

# Towards an Understanding of the Work of Teacher Education Professoriate in India

Higher Education for the Future  
6(1) 101–114, 2019

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DOI: 10.1177/2347631118802732  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/hef](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/hef)



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## Abstract

Reforming the teacher education system has been a key government policy towards improving school education in India. While recent curriculum and governance reforms articulate a new vision of teacher education that underscores a symbiotic relationship between teacher education and school education, it fails to engage enough with the most important participant of the teacher education system—the teacher educator. Changes to curriculum and governance process in the absence of a pro-active engagement of teacher educators with the reforms can do little to influence the teacher education processes and outcomes. The work of pre-service teacher educators is complex because their responsibilities relate to both school and higher education. The distinctiveness of their work, identity and professional development has always been marginalized in educational discourse. This article analyses select educational documents to examine the construction of work and identity of higher education-based teacher educators. It proposes the development of a professional framework of practice through a collective process, which would help understand the work of teacher educators and offer various possibilities for their professional development.

## Keywords

Teacher educators, profession, education policy, teacher education reforms, collectives of practice, professional development

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## Context

Teacher Education in India stands at a critical historical juncture with several reforms that have taken place in recent times. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) (NCTE, 2009), Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education (Government of India [GoI], 2012) and the NCTE (Recognition, Norms and Procedures) Regulations 2014 (NCTE(2014)) are progressive steps in the reform process. It is not surprising that such systematic efforts at reform would come to face contestations and debates from several directions. While it cannot be denied that these efforts would impinge upon the academic life of institutions in terms of student learning and an entire overhaul of the system, what has not received enough attention is the work, identity and professional development of teacher educators. These reforms aimed at strengthening the quality of teacher education in India fail to engage adequately with a crucial link—the teacher educator and her profession of *teacher educating*.<sup>1</sup> India has one of the largest systems of teacher education in the world with nearly 13,000 institutions. These include the university departments and their affiliated colleges, government-aided institutions, private institutions and open universities. They have several under-compensated and under-qualified teacher educators. Teacher educators are also a highly under-researched group in India. The demand for teacher educators will continue, as the expansion of elementary and secondary schooling has led to an increase in the demand for teachers. The system will soon include teacher educators emerging from the newly designed two-year teacher educator programme, who will require continued support. Realization of the curriculum and governance reforms would require a re-articulation of the work and continued professional development of teacher educators.

This article examines the uniqueness of the work of teacher educators in higher education institutions (HEIs). It analyses issues and concerns of teacher educators as framed within the policy perspectives. It makes a plea to the teacher educators to come together as a collective and take onus of their profession. This article concludes with a proposal for a communally articulated framework of professional practice of teacher educators. Recognizing the domain of teacher education as an academic area of study in higher education, the article focuses on teacher educators in higher education-based programmes such as BEd, BEI.Ed, BSc-BEd, BA-BEd and MEd programmes. Much of the understandings and experiences of this group is not explicitly documented or available for reflection and critique, as this group has been inadequately researched. So the author relies on her own practical experience of being a teacher educator and working with this educational community.

## Teacher Educators and the Higher Education System

In general, teacher educators bring under their fold a variety of educators concerned with the development of pre-service and serving teachers at all levels of education such as early childhood, elementary and secondary and across

