
UNIT 9 TEACHER AS AN EDUCATIONAL INPUT

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

School as a social organization situates in a socio-cultural context. School is a system designed by the society for educating and shaping the life of the young. They spend a considerable time in school. Schools are expected to train them for a better life. Teachers are the main agents for making this goal happen. Teacher takes upon various roles to serve this purpose. An attempt is made in this unit to identify and analyze the different functions performed and the role played by teachers in school. The changing role of teachers is discussed in a historical perspective. The discussion centres around instruction, curriculum, professionalism, mentoring and community with respect to teacher role. The discussion mainly focuses on 'what is the role of teachers?' and 'why should they play the 'expected' role?'

As there are varied roles and expectations from teachers there cannot be just one definition assigned to teachers. In sections below you may come across various definitions of a teacher depending upon the tasks he/she performs. They may seem contradictory but they all together contribute to the understanding of the professional roles of teachers.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the changing role of a school teacher in historical perspective;
- explain the importance of teachers as instructional input;
- discuss the role of teachers in curriculum planning, transaction and evaluation;
- analyze the significance of mentoring as an important function of a teacher;
- discuss the functions of teacher as a professional;
- discuss the role of teacher in bringing about social change;
- discuss the functioning of school teachers in the context of State control; and
- appreciate the managing role of a teacher.

9.3 TEACHER AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL INPUT

The first image that comes to mind on thinking of teachers is that of the classroom teachers. Essentially teacher is identified with his/her classroom teaching. Knowledge in organized form is imparted to students in schools. Here, teacher functions as an instructional input. When we consider teacher as an instructional input, there is also the presumption that the teacher is in a position to impart knowledge. This implies that the teacher has a fund of knowledge and considerable experience at a level different from that of the students. As M.S.Gore (1967) noted, the instructional processes operate with the assumption that the teacher is ahead of his/her pupil in the pursuit of knowledge and that he/she can effectively guide the pupil. This notion brings in an element of distance and authority in the teacher-pupil relationship. This sense of distance and authority exists when teacher is the only source of knowledge. But if knowledge is available and accessible beyond the teacher and classroom, the teacher's word loses the ring of finality.

Today, knowledge is available and accessible to anyone who pursues it. It means teacher is no more the only custodian of knowledge. Therefore, in instructional processes, teacher is one of the sources of knowledge.

A teacher is invariably associated with instruction. Instruction as we know, takes place in a controlled environment leading to prespecified learning outcomes. That way instruction based learning is different from learning which is a result of interactivity with environment informally, incidentally or in an unorganized fashion. Here, the pre-specified learning outcome is determined or planned by the teacher. In order to achieve the prespecified learning outcome, the teacher organizes the learning activities/experiences.

As an instructional input the teacher has the following major concerns:

- Formulating the instructional objectives;
- Organizing learning experiences to achieve the instructional objectives; and
- Judging, if the instructional objectives are achieved.

At the input stage, the teacher decides upon instructional objectives and plans teaching-learning and evaluation strategies and activities to achieve these objectives. At the process stage, the teacher implements instructional strategies and guides the children through the process of learning. This is the stage where the teacher anticipates the realization of the instructional objectives. At the output stage, the teacher evaluates the learning outcomes to examine if the predecided instructional objectives have been achieved.

The teacher organizes the learning experiences keeping in mind the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the pupil. The overall development of the pupil is kept in mind while formulating the instructional objectives as well as evaluating learning outcomes. Evaluation of learning outcomes gives feedback to the teachers. This feedback helps the teacher on two counts. One, the teacher gets feedback on individual pupil's learning strengths and weaknesses. Another, the feedback helps the teacher to consider different teaching strategies for effective learning.

9.4 TEACHER AND CURRICULUM

You have studied in detail the meaning of curriculum, the types of curriculum and the steps and stages involved in the planning and development of a curriculum. In this section, we will discuss the role of teachers in curriculum planning and developmental transaction and evaluation.

Before colonial rule began, school education in India was not a well organized activity as we see today. There were village schools, where a single teacher taught a small group of students mostly from the same village. These village school teachers often taught a multi-grade class. In some cases, school education was family exclusive, that means the family appointed a teacher to educate its children. In all these cases, the teacher had a great deal of autonomy to choose the content to be taught. The teacher also enjoyed the freedom to decide how to teach the content. With the advent of colonial rule and colonial education, this situation underwent a drastic change. In essence, the school teacher's role began shrinking under the colonial rule. As Krishna Kumar (1991) pointed out:

Once the colonial administration had established an education system by mid-nineteenth century, the teacher could no longer decide on his own or on the basis of convention what to teach and how to teach. Tradition lost its hold when prescribed syllabi and text books came into being.

