

Educational thought of Dr. Zakir Hussain on training of a teacher

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On the quality of teachers depends the quality of education. The problem of preparing good teachers has, therefore, often been the centre of thinking of educational philosophers, Pedagogues and practitioners whether of East or West. For instance, Plato in the Republic sketched the question of teachers' preparation particularly in relation to his over all ideas on education. Similarly, in the Jesuit system it was forbidden to take to teaching without undergoing proper training. In that, the system of teacher training has been considered at length and thoroughly by Jesuits.¹ Pope Pius XI believed that perfect schools were the result not so much of good methods as good teachers; for this reason teachers should be "thoroughly prepared and well-grouped"² for their work. This is very well brought out by other schools of thought that teacher's training tend to make him perfect in every way and in every respect of his job as well as personality, to help him leave a positive and wholesome impact on the development of children put to his charge. Comenius, Froebel and Pestalozzi also gave their similar thought on this problem., So did Dewey who discussed the principles of teacher training in "The Relation of Theory to Practice" which deals with he practice of teaching in detail in order to raise the work of a teacher into a profession.³ And in so far as Eastern, especially Indian Philosophy is concerned, its fundamental focus is on making teaching the noblest of all professions requiring the teacher to possess not only personal and professional excellence but also the wisdom of all ages and sages, which, in turn, makes the selection and training of teachers deserve utmost care. He has not simply to be the school master, but also a friend, philosopher and worthy guide of mankind and indeed the destroyer of all darkness that baffles

mankind in one form or the other. It naturally highlights the imperative need for a perfect system of teacher training.

However, the sources of divergence amongst the existing philosophies of teacher training are many; and as pointed out by Shukla⁴, some of them view it in terms of the nature of learning, sources of knowledge, aims of education, role of education etc. But all these things, in a way, point to the fact that quality of education of the teacher has invariably a direct bearing on the nature and quality of education in schools.

Dr. Zakir Husain also knew that even in normal circumstances the quality of teachers generally determines the quality of education³ and, therefore, the proper training of teachers is perhaps the most important condition for the success of an educational system. He gave his thoughtful consideration to the problem of how best to prepare teachers. After having conceptualized the kind of teacher he would require for his system of education, he expressed himself extensively on the problem of teacher training that might produce such a teacher who could suit the requirement. He strongly believed that if general education is to be related with the main stream of national life, it should be responsive to national needs. So should teacher training too not be allowed to stand in isolation from the main stream of national life that is, from the school as also from the community. The fact that education must have relevance to personal as well as social life as also to the needs and aspirations of the people, necessitates that teacher training should also have the same kind of relevance. It is essential that teacher training should comprise, among other things, an understanding of the new educational and social ideology inspiring the

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system of education, combined with enthusiasm for working it out.⁶

Dr. Zakir Husain prefers to describe the kind of school experiences that would help children grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, aesthetically, culturally and spiritually before spelling out competencies he would need in teachers. He would prefer to prepare such teachers as are sensitive and alive to conditions conducive to the proper growth of students. This would involve developing certain knowledge, attitudes and qualities in teachers which could be gained only through proper training besides essential skills needed to successfully carry out his job specifications. According to Dr. Zakir Husain, teachers should not only understand theory of teaching but also how to put it into practice in their day to day work. He thus, commended that both theory and practice have an important place in the training of teachers.

Obviously, the most characteristic element according to Dr. Zakir Husain is seeking in teacher training wholesome integration between theory and practice of education as also between pedagogy and subject-content. Any kind of over-emphasis on either of them would defeat the very purpose of training as it would only result in lop-sided development of the trainees. Too much emphasis on theory and abstract principles bereft of considerations for practical efficacy or on practice of teaching without any reference or relevance to the theory of teaching must simply be infructuous. In traditional teacher training programmes and institutions, a host of teaching techniques and teaching methods are preached rather than practiced leaving a great deal of gap between theory and practice such that most of the teacher trainees leave the method learnt by them during training as a legacy to the training institution itself. The result is a conspicuous culture lag between the training college methodology and the real school or classroom situation. Therefore, in order to be really tangible, training of teachers must not only bridge the gap between theory and practice but also between the training college and the school. Theories become meaningful only when they are made relevant to practice and vice versa. So do training colleges and their programmes vis-à-vis schools and school practices. In isolated training programmes, the trainees tend to be too intellectual, caring too much for abstract theories rather than for their practical implications for and meaningful interaction with real classroom situation. Dr. Zakir Husain was fully alive to isolation of these kinds and, therefore wanted teacher training to prepare versatile practitioners and teachers to meet actual classroom needs, aspirations and programmes of the school vis-à-vis socio-cultural

development of every person.

It is in this particular context that Dr. Zakir Husain wanted integration of educative work and cultural goods at every level of the educational process. His basic concern was how to inculcate positive values among children through work and education and how best to prepare teachers to help them discharge their onerous role and responsibilities to school children and society. He emphasized that a teacher should possess adequate knowledge of theory and sufficient practical skill and experience in crafts beside pedagogy. He wanted teachers to exploit the potentialities of crafts for teaching different subjects through the technique of correlation. In that a teacher must be trained to become a method master well versed in the art of teaching and correlating different subjects, life process and activities. Obviously, Dr. Zakir Husain wanted to develop a task-oriented teacher education programme to help teachers effectively handle a variety of tasks, inside and outside the class, such as identifying and formulating the objectives of teaching a given subject, communicating an idea or a concept, demonstrating an experiment, organizing a project or a co-curricular activity, guiding an emotionally disturbed or a disabled child, winning over confidence and cooperation of parents, playing leadership role etc. He emphasized that instead of imparting theoretical understanding of the principles of educational psychology, educational philosophy, educational sociology etc. teacher's training programme should aim at the application of these principle into practice teaching and other practical work involved in the teaching-learning process.