categories such as special education and physical education. Teacher educators based in HEIs engage in the professional preparation of prospective and serving elementary teachers and secondary teachers. The higher education system has 30 central universities, 140 state universities, 28 private universities and 28 deemed universities that offer BEd and MEd programmes (NCTE, 2017a). Further, among the 11,808 teacher education institutions (TEIs), which filled the mandatory affidavit required by NCTE in 2017, 49.8 per cent offer the BEd programme and only 6.13 per cent offer the MEd programme (NCTE, 2017b). There is no publicly available data on the number of teacher educators. The centrality of teacher educators in teachers' development of content knowledge, skills, pedagogical reasoning and moral dispositions is well-recognized and encapsulated succinctly by Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, and Whitty (2000, p. 36), 'what student teachers learn during their initial training is as much influenced by who is responsible for teaching them as it is by the content of the curriculum'. Yet, this group has been neglected in India in the broader educational discourse. This may be partly due to the uneasy academic positioning of teacher education as a professional field of study and the isolation of teacher education colleges from university life. The elementary teacher education programmes are located in the District Institutes of Educational Training (DIETs) (except the BEI.Ed programme offered by the University of Delhi) which are in the non-university sector. Secondary teacher education programmes are based in higher education and the majority function inside stand-alone colleges of education. Origins of this can be traced back to the nineteenth-century Normal Schools. The institutions that emerged from the Normal Schools for the initial preparation of teachers were established as teacher education colleges. Contrary to the expectation that a comprehensive and unified knowledge base would integrate teacher education across different stages (Seshadri, 2003), a hierarchy of institutions was created. Many commission reports have lamented about the hierarchy and recommended for an enhanced status of the elementary teacher education. The marginal participation from the DIETs and other DEd colleges led secondary teacher education become the dominant representative and focus of reference for many decisions. However, the establishment of the BEI.Ed programme at University of Delhi in 1994 not only attempted to enhance the status of elementary teacher education but also underscored the place of academic traditions in teacher education by locating the BEI.Ed programme within the colleges of general education. This was an attempt to break the intellectual isolation of teacher education from other disciplines. The isolation has been so deep that wider academic discourses, policy debates, professional development and research are less familiar to the teacher education community. A welcome move in the recent NCTE Regulations, 2014, is the stipulation that new teacher education programmes must be offered only in composite institutions that have multi-disciplinary or multi-teacher education programmes. Such reforms that break the insulation between teacher education and other disciplines, teacher education and schools and teacher education and university life hold the potential to enhance the status of teacher education in higher education and re-evaluate the contribution that teacher educators can make to teacher education and school education.

As elsewhere in the world (e.g., England, the Netherlands), teacher educators in India too cannot claim to higher academic status. Raina (1995), in his paper, 'Teacher Educators in India: In Search of Identity', observes: 'the field of teacher education attract mediocre individuals who have drifted to the field without specific motive or preparation, their professional productivity and research capabilities are very limited, their academic life is almost bankrupt and they show tremendous resistance to change'. Alluding to Raina's remarks, Seshadri (2003) states: 'strong words indeed but the truth they contain cannot be wished away'. While this may be true even today, it would be inapposite to ignore the work of teacher educators who are deeply invested in the intellectual and moral development of their student teachers. The work that they carry out, despite the severe constraints posed by the institutional, systemic, cultural and structural context, requires dire attention.

The work of teacher educators is a complex affair and is distinct from other higher education faculty because it relates to both school and higher education. Their responsibilities seem to include an amorphous category—teaching, research, partnership with schools, developing materials, supervising student teaching at schools, academic administration, curriculum design and service to the institution. The practice of teaching about teaching requires scholarly and practical knowledge about schooling and teacher education. The key challenge to the teacher educator lies in the task of moving between these two worlds of knowledge and bringing to fore the tacit knowledge of teaching to the prospective teachers. Therefore, the ways in which teacher educators understand and experience their own practice are central to the ways in which 'teaching about teaching' is carried out.

Their engagement with the problems of school practice also makes their enculturation into higher education complicated. In other words, they need to navigate the tensions created between the need to have a practical vision of teacher preparation and the university norms of academic inquiry. The former demands relevance, practicality, competence and skills, while the latter stresses on scholarship, theoretical fruitfulness and disciplinary rigour (Taylor, 1983). This dual demand from the teacher educator to be a practitioner and a researcher makes their work unique and complex in comparison with other academic groups.

