

An innovative Practice in Teacher Education : Gram Jivan Padyatra

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ABSTRACT

NCFTE had suggested that the teacher-education programme should help prospective teachers to develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities. Moreover, it had been also suggested along with that, we need teachers who promote values of peace, democratic way of life, equality, justice, liberty, fraternity, secularism and zeal for social reconstruction. In this programme some courses are likely to provide space for engagement with issues and concerns of India's pluralistic nature; issues of identity, gender, equity, poverty and diversity. This would enable teachers to contextualize education and evolve a deeper understanding of its purpose and its relationship with society and humanity. In two years B.Ed. programme, NCTE framework has also given importance to these programs related to Enhancement of Professional Capacities (EPC) to develop professional capacities among student-teachers. Gram Jivan Padyatra can be helpful in developing the professional abilities which are essential for the student-teachers. It can be useful to orient student-teachers towards society and social problems. The paper describes an innovative practice 'Gram Jivam Padayatra' implemented in the higher education institute named Gujarat Vidyapith founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. The objectives and activities of this practice are also described in this paper so the people who are working in the field of teacher- education can understand and implement in their programme. The practice is very beneficial for the student-teacher, teacher education institute and society.

Key Words : Innovative practice, Teacher education, Student-teacher

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi has said that education is a fundamental tool for the development of social reconstruction and social consciousness. But common teachers and teachers-educators are quite lethargic about their role and responsibility, therefore the entire process of education is confined to reading, writing, and counting; At most, teachers complete the syllabus required for the exam. (National Commission on teachers, 1983). NCF (2005) also suggested that a teacher should be able to accept social responsibilities, build a better world. NCFTE (2009, p. 21) has suggested that the programme should help teachers or potential teachers to develop social sensitivity and consciousness and finer human sensibilities. It had been also suggested along with that, we need teachers who promote values of peace, democratic way of life, equality, justice, liberty, fraternity, secularism and zeal for social reconstruction (NCFTE 2009, p.

23). It is also expected from the teacher that it is not enough just to work as a teacher but the teacher should also be able to understand the students and the parents. But, are our teacher-training institutes successful in fulfilling this expectation? Even today, to meet all these expectations, do we have any special plans, experiments or practices?

NCFTE (2009, p. 30) also expected that in teacher-education programme some courses are likely to provide space for engagement with issues and concerns of India's pluralistic nature; issues of identity, gender, equity, poverty and diversity. This would enable teachers to contextualize education and evolve a deeper understanding of its purpose and its relationship with society and humanity. It is also important to understand the classroom as a social context, as it provides a setting for interaction, generation of dialogue and the opportunity to appreciate diverse perspectives on a given issue.

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In two years B.Ed. programme, NCTE framework (2014, p.2) had also given important to the programmes related to Enhancement of Professional Capacities (EPC) to develop professional capacities among student-teachers. And it has been emphasized that during the internship, student-teachers will have to act like in-service teachers, which includes planning, teaching, evaluation and interaction with school teachers, community members and children. Gram Jivan Padyatra can be helpful in developing aforementioned professional abilities which is essential for the student-teachers.

Regarding the social orientation of the current teacher-education programme Joshi and Dixit (2012) said that the teacher's duty has been limited to only the classroom teaching and its related skills are taught in teacher-training. As a result, student-teachers are neither aware of social problems nor they are interested in the solving that problems. Due to lack of adequate training in this direction social commitment is not developed among student-teachers. This type of teacher neglects the society and keeps on busy in classroom teaching. Dixit (2017) also said that there are many reasons for the failure of the current education system, disinclination of teachers towards the society is also one of the reason for this.

Gram Jivan Padyatra can lead student-teachers towards society and social problems. Since 2007, this practice is implemented by Prof. Sudarshan Aayangar (Vice Chancellor) and Dr. Rajendra Khimani (Registrar) in the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad as a part of Gandhian Philosophy based teaching-learning process. The paper describes objectives and activities of this practice so the people who are working in the field of teacher education can understand it and implement in their institute or university. The practice is very beneficial for the student-teachers, teacher education institute and society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GRAM JIVAN PADIYATRA

The main objectives of the Gram Jivan Padiyatra implemented by Gujarat Vidyapith are as follows :

1) To cultivate Gandhian values among student-teachers, 2) To increase social consciousness among student-teachers, 3) To explain the role of the student-teachers in social development, 4) To enable the student-teachers to solve social problems, 5). To enable the student-teachers to be sensitive towards social problems, 6). To make the student-teachers self-reliant in daily routines, 7). To develop various qualities among student-teachers such as leadership; unity; hard work; simplicity and regularity, 8) To teach the social interaction skill to student-teachers, 9). To develop the social commitment among student-teachers, 10). To teach the student-teachers how to use various methods and techniques for community education, 11). To orient student-teachers towards society, 12). To cultivate professional skills, abilities, qualities and creativity among student-teachers

THE PRACTICE

The practice Gram Jivan Padyatra implemented by Gujarat Vidyapith is organized for five days. On the first day, a group of eight to ten student-teachers and a guide teacher-educator travels towards the village of the district as decided by the Department.