What Dr. Zakir Husain propounded for training of teachers through crafts was also well supported by Gandhiji who was of the opinion that the teacher-trainee should be trained to understand how he could have derived his knowledge of mathematics, history, geography etc. through a particular craft; he should be trained to reorganize, reset and reorient his knowledge in a new setting, the setting of teaching as well as learning rather than mere learning which he had hitherto been doing during his career as a student. He must become a true student-teacher, learning and teaching at the same time, than being a mere student. For, he must at least apply all his knowledge to the process and purpose of teaching. He, therefore, needs to be trained for a new kind of orientation during training as teacher. He must be made to develop receptivity as well as eagerness to become an effective teacher.

Besides, a trainee comes for teacher-training after gaining some knowledge of school subjects. In addition, he must also possess basic pedagogical skills and

knowledge of cultural goods to make his training meaningfully effective and socially relevant. He owes an obligation to the cultural goods and also to his students. The teacher's effectiveness depends on his ability to interpret the cultural goods and to develop insight into the process of cultural goods which led to its creation. Through the interpretation and appreciation, the teacher can make the student to realize the values which the creators of that cultural goods might have realized. Teacher-training must, therefore, focus attention on three fundamental aspects viz., the teacher, the taught and cultural goods. The teacher must be made critically and constructively conscious of how these aspects could be integrated to obtain fruitful educational results.

From the above discussion, we clearly see that there are two conditions involved in what Dr. Zakir Husain propounded. The first condition goes back to the student-teacher's own knowledge both of the craft and cultural goods. This should be sufficient and wide enough so that the ground could be laid down in the prescribed syllabus of the training course, in the hope that the would be teacher will be able to advantageously cope up with unexpected questions and unanticipated situations. The other condition is the fact that the teacher should be professionally equipped to be able to observe the mental responses and processes of students as the interaction of activity based craft and cultural goods take place with other educational forces. Unless the teacher has mastered the craft or cultural goods, unless he is thoroughly at home with the craft and cultural goods, he will not be free to observe and interpret the student's reactions. The teacher must be able to identify, analyse, interpret all forces of bodily and mental responses of student viz., puzzled situations, boredom, mastery, dawning of new idea, feigned attention, showing off etc. These three conditions as mentioned above, are common to all other subjects which the teacher has to teach. In general terms, it can be said that any teacher training programme should take care of these three things.

Indeed, Dr. Zakir Husain wanted the teachers to be trained as to help them teach academic subjects not simply in traditional style, but verily through the strength of work and cultural goods. They must be trained to develop a strong feel of social sensitiveness and responsibility. He firmly believed:

They must have an intellectual interest in the life and activities of their human environment and a thorough grasp of the intimate relationship between school and society.

They should also be provided with actual life experiences to help them develop their inquiring mind and

problem-solving faculties. As "our educational process fails to put our trainees on road to discovery by not providing concrete experiences such as observing, perceiving, investigation, doing etc." It is only through providing opportunity of working in real life situations that the trainee is likely to develop an insight into and sensitivity to social problems as also positive attitude and values. Besides, this will enable him to develop communication and practical skill to serve the community. In other words, they should be trained to identify work situations, social as well as natural, and also to understand their objectives and processes. The so-called theoretical training can be meaningfully concretized through work and life situations such as flora and fauna, rivers, lakes, mountains, folklores, songs and dances, crafts and other cultural goods of the community including festivals etc. They should also be trained to keep close contact with artisans, mechanics, carpenters, farmers and other community resources for their proper education and upbringing relevant to their social milieu as also to augment their better participation in community work and national reconstruction.

Needless to say, Dr. Zakir Husain, like most educational thinkers, was aware of the ever-expanding frontiers of knowledge. He never hoped that any amount of learning or training could ever produce a finished product or a perfect teacher. In his own words, "our object is not to produce academically perfect scholars." He wanted instead to produce skilled, intelligent, educated men possessed with right mental orientation, who should be keen to serve the community and anxious to help the coming generation realize and understand the cherished life ideals and values. A teacher must be trained to alive to this fundamental role besides being a learner all his life. This is all the more evident in the face of fast galloping exploration in science, technology and other dimensions of knowledge. This also makes sufficient room for on-the-job training via refresher courses and frequent re-orientation programmes beside encouraging self-learning, or self-training, to prevent him from becoming a fossilized teacher after a lapse of time. To obviate the apparent stalemate, Dr. Zakir Husain, aptly laid a great deal of emphasis on two major considerations which should be properly developed during training of teachers. These are: (i) Professional pride and (ii) intellectual interest. In his own words:

If professional pride has been quickened and intellectual interest has been generated, many of these teachers will continue their study privately and try to obtain a more thorough acquaintance with certain subjects.

These seem to be the major thrust of Dr. Zakir Husain's educational philosophy and especially of his

concept of teacher training. He wanted teachers to be initiated in formulating projects and scheme of correlated studies linking life, learning and activity. Teachers must be trained to handle different subjects not in isolation as mutually exclusive branches of knowledge but a inter-related aspects of a growing and developing activity.

The teacher training as envisaged by Dr. Zakir Husain is practical and relevant to the present day needs; it is task-oriented, value-based and responsive to national needs; it is also consistent with accepted national goals and values. However, what is most fundamental in his philosophy is that training of teacher is a must whether one is born teacher or otherwise. It is often said that a good teacher is born and not made. Dr. Zakir Husain admitted that there are some qualities of good teacher which are innate and inborn, verily given by God, as a gift. But still some qualities of a good teacher could be acquired and if given by God, they could be made more prominent. A person born with essential qualities of a good

teacher, can be made a still better teacher by receiving proper training.

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