Third, teacher educators teach in 'professional' programmes while 'liberal' programmes focus on critical comprehension of theory and collective reflections, exploratory readings and inquiry through research, both theoretical and empirical, and professional programmes have a distinct additional emphasis on hands-on and field-based experiences, deep and protracted reflective practice, development of competencies and skills and inculcation of ethical principles that characterize the profession (NCTE, 2015). Teacher educators as teachers of teachers are 'professionals' and have the challenge of meeting the rigorous criteria of a profession, which commonly includes depth of knowledge, long duration of professional education and the ideal of service and professional ethics.

Last, the teacher educators in HEIs have to align themselves to the requirements of multiple higher education regulatory authorities such as the University

Grants Commission (UGC), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE). These bodies have separate sets of rules, procedures and regulations on issues such as recognition, admissions, student size, infrastructure, curriculum, faculty and administrative staff recruitment and academic calendar which TEIs and teacher educators are expected to comply with. Key among these has been the influence of the NCTE. It was established as a non-statutory body housed at the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1973, and it became a statutory regulatory body in 1993 to monitor and inspect the TEIs. On it rests the responsibility of maintaining the quality of the TEIs, developing curriculum frameworks and establishing norms for the recruitment and functioning of TEIs. It has had an uneasy relationship with the TEIs, just as any other inspecting institution. For years, it was charged as being a corrupt institution. In 2017, an amendment was made to the NCTE 2014 Regulations, which made it mandatory for TEIs recognized by the NCTE to obtain accreditation from NAAC within five years of their recognition (NCTE, 2017c). Its accreditation framework is referred to as TeachR (NCTE, 2017d). To accomplish this, the TeachR has identified four pillars for accreditation of institutions—physical assets, academic assets, teaching–learning practices and learning outcomes. The quality of each teacher educator’s work will be assessed on two dimensions: teaching and learning quality and research. The criteria for assessment remain ambiguous. However, the fear of withdrawal of recognition compels the TEIs and their staff to comply with the norms of NCTE and other regulatory authorities.

For a long time now, these distinct aspects of teacher educators in HEIs have been kept at the periphery by policymakers and planners. Teacher educators too have been passive implementers of curriculum and governance reforms, ignoring the possibility of taking charge of their profession. Their pro-activeness towards the growth and cohesion of their professional group has been poor. Their expertise as knowledge producers or as a community of learners or as public intellectuals, contributing either to the field of teacher education or school education, has been weak. Further, absence of scrutiny, reflection, critique or research have led to a neglect of these professoriate. This article attempts to bring to fore the complexity and uniqueness of this profession and makes a plea to revamp this profession.

## **The Work of Teacher Educating: Perspectives of Educational Documents**

Just as in many other countries, reforming the teacher education system has been a prime strategy in government policy towards improving school education and professionalizing the work of teachers. While changes in the field of teacher education since independence have been extensive and focused on the curriculum, duration of programmes, professional development of teachers, ICT in teacher education, the work and responsibilities of teacher educators have received relatively

inadequate attention in educational documents. Educational reforms change not only what educators do but who they are (Ball, 2003). Teacher educators' work and identity is dependent on each country's political and economic structures and processes. Much of these processes are subject to continuous changes. Regulatory regimes, institutional and structural constraints, curricular changes and accountability structures also influence the work of teacher educators. The following section attempts to understand how the work of teacher educators has been conceptualized in the official discourse by examining educational documents (especially the post-independence policy and curriculum documents) that have been significantly influential in shaping the reforms in teacher education. An analysis of the profile and expectations from teacher educators in these documents will allow for a discussion and critique and may help rearticulate the contributions that teacher educators can make towards teacher education and schooling.