9.4.1 Curriculum Planning

Let's discuss the role of school teachers in the planning and development of curriculum and preparation of textbooks. Today, in our country, we have a highly structured education system. At the national level, the National Council for Educational Research and Training sets up a committee for developing a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for schools. Textbooks are prepared on the basis of the National Curriculum Framework. There are two State agencies involved in the preparation of textbooks, the NCERT at the national level and the State Councils as its counterpart in States. Some private agencies and NGOs have also prepared textbooks.

Now, coming to our point of discussion, what is the role of a school teacher in the development of the National Curriculum Framework and the preparation of textbooks? The draft of the National Curriculum Framework is said to be debated among interested parties that include school teachers and students. But in practice, no systematic attempt has been made to involve school teachers on a large scale in such debates. Text book writing also happens more or less the same way. The point I am trying to make is that there is no large scale participation by school teachers either in curriculum development or text book writing. Yet for most school teachers in India, the text book is the curriculum and syllabi. It is true, a prescribed textbook and syllabi take away the autonomy of the school teacher. Given the context, how does a school teacher enrich the educational input he/she brings to the classroom? A teacher must critically examine the content to be taught and then place it in social context. This will enable the teacher to incorporate local knowledge, experience and wisdom to the prescribed content and organizing the learning experience in the social context of the pupil. Teachers should consider textbooks as a broad framework and look beyond them for what to be taught. Under the bureaucratically controlled education system, textbooks become the curriculum for teachers.

In the year 2005, a new Curriculum Framework was brought out by the NCERT. This document is a definite departure from the previous documents. In the 2005 NCF more emphasis has been placed on incorporating local content. In the social science and humanities especially language, the content provided is in the form of teaching points expected to provide trigger points for further debate and discussion and accordingly evaluation is also expected to be different from before.

9.4.2 Curriculum Transaction

We have already discussed one of the most familiar and visible roles a teacher plays, in the instructional input. I have mentioned earlier that schooling as an organized activity was very much a colonial and post-colonial phenomena. Under the state

controlled school education system, individual teacher lost the freedom to choose and select what to be taught. However, teachers still have the autonomy to critically examine and challenge the prescribed curriculum and textbooks and play the role of a social pressure group. Curriculum transaction was another aspect where teacher role had to be redefined under organized school education.

As Krishna Kumar (1991) pointed out, it was not only that the teacher lost his/her autonomy with regard to what to teach but also the teacher lost autonomy with regard to pedagogy.

The syllabus and textbooks determined not only what had to be taught, but also the time within which the teaching had to be completed. This meant the teacher could no longer pace his pedagogy to suit his pupils.

The syllabus and textbooks tell the teacher what to do, how to do and within what time frame to accomplish each task. This meant that the teacher's activity was being controlled by forces external to the social context and time within which the teacher, student and school were placed. This also implied that the teacher was incapable of making pedagogical decisions. The State may try hard to influence the curriculum and curriculum transaction but it may not always happen that way. Schools and teachers as State functionaries are under tremendous pressure from the State at times to act in a particular manner. Even then, teachers are known for resistance against extreme ideological indoctrination. As Michael Apple (1986) has noted:

Thus the 'mere' fact that the state wishes to find 'more efficient' ways to organize teaching does not guarantee that this will be acted upon by teachers who have a long history of work practices and self-organisation once the doors to their rooms are closed.

Teachers may not have the autonomy to choose what to teach. But a great deal of autonomy can be exercised by the teachers in transacting the curriculum, in spite of the external agency control. How a teacher transacts the curriculum is as important or more so as the content of the curriculum. About human learning, Jerome Bruner (1996) says, it is best when it is participatory, proactive, collaborative and given over to constructing meanings rather than receiving them. Emphasizing the pivotal role of the teacher he says:

Learning in its full complexity involves the creation and negotiation of meaning in a larger culture, and the teacher is the vicar of the culture at large. You cannot teacher-proof a curriculum any more than you can parent-proof a family.

The Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire (1998) considered the function of education as developing critical consciousness. He said

We wanted a literacy programme which would be an introduction to the democratisation of culture, a programme with men as its subjects rather than as patient recipients, a programme which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, and in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention.

Both Bruner and Freire emphasize the process of learning as participative and meaning constructing rather than receiving. Once again reference need to be made to the NCF 2005 where crucial departure has been suggested in the process of curriculum transaction.

Aronowits and Giroux (1986) argue that as transformative intellectuals the task of the teacher is to help students develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to

overcome injustices and to change themselves. That teachers must utilize forms of pedagogy that treat students as critical agents, problematizes knowledge, utilizes dialogue, and makes knowledge meaningful, critical and ultimately emancipatory.

