
24. Challenges for running CBSE schools in India: navigating the dynamic educational landscape <i>M. J. Sharmil</i>	134
25. Developing 21st century skills among prospective teachers <i>AjitPoulKujur</i>	140

26. Pedagogical Methods and Innovations for science student in High school level 146
A.Vennila & G.Ramesh

Chapter III

Mental Health of the Teachers

27. The Impact of Mental Well-Being of the School Teachers 150
A. Ignaciammal & Dr. P. Muthupandi
28. Nurturing Mental Health among Prospective Teachers for Holistic Education 155
Dr. R. Sathesh Franklin & Dr. A. Nicholas Jegan
29. Teachers' Mental Health: Challenges and Solutions 159
Dr. R. Grace Sophia
30. Strategies for Building Emotional Intelligence for Intangible Lifelong Cognitive Gains 165
Dr. P. Subramanian & M. Rathish
31. To enrich the mental health of teachers 172
V.Rajkumar & K.Mathumitha
32. Mental Health of the Teachers 177
S.Vaishnavi
33. Nurturing the Roots: The Essential Role of Teacher Mental Health and Mindfulness in Education 182
S.Ulagammal & Dr.C.Ramesh

Chapter IV

NEP and Teacher Education

34. Transformation of Teacher Education for Building Resilience of Pre-Service Teachers 186
Evangaline Arulmary K. & Dr. M. Antony Raj
35. Metamorphosis of Digital Education in India with Special Reference to the Policies and Regulations of NEP 2020 192
Krishnendu E.S.
36. Fostering Multifaceted Dimensions of Professionalism among Teacher Educators 200
S.S.Helen Sathia Sheela

37. Empowering Educators: Integrating Sustainable Development Goals in Teacher Education Curricula <i>Dr. R. Indra Mary Ezhilselvi</i>	206
38. Navigating New Horizons: The Future of Teacher Educational Institutions in India <i>Dr. U. Subramanian & Dr. A. Nicholas Jegan</i>	212
39. Challenges of Teacher Education in NEP 2020 <i>Dr. Y. Daniel</i>	217
40. Utilizing AI in The NEP 2020 Framework: A Pathway to Enhanced Scientific Reasoning Abilities in Indian Education <i>A.Y. Paul Usha Rani</i>	223
41. Role of Evaluation in Teaching and Learning Process <i>Sankareswari N, Dr. H. Deepa</i>	230
42. Evaluation Process in Teacher Education <i>Dr. A. Nicholas Jegan</i>	236
43. The Teaching Approaches for the Reduction of Cognitive Dissonance <i>P. Rajeshwari, Dr. A. Michael J Leo</i>	240

TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the crucial role resilience plays in helping teachers navigate the tough and challenging profession. It emphasizes the importance of the proactive role Teacher Education can play in cultivating resilience in prospective teachers. The study highlights various skill-building training programs that can be incorporated into the Teacher Education program to bring about transformative changes in nurturing resilient teachers. It highlights the potential of educational technology and training in problem-solving, time and stress management, assertiveness, emotional competence, social skills, self-regulation, digital networking, work-life balance and continuous professional learning. By addressing these strategies, this paper advocates a comprehensive and proactive approach to Teacher Education, fostering resilience and empowering future teachers to thrive in their profession.

Keywords: *Resilience, prospective teachers, Teacher Education*

Introduction

The study about importance of resilience was originally confined to the disciplines of psychiatry and developmental psychology (Gu & Day, 2007). Resilience means rebounding or the ability to return to one's former, healthier self after experiencing tremendous stress or trauma. It is an attribute of an individual's personality that helps them bounce back, sustain and overcome a stressful period. Resilience is a psychological construct that sets apart successful people from their counterparts, and it is a contributing factor in maintaining the overall physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals. For the teaching profession "resilience may be conceptualised as a capacity, a process and also as an outcome" (Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016, p. 7).

Resilience of Teachers - Purpose and Perspectives

Teachers are required to adorn numerous hats all throughout the day and year. They are expected to serve as instructors, facilitators, resource persons, counselors, mediators, managers, organizers, content experts, content deliverers, assessors, evaluators, record keepers and more. They are entrusted with overseeing various curricular, extracurricular and co-curricular activities, all while navigating through the curriculum within the stipulated time frame and managing extensive documentation, which consumes a significant portion of their time. Furthermore, they bear the responsibility for the physical and psychological safety of their students. Hence, it is evident that teaching goes beyond mere instruction; it encompasses a multitude of roles and responsibilities.

"Pre-service teachers should develop a strong conceptual understanding of resilience, specifically its dynamic and multifaceted nature. This means not only appreciating personal strengths and limitations, but developing awareness of the contextual resources and coping strategies that can promote resilience.(Mansfield et al., 2016, p. 21)"

Such a demanding and heavy laden job profile is accompanied with job uncertainty, stagnation, burnout, lack of reinforcement, low pay and lack of recognition. Consequently, teaching becomes one of the most stressful professions. The impact of this stress largely depends on the personality of the teachers and how they handle these challenges to emerge successfully. Resilience stands as a key personality attribute in this context. Being resilient enables teachers to navigate the demands of their job more efficiently. Resilience is not only an innate capacity but also a skill that can be learned and developed. Through awareness and training, the ability to be resilient can be cultivated.