All educational documents recognize school teaching as a profession. In view of this, teachers educators also have to bear the cross of belonging to a *profession* (italics in original) (Seshadri, 2003, p. 197). The criteria of a profession-specialized body of knowledge, entry qualification, professional organization, professional development and professional ethics are taken as a frame for the analysis of educational documents. Some of these components are examined to understand the constructions of this professional group in the documents. Select educational documents that have considerably shaped the contemporary discussions of teacher education have been identified. These include three commission/committee reports—Kothari Commission (GoI, 1966), National Policy on Education (NPE) Committee Report (GoI, 1990) and Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education (GoI, 2012), and two curriculum frameworks of teacher education (NCTE, 1998, 2009). While a country's educational policies are the most influential documents in framing practice, it is interesting to note that both the National Educational Policies of 1968 and 1986 make absolutely no mention about teacher educators. Since the selected documents are different kinds of documents, they do not necessarily address each of the criteria of a profession directly or systematically. So the analysis depends occasionally on other documents also. The analysis is guided by two questions. What aspects of teacher educators' professionalism are represented in the educational policy and curriculum documents in India? What recommendations for action have been proposed in the aforementioned documents?<sup>2</sup> Against the backdrop of these two key questions and the idea of a profession, the analysis identifies gaps and discontinuities in the conceptions and examines their implications in contemporary discourse and practice. While avoiding any forms of direct correlation to practice, the article attempts to engage with some of the hard questions that surround the neglect of the education professoriate.

### *Commission/Committee Reports*

On the first criteria of a profession as having specialized professional knowledge base, the commission reports make no specific reference to the nature or types of knowledge that teacher educators need to possess. They refer to 'expectations' and 'roles' of the teacher educators. For example, the NPE Review committee

(GoI, 1990) in the section titled 'preparing teacher educators for leadership roles' observes, 'they lack today the necessary motivation, aptitude and competence to assume the leadership role' and recommends that teacher educators be given a leadership role in educational policymaking, strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring. It lists a cluster of expectations as 'shoulds': be a school teacher, possess high academic competence, have competence in educational research, have a broad understanding of the Indian society, have personality attributes such as interpersonal skills, convince and catalyse people and have high motivation for need achievement. The Kothari Commission emphasizes that teacher educators should be 'competent' staff, without any explication of what 'competent' meant. It expresses discontent about the preparation of teacher educators and proposes a curriculum structure. It outlines the need to offer courses on developing perspectives in education, research capabilities and specialized fields of study such as educational planning, administration, teacher education and guidance and counselling.

The documents construct the work of teacher educators in terms of 'role' and as a relatively straightforward set of activities. The concept of role as a cluster of expectations of the behaviour/characteristics of a person in a position is too limited an approach to understand the aims and complexities of teacher education. The teacher educator requires sophisticated content and pedagogical knowledge, skills and moral dispositions as second-order practitioners in teacher education. Her repertoire of knowledge needs to encompass her understanding of the aims of teacher education and its symbiotic relationship with school education, perspective on education in general and, specific to teacher education, knowledge of curriculum (school and teacher education), learners (children and student teachers) and institutional arrangements (schools, TEIs), strong content and pedagogical knowledge of one's own discipline and the school subjects and capabilities to do research. In the absence of a conceptualization of teacher educating as a complex intellectual, social and moral practice, the preparation and continued professional development of teacher educators have remained weak.

The second criterion related to duration of programme and entry requirements finds a mention in almost all documents. Teacher educators at the entry level in HEIs are expected to have a postgraduate degree in social sciences/sciences/humanities and MEd. More recently, the desirable qualification has been a PhD. The importance of including school teaching experience as a required qualification is found in the commission documents—University Education Commission (GoI, 1949) and the Mudaliar Committee Report (GoI, 1953). Citing the need for demand for specialists in the school subject areas, the Chattopadhyay Commission (GoI, 1985) recommends that outstanding teachers be promoted to the TEIs as his/her 'practical wisdom' would be of benefit to student teachers. Seshadri (2003) observes that while in the past it was a 'crowning glory' for a career teacher to become a teacher educator, following years of school teaching experience, later on, with the proliferation of TEIs and the need for increasing the number of teacher educators, the convention of teachers with teaching experience in the school being placed as teacher educators was sidelined. However, in the recent NCTE Regulations of 2014, one finds a revival of school teaching experience as a qualification in select teacher education programmes.