The above discussion suggests that the teacher's role in curriculum transaction is not the transmission of ideas into the minds of the pupils to be received passively. In fact the teacher's role is to help the pupils to use the tools of 'meaning making', reality construction and developing a critical vernacular that deals with problems experienced in daily life.

9.4.3 Evaluation

We have already discussed the erosion of teacher role in the context of 'what to teach?' and 'how to teach?'. Yet, another role, the teacher had to redefine under the colonial system of education was his/her role as an evaluator.

Before the colonial system of education, the teacher decided when to terminate the studentship. Under the new system of education, a predesigned, structured system of examination came into existence. The teacher lost the autonomy to decide 'what', 'when' and 'how' to evaluate. Termination of studentship was predecided irrespective of the pace of learning of individual pupil.

Today, in most schools, teacher-made tests are used for two purposes. They are formative testing and summative testing. We have discussed in the section, 'Teacher as instructional input', that teacher formulates instructional objectives. Testing and evaluation are conducted to determine if the instructional objectives are achieved. The teacher also uses test and evaluation as a feedback mechanism to improve teaching strategies.

There are two terminal level examinations in schools. In these two examinations teacher-made tests are not used. The 'what', 'when' and 'how' of these examinations are decided by external agencies. In other type of teacher-made tests evaluation is conducted in the school itself. The teacher decides what to evaluate and how to evaluate. As we have discussed earlier, the 'what' and 'how' to evaluate are based on the instructional objectives and the process of teaching-learning to realize these objectives. Accordingly, it is important that appropriate evaluation techniques are used for evaluating the teaching-learning process and instructional objectives. Based on the evaluation, the teacher makes value judgment on the performance of the pupil and the effectiveness of one's own teaching.

We have examined three aspects of curriculum and teacher's role. We have discussed that 'what' and 'how' of the curriculum are highly structured and externally controlled. The bureaucratic control in school education changed the role perception of school teaching.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define 'Classroom Transaction'.

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- 2) Define the Teacher's role as a Facilitator.

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- 3) Learner Participation in Pedagogic Process.

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9.5 TEACHER AS MENTOR

Planning and executing the best teaching learning strategy in a classroom is associated with good teaching. Children in school are in their formative years. At this stage, a teacher's role extends beyond good teaching and the good teacher image. Along with good teaching, mentoring is also necessary. This was pointed out in the UNESCO Report (1996), *Learning: The Treasure Within*, although the word mentoring is not mentioned:

It is at an early stage of basic education that the principal attitudes towards learning as well as the self-image of the learner are formed. The role of the teacher at this stage is crucial. The greater the handicaps the children coming to school have to overcome – in terms of poverty, difficult social environment or physical impairments – the greater the demands on the teacher. He or she, to be effective, must draw upon a broad range of teaching skills, as well as on the human qualities of empathy, patience and humility, as a compliment to authority.

While a good teacher knows all about the best teaching-learning strategies, a good mentor knows how to help students to set their goals and achieve them. Mentoring provides supportive environment to pupils to pursue their goals. Teacher-mentors help their pupils to build on their strengths and give moral and emotional support to overcome weaknesses and failures. Children coming from different socio-cultural, economic and family, background bring their own 'cultural capital' to the classroom. So, their needs are also different from each other.

Mentoring is not an organized activity in school. It is different from guidance and counselling, which is an organized activity. Guidance and counselling are done systematically in sessions. There is no such systematic approach a teacher-mentor adopts in mentoring. It is an ongoing process. Mentors have an inquiring and pleasant disposition that makes them approachable to students. The inquiring nature of the mentors make them reach out to students in difficulty. An effective mentor has strong interpersonal skills. They are non-judgmental in approach and have high level of empathy. They win the trust of students due to these qualities. They have excellent observational skills that help them to reach out to pupils and offer them constructive

feedback. They are patient listeners and never exercise authority to talk down to pupils. They exude warmth in their interaction with students. As the UNESCO Report pointed out, a teacher must have all these qualities along with best teaching skills for helping the students to realize their potential and achieve their goals.

9.6 TEACHER AND COMMUNITY

The Education Commission (1964-66) emphasized the role of education as the instrument of change. The report of the commission begins with the following statement:

The destiny of India is being shaped in her classrooms.

If education is a tool for change, then teachers undoubtedly are the agents to promote that change. School and teachers play a pivotal role in bringing about social change in the community. They lead the community in breaking the cultural barriers of illiteracy among women and socially disadvantaged group in the community. Schools sometimes collaborate with other government agencies to fight primary health problems by developing awareness among the students who take the good health message home. One of the primary responsibilities of the teacher is of promoting rational thinking among community members. Teachers must make efforts to participate in community activities and encourage the members to take socially progressive measures. The UNESCO Report (1996), *Learning: The Treasure Within*, discussed the role of teachers in achieving community goals:

Ways can be found for improving the performance and motivation of teachers in relationship they establish with local authorities. When teachers are themselves part of the community where they teach, their involvement is more clearly defined. They are more sensitive and responsive to the needs of their communities and better able to work towards community goals. Strengthening the links between the school and the community is therefore one of the most important ways of ensuring that the school is able to grow in symbiosis with its milieu.