Hence, it is prudent to empower the prospective teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the actual challenges they will encounter in their profession coupled with resilience training. Equipping aspiring teachers with these skills will undoubtedly place them in a stronger position compared to their counterparts.

Educational Technology and Resilience of Teachers

Educational technology can bridge the gap of time and experience factor to a large extent. The content of the educational technology basically acts as knowledge transfer of the special 'know how' of experienced teachers. Authenticity, Flexibility and frugality is key requirements in adopting educational technology as means to building resilience in pre-service teachers. The "2024 National Educational Technology Plan (NETP): A Call to

Action for Closing the Digital Access, Design and Use Divides" has stated the there are factors that hamper the transformational potential of educational technology. It is upto the individual institutions to address these divides of access, design and use of educational technology. The key challenges for educators are "opportunities for educators to expand their professional learning and build the capacities necessary to design learning experiences enabled by technology; and opportunities for students and educators to gain equitable access to educational technology, including connectivity, devices, and digital content. This also includes accessibility and digital health, safety, and citizenship as key elements of digital access.(“U.S. Department of Education Releases 2024 National Educational Technology Plan | U.S. Department of Education,” n.d.)"

Building resilience of Prospective Teachers

There are various strategies and training program that can be conducted to cultivate resilience among prospective teachers.

Problem solving skills - providing prospective teachers with training to enhance their problem-solving skills will enable them to navigate the various challenges they will encounter in their careers more smoothly. Teaching is a highly demanding and continually evolving profession, presenting new challenges at every turn. Therefore, improved problem-solving skills will contribute to teachers' resilience in the face of these challenges. During the times of various disruptions teachers are under great pressure to keep the education system operational and resilient to the disruption. "Resilience should be part of the continuous quality improvement processes of education systems subject to environmental dynamicity"(Borazon & Chuang, 2023).

Time management- Teaching is an exceptionally demanding profession. Effectively utilizing time can significantly reduce teachers occupational stress levels. Acquiring knowledge about task prioritization, employing strategies for efficient yearly, monthly, and weekly planning and the ability to review and adjust working methods will empower teachers to proactively manage and mitigate potential stressors.

Stress management - Teaching is a stressful profession, requiring educators to seamlessly fulfill multiple roles. This leads to tremendous stress. Providing prospective teachers with the ability to recognize stress and its sources, understand both physiological and psychological responses to stress, and empowering them with diverse stress management strategies and techniques will enhance their capacity to navigate through demanding situations more efficiently.

Assertiveness training - Resilience building has the assertiveness of the teacher as a basic requirement. Professional experience alone can bring about this assertiveness instead of mere confidence. Assertiveness will help the teachers to draw professional boundaries, helping them to have control over their output. A well designed "learning communities model of professional experience has the potential to contribute to developing resilience in pre-service teachers" (Le Cornu, 2009) .

Improving Emotional Competences and Social Skills- Studies have also shown that emotional intelligence had a positive impact on the psychological wellbeing of teachers (Kamboj & Garg, 2023). Enhanced emotional competency and apt social skills are key contributors to the resilience of prospective teachers. By recognizing and managing their emotions and navigating social situations efficiently, educators become effective communicators, leaders, and collaborators. These skills, coupled with adaptability and empathy, form a vital foundation for resilience in the demanding field of education.

Self-regulation - The ability to self-regulate helps individuals to navigate stress, make thoughtful decisions and maintain equilibrium in various situations, all of which are crucial for rebounding from highly demanding situations. Novice teachers require to be trained in self regulation. "Resilience can be fostered in novice teachers as a means to encourage teacher retention."(Doney, 2013).

Developing Digital Support Networks- Partnership with technology companies to design unique educational technological tools is crucial for educating teachers. A teacher must be in a position to negotiate and network the digital requirements for the classroom activities for the respective discipline. "Private sector leadership now is vital to ensuring we are build digital resiliency"(Building a Digitally Resilient Workforce, 2020). Hence collaborative capacity of a teacher is vital for resilience building.

Work Life Balance - Empirical research results have shown that the teacher wellbeing is an outcome of the resilience process.(Hascher, Beltman, & Mansfield, 2021). Thus, educating prospective teachers regarding work - life balance is vital for their wellbeing and success.

Ongoing Professional Learning- The UNESCO on World Teachers' Day in October 2020, launched "the Global Teacher Campus to reach one million teachers most affected by COVID-19 school disruptions and provide them with opportunities for professional development free of charge."("Acting for Recovery, Resilience and Reimagining Education:

The Global Education Coalition in Action - UNESCO Digital Library,” n.d., p. 67). Teacher Education should foster, among prospective teachers, a passion for lifelong learning and professional development, which will be equip them with the timely resources and skills, to skillfully and competently navigate the dynamic demands of the profession.

Conclusion

In the ever-evolving world of education, it is crucial for teachers to be tough and bounce back from challenges. Major disruptions to the education system challenge the resilience of teachers continually. Capacity building through equitable access, ubiquitous design and universal usage of educational technology alone can help the teachers to be resilient in the context of major disruptions. Teacher Education needs to play a pivotal in cultivating resilient teachers by imparting essential skills including stress and time management, emotional competence, self- regulation, social skills, work-life balance, problem solving, assertiveness training, a commitment to lifelong learning and leveraging technology as a valuable aid and support.

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