The Kothari Commission and the NPE Committee Report make scant references to the continuing professional development of teacher educators in HEIs. While the Kothari Commission recommends summer institutes, the NPE Review Committee observes, 'a special programme of education, having the necessary status and resources, would have to be developed. The programme would give adequate weightage to cognitive, affective and operational components of the role expected of teacher educators'. The Justice Verma Commission on teacher education (GoI, 2012) makes no references to the continued education of teacher educators. Top-down professional development opportunities such as seminars, talks, lectures and refresher courses have been identified by teacher educators as weak (Srinivasan, 2016). Professional development is a continuous process of personal and professional renewal and growth and happens in multiple contexts and through diverse pathways. Research as a development pathway has been marginalized and is one of the reasons for the low status of teacher education in India. An analysis of a study by Walia (2003) on the profile of teacher educators shows that only 25 per cent of the secondary teacher educators published papers. Inadequate library resources, internet resources, funding and the absence of linkages with promotions were reasons that teacher educators cited for low research output. In the absence of a culture of research, research is perceived as something remote, difficult and not immediately applicable to their teaching (Srinivasan, 2016). In contrast to these low expectations from the educational documents and the absence of a mindset for research, the accountability mechanisms, through the performance-based appraisal system of the UGC, require teacher educators to engage in research for career advancement. Such stipulations made by the UGC and the NAAC have only resulted in proliferation of predatory educational journals that encourage poor-quality empirical studies and writing. There is a need to develop a shared understanding of what entails good research in teacher education and what forms of research can contribute to the discourse and practice of teacher education.

Efforts to come together as a 'collective' of practitioners has been inadequate. The first concerted efforts to establish a professional organization was made in 1950 at M. S. University, Baroda, with the setting up of the Indian Association of Teacher Educators. The Council of Teacher Education was set up in 1986. Mere tokenism through organizing once-in-a-year conferences cannot be the sole agenda of professional organizations. Given the host of problems and the multiple policy changes that have happened, there is a need to break the isolation among teacher educators. Enhancing professionalism among educators requires teacher educators to take greater collective ownership of the vision of teacher education, rather than being mere passive recipients of reforms.

### *Curriculum Reforms*

Prior to 1978, the universities formulated the content of teacher preparation programmes for their affiliated colleges of education. Following the setting up of the NCTE as a non-statutory body under the NCERT in 1973, a curriculum framework was developed in 1978 (NCTE, 1978) and was revised in 1988 (NCTE, 1988).

After NCTE was established as a statutory regulatory body, it developed a 'Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education' in 1998. A discussion paper was jointly developed by NCERT and NCTE in 2006, which did not see the light of the day. It was after two decades that the NCFTE was prepared in 2009 to align with the ideas espoused in the school education curriculum of 2005 (National Council for Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2005). The 1998 and the 2009 frameworks have an entire chapter dedicated to teacher educators. The 1998 framework refers to it as the 'Education of Teacher Educators', while NCFTE titles it as 'preparation of teacher educators'. The Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education (CFQTE) (NCTE, 1998) was formulated in the decade following the NPE (GoI, 1986). Although the policy made no mention about teacher educators, the CFQTE has a chapter with seven subsections dedicated to the education of teacher educators. It starts with an assumption: 'teaching is an art, which can be inculcated through a series of well-designed activities in respect of education and training of teachers and is equally valid for professional preparation of teacher educators' (Section 7.1). It laments about the preparation and continued development of teacher educators and locates the lacunae in the absence of stage-specific recruitment qualifications and the low-quality content of the preparation programme for teacher educators. The CFQTE identifies a range of 'skills' and 'competencies' that teacher educators need to be prepared with: curriculum development, assessment, teaching learning materials, management of TEIs, pedagogy, material development, interactions with the community, technology, resource mobilization, research, realities of practice and so on. About 17 such competencies are listed as objectives of the teacher educator preparation programme. It recommends MEd programmes in pre-primary, elementary, secondary and senior secondary education, special education, distance education and physical education. It also proposes a curriculum framework that identifies foundation courses, practicum, field internship, specialization in teacher education courses and dissertation in its framework. Regarding continuing education, it proposes short-term programmes and networking among institutions. In the CFQTE, there is an attempt to construct the vision of responsibilities of teacher educators and the education of this group. However, its penchant for 'skills', 'activities' and 'competencies' only paved way for a narrow interpretation of the MEd programme with a focus on 'training' teacher educators. Despite the emergence of cognitive research in that decade, the framework fails to engage with notions of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes required for professional practitioners.

