

1. Teaching the Teacher

Context:

- Inadequacies in planning, regulation, policy and organisational structures in the teacher education space must be addressed, for the sake of the country's future.

Brief Background:

- An assessment of the quality of teacher education can be a status check on the schooling system. Teachers remain at the heart of the issue, and translating schooling into learning is a critical challenge.
- The learning crisis is evident in the fact that almost half of the children in grade 5 in rural India cannot solve a simple two-digit subtraction problem.
- While 67 per cent of children in grade 8 in public schools score less than 50 per cent in competency-based assessments in mathematics.

Key Issues in the Teacher' Education System:

- On the one hand, India is dealing with a scenario of significant teacher vacancies, which are to the tune of almost 60-70 per cent in some states. But, on the other hand, there are 17,000-odd Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) that are responsible for preparing teachers through programmes such as the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), and Diploma in Elementary Education.
- Not only are these TEIs generating a surplus supply of teachers, they are also producing poor-quality teachers.
- Besides it being reflected in the dismal state of learning across schools, the pass-percentage in central teacher eligibility tests that stipulate eligibility for appointments as teachers has not exceeded 25 per cent in recent years.

Reasons behind the dismal performance of the teacher's Education System:

- **Inadequacies of planning, regulation, policy and Organisational Structures** are the major contributing factor for this dismal performance.
- The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and its four regional committees are responsible for teacher education in India.
- However, the Act assigns **disproportionate power to the regional committees which grant programme affiliation while the Council has been rendered Toothless.**

- Perverted incentives, widespread corruption and commercialisation have resulted in a massive proliferation of sub-standard TEIs.
- About 90 per cent of these institutes are privately owned and majority of them are standalone institutes, running single programmes with as few as 50 students.
- While most of these TEIs are financially unviable, some function out of tiny rooms with duplicate addresses, and a few could even be selling degrees at a fixed price.
- **These institutes function in isolation from the rest of the higher education system**, and there is no system to assess and accredit them.
- There is no systemic sieve to ensure the entry of only motivated and meritorious individuals into the teacher education space.
- Adding to the **mix of challenges is an outdated teacher preparation curriculum framework** that was last updated over a decade ago.
- Further, on the governance front, multiple agencies have oversight on teacher education.

Reforms need to be taken:

- **Need for accurate real-time database of the number and details of teacher Education Institutes**, students enrolled and programmes offered. Such data could be used to create a comprehensive plan for the sector, devising the optimal number of TEIs, their regional spread and programme-wise intake.
- **An accurate system of assessment and accreditation** must be developed to ensure high-quality teacher education.
- The **National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC)**, responsible for quality-standards in higher education, have only covered 30 per cent of all institutes since its establishment back in 1994.
- A **common accreditation framework** should be designed through a consultative process including all relevant stakeholders to facilitate its wider acceptability.
- A **transparent and credible system of accreditation** could form the bedrock for weeding out substandard TEIs and propelling quality improvements in the rest.
- Another core determinant of quality is the **curriculum which must be regularly revamped and revised** to ensure that our teacher education system is aligned to global standards.
- There is a need for shift towards integrated four-year subject-specific programmes to be housed in multidisciplinary colleges and universities.

-
- This could also potentially serve as an avenue for India to outsource its surplus high-quality teachers to over 70 countries that face a teacher shortage.
 - **Reforms must be driven by administrative will and executed through a well-established Governance Mechanism,** clearly establishing ownership and accountability for set work streams across multiple agencies.

Conclusion:

- India is estimated to have the largest workforce within the next decade. This means that a population bulge is on the cusp of entering the higher education ecosystem now.
- The pressing need of the hour is to focus on providing the best quality teacher education to those who aspire to build the future of this country.

Source: The Indian Express