This group of pedestrians (student-teachers) walks in five villages during five days. During the five days student-teachers prepare breakfast, lunch or dinner themselves. They travel from one village to another by walking. It also includes visiting places like farms, temples, rivers, lakes or historical places along the way.

If possible, every member of the team takes a meal at villagers' homes. The member tries to know closely villagers' daily routine, occupation, employment, local issues, challenges and problems.

The team members also try to make the people aware through street plays. These street plays cover local, social, environmental and educational issues. They also demonstrate solutions through the street play. These street plays are performed in public places of the village with the intention of bringing them out of their old traditional and insensible ideas.

Poster exhibition is also organized by the team members for the awareness of villagers about addiction, savings, literacy, agriculture, education and sanitation.

In the village, the team member tries to interact with the Sarpanch, Talati, Government servants, Children, Housewives, Farmers, Laborers, Teachers and elders. They also visit school, post office, bank and dairy. The team members reflect on the local problems and also think about solution.

A cultural programme is organized at night by the student-teachers. Local problems centered dramas, songs, acting, mimes, group songs, folk-lore; lectures are performed.

Gram Jivan Padyatra and its activities are conducted taking into consideration the condition, co-operation and environment of the village,. The practice has no fixed schedule; some changes are made according to the requirement. However, a framework and guidelines has been decided for the practice. Various activities are conducted from 5-30 am. to 10-30 pm. Outline of the activities conducted during the Gram Jivan Padyatra is given by Joshi and Dixit (2012), which is as under:

Morning

05-00 am to 05-30 am	Wake up and bath
05-30 am to 06-00 am	Going round the village with singing song
06-00 am to 07-30 am	Self-cooked breakfast
07-30 am to 09-30 am	Departure towards the village by walking
09-30 am to 12-30 pm	Interaction with villagers

Afternoon

12-30 pm to 02-30 pm	Self-cooked Lunch and recess
02-30 pm to 05-30 pm	Community education related activities
05-30 pm to 06-00 pm	Recess

Evening

06-00 pm to 07-00 pm	Preparation of Meeting at night
07-00 pm to 08-00 pm	Dinner at villagers' home

Night

08-00 pm to 10-00 pm	Meeting at night /Cultural programme
10-00 pm to 10-30 pm	Review of the whole day programme and planning for next day

The teacher-education process which has become limited to the classroom can be extended to the society through the practice. Directly or indirectly the practice is very advantageous for the student-teachers, teacher education institutes and society.

ADVANTAGES TO THE STUDENT-TEACHERS

There are many benefits to the student-teachers from the activities. Kapadia (2018) has also highlighted the advantages of the programme. Some of the major advantages are: 1) Gandhian values are cultivated among the student-teachers, 2). It increases the social orientation among the students. 3) Student-teachers understand their role in social development and become more sensitive towards society and social problems, 4). Student-teachers become self-reliant in daily routine, 5). Professional skills such as singing, acting, writing, narration, conversation, meditation etc. are developed among student-teachers which are very essential for an effective teacher; 6). Different artistic, creative and constructive abilities develop among the student-teachers; 7). Some good qualities such as leadership, unity, hard work, simplicity, punctuality are developed among the student-teachers; 8). Student-teachers become conscious about the problems of villagers, social problems, and environmental problems; 9). It develops the abilities to organize and implement different programme to solve social problems are develop among student-teachers.

ADVANTAGES TO THE SOCIETY

The practice is very beneficial for the society. These are the main benefits to society from the practice: 1). The practice can lead to social

consciousness and social awareness among the people; 2). It is very useful for social harmony, cooperation and collaboration; 3). People can be awakened to superstitions, trials, addiction, superstitious beliefs; 4). People can be motivated to focus on social problems and solve them; 5). The attitudes and thinking of people can be changed.6). The information of government schemes can be useful to the village and community can be made accessible to the people; 7). People can be motivated to plan and implement different programs to solve social, environmental and educational issues.

ADVANTAGES TO THE INSTITUTE

There are many benefits to the institute from the activities. Some of the major benefits are: 1) The organization can get public partnership for various programmes; 2) Activities of the institutes can be advertised to the society; 3). Strong relations between the organization and the society can be established; 4). Public cooperation can be obtained for institutional need; 5). The practice can be a plus point or an innovative practice at the time of institutional inspection done by a regulatory body like UGC, NAAC, NCTE.

FACILITIES AND RESOURCES REQUIRED TO CONDUCT THE PRACTICE

There are no special facilities or resources required to conduct the practice. Teachers who have leadership quality, managerial skill and public relation capacity are key person of the practice. Teachers who are enthusiastic, who can lead, can plan the program by visiting the village authorities are necessary for this Gram Jivan Padyatra. Those teachers who are interested in this type of extension work are requirement for the practice, Otherwise the practice become a formality. In addition, it has to be allocated for five

days for the programmes in institutional planning. Budget for the programme has to be managed by the team or institute.

It is rightly written in our National Education Policy-1986, that the quality of the people of the nation is not more than their teachers. The practice can be useful in future in the educational, social, and psychological development of student-teachers. Whatever expectations kept by the education commission appointed before and after independence, it can be fulfilled by the practice. Not only in teacher education institutes but the practice should be accepted in every higher education institutes of the nation.

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