Almost after two decades, the NCFTE (2009) proposes the development of humane and professional teachers through a radically different model of teacher education. NCFTE views teaching as a social practice with an emphasis on local knowledge, citizenship, democracy and inclusion. It emphasizes an understanding of the learners and the process of learning in a sociocultural context, underscores the importance of student teachers constructing knowledge and seeks to develop them as reflective decision-makers. It proposes a new approach to curriculum areas with a focus on deeper engagement with curriculum and knowledge, theory and action and socio-cultural notions of learning and other related aspects of educational studies. Such a complete overhaul of the curriculum requires the

honing of a different set of capabilities among the teacher educators. Education of pre-service and serving teacher educators needs a complete reorientation. It is only to be expected that some of these challenges would be addressed in Chapter 5 of the document titled 'Preparing teacher educators'. But the chapter reflects major gaps in its vision of teacher educator development. The chapter begins with a critique on the status and the shortage of properly qualified and professionally trained teacher educators. Along the lines of the committee reports, the 'functions' and 'role' of the teacher educators are constructed in the light of the 'role' of the teachers. It outlines the role of a teacher as identified by the NCF as one who cares for children, does not treat knowledge as given, discourages rote learning, critically examines textbooks and promotes the democratic way of life. It states:

[T]he teacher educator (whose job is to contribute towards the preparation of such a teacher) should share the underlying educational philosophy and possess the needed understanding and professional competencies to develop such teachers ... In other words, the locus of the functions of teacher educators lies in the role perceptions of teachers with regard to educational objectives, practices and processes of the school. (NCTE, 2009, pp. 70–71)

If teaching is complex, teaching about teaching is even more complex. To look at teacher educators' work only from the view of teachers is a narrow construction of the work of teacher educators. Teacher educators are engaged in a range of activities that includes teaching, in-service education, material development, research, practice, partnership with schools and contribution to institution building. These dimensions fail to find a place in the description of the chapter. The remaining sections of the chapter focus on strengthening programmes, structures, activities, incentives and institutional contexts for the professional development of teacher educators. Innovative ideas have been presented towards strengthening professional development at the institutional level.

Given the non-legislative status of curriculum frameworks, NCFTE could not be mandated. The recommendations of Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education in 2012 and the ensuing amendments to NCTE regulations in 2014 made it mandatory for all teacher education programmes to align with the guidelines of the NCFTE. The duration of the teacher educator programmes was extended to two years. Universities had to implement the two-year programme starting with the academic year 2015. It is not unexpected that such reforms would come with contestations and challenges from the various actors in the system. While the challenge to the status quo was welcomed by many academicians and educationists, some teacher educators saw these reforms as 'forced' and have showed resistance to changes. This was indeed a very short time for the TEIs, who for years have been reeling under the influence of academic isolation, complacency, funding and lack of faculty members. For those teacher educators who have been immersed in the looming culture of textbooks and examinations, the reformulated curriculum was beyond their grasp. Lack of reading materials and books for the recently formulated syllabus has been the greatest challenge. Many made cosmetic changes to the existing courses, without any significant change in

approach or perspective. The textbook market has begun to flourish by publishing textbooks for the 'new two-year BEd/MEd programmes'. Given that a majority of teacher educators in the various stages of their career have hardly had any opportunity for their own professional growth, the academic and pedagogical environments of these institutions stand challenged.