Teachers must work with the community towards upholding our constitutional values of democracy, secularism, social justice, elimination of poverty and eradication of illiteracy. Schools as State apparatus are often used as portals of cultural reproduction by powers of dominance. Teachers as State functionaries, here, come under pressure to become agents of reproduction of the culture of the dominant group, therefore, maintaining the status quo of the dominant group. However, the role of the teacher is to write and rewrite the script of social change ensuring new socialization and social mobility. For such social change activism, a teacher must recognize and appreciate the knowledge generated by the marginal group, that is giving voice to the group from the periphery. A teacher who is an agent of social change, starts this process in the classroom by giving the learners voice, helping them to find their voice and making classroom process participatory.

Check Your Progress 2

- 4) List out any three educational activities you would like to carry out in the local community.

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9.7 TEACHER AS STATE APPARATUS

Before State control in school education began, the teacher received remuneration from the parents of the pupils, in kind or in cash. When school education came under the control of the State, the school teacher became a functionary of the State, working for a salary. Teaching became part of government service and teachers began to be considered as State apparatus by powers of dominance. Teachers have been summoned for State duties that have nothing to do with their profession and often at the cost of academic responsibilities and obligations but in recent past the judiciary has objected to such practices and also has forbidden State from deploying teachers for such duties. It is a common practice that teachers are asked to attend to electoral and census duties. This was a testimony to the status accorded to the school teacher's job as one of low ranking, that they can be asked to do a range of duties. This also meant, the State did not consider the school teacher's job as a specialized one. Teachers were also expected to carry out administrative duties in school. Their duties included admission, keeping records, distributing text books, sometimes fetching textbooks or any other material under any government scheme, for example, mid-day meal and such other jobs. In brief, the role definition of the school teacher underwent drastic change and the teacher became a State apparatus under the State control. Although, different Commissions have upheld the importance of the social status of teachers. For example, the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) said:

We have already referred to the importance of the teacher's social status. There is a growing feeling that the lead in this matter should be taken by persons in high public positions who should show special recognition of the status and dignity of teachers and treat them not on the basis of their salary and economic status but on the importance of the nation-building work that is entrusted to them. ... They must also be consulted in all important matters pertaining to education so as to strengthen their sense of professional responsibility.

About the social status and morale of the teachers, the Education Commission (1964-66) noted:

The efficiency of the teaching profession and its contribution to national development in general and educational improvement in particular, will depend largely on its social status and morale.

In spite of the recommendations of Commissions from time to time, school teachers, even today, are treated as government servants at the disposal of bureaucracy.

9.8 LET'S SUM UP

Traditional role of teachers changed drastically with the advent of colonial education in India. School education came under the control of bureaucracy. More organized and structured school education came into existence. As a result, pre-designed curriculum, syllabi and textbooks began to play a central role in school education. Under the circumstances, teachers lost their autonomy and freedom to choose 'what to teach' and 'how to teach'. Examination also became an impersonal exercise to accommodate the structural functioning of school education. Under the bureaucratic system of school education, teachers were needed only for their expertise in teaching not for curriculum development or decision-making. Matters did not change even after independence. The bureaucratic control in school education continued. Teachers do not play any major role in curriculum planning and development. Textbook development by and large still remains a centralized activity where teachers do not play a major role, although both curriculum transaction and evaluation are influenced by the textbooks. However, teachers need not confine their role to 'covering' the

textbooks. Instead, through curriculum transaction, teachers must help students to use tools for meaning making and constructing reality. Teachers as professionals must constantly upgrade knowledge and skills and keep abreast with the new and changing world order. As instructional input, teacher organizes various learning experiences for the students. For effective learning, teacher plans and executes different instructional strategies. As mentors, teachers provide support environment to individual students and facilitate and help them to realize their potential and achieve goals. Teachers play a crucial role in the social process of change. Working with the community, teachers influence the process of change. They help and support the community in challenging and questioning retrograde practices and stereo-types and making way for change and a new social order.

9.9 UNIT END EXERCISES

- 1) Select a textbook of your choice. Critically examine the content and suggest what improvements can be made in terms of content, methodology and evaluation.
- 2) Conduct a survey in the local community and find out the areas in which educational intervention is needed for bringing about social change. Discuss and work out a detailed plan with local community authorities.
- 3) Discuss the importance of advanced training in teaching profession. How can Teachers' Association promote advanced training among school teachers?

9.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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