Analysis of the educational documents shows that there are innumerable concerns about the quality of preparation and continued education of teacher educators as a professional group. It is clear that there are complex problems that are being faced by teacher educators as a consequence of the increased duration of teacher education and a radically different curriculum of teacher education. Neither has enough external support been provided to the teacher educators nor have teacher educators as a collective made any self-initiation to upgrade their professional knowledge. In the absence of a robust conceptualization of what entails her work and responsibilities, what seems to emerge is a form of compliant notion of the profession rather than an autonomous pathway of self-growth and renewal. The capacity for the reform to achieve change rests on the recognition of alternative pathways of professional development that the teacher educators could chart as a collective. A communal cohesive articulation of the status, stance and progression of the professional practice seem to be the need of the time.

## **Towards a Framework of Professional Practice of Teacher Education**

The aims of teacher education and notions of a good society inform and shape the practice of teacher educators. Teaching about teaching is a complex and knotty affair, as the teacher educators are required to traverse boundaries between school and higher education. Analysis of the documents clearly reveals the absence of serious discussion around the work of teacher educators based in HEIs. This ought to be a matter of serious concern for the teacher educators. The neglect of this group has led to the stagnation and lack of agency among teacher educators. The two sets of reforms—the curriculum and governance reforms—seem to be influencing work and responsibilities but in different ways. The curricular framework offers the possibility of a professional development agenda for the teacher educator while the regulatory-accreditation process poses a technical accountability regime. The former offers a likelihood of greater autonomous development as an individual or a collective while the latter reflects compliance and conformity. The difference in the rhetoric of these discourses requires to be navigated by the teacher educator very carefully. In both, she is a passive recipient of the reform. However, the former pathway allows for a greater leeway and opportunity for the teacher educators to become thinking, reflecting individuals who could take more pro-active responsibility for their personal and professional growth and move towards moral accountability of their profession.

The realization of the vision and perspectives of the NCFTE necessarily requires the teacher educator to develop capabilities to question, to reason, reflect, construct knowledge, be self-aware and make autonomous educational

judgments. While it has proposed a progressive teacher education curriculum, it fails to engage sufficiently with the most important participant of the teacher education system—the teacher educator. Changes to curriculum and governance process without the pro-active engagement of teacher educators with the reforms can do little to influence the teacher education processes and outcomes. Those teacher educators with a strong sense of passion and purpose of their professional practice will continue to engage with the moral and intellectual aims of teacher education, oblivious of the external influences. However, it is important to recognize the heterogeneity of the teacher educators' professional lives, contexts and backgrounds.

Given this unusual context of multiple policy changes, it may be worth the while for teacher educators to come together as a collective and develop a framework of professional practice that offers a vision of their work. Such an exercise of autonomy may help enhance the status of the profession. Countries such as the USA, the Netherlands and the UK have developed their framework through communal processes. Against the backdrop of the moral purpose of teacher education, the complexity of the profession as a second-order practice and the heterogeneity of the teacher education communities in India, the framework of professional practice could address questions such as: what is the nature of teaching and learning about teaching? What are the professional responsibilities of teacher educators? How do these relate to the aims of education and teacher education? What should teacher educators think about, know and do? How does the knowledge of the teacher differ from that of teacher educators? What is distinctive about their practice and expertise? What are the aims of professional development of teacher educators? What are the professional development pathways for a teacher educator? What constitutes research and practice by the teacher educator? Developing such a framework of profession based on knowledge, autonomy and responsibility (Hoyle & John, 1995) could provide the starting point for generating an intra-professional re-articulation and recognition of expertise and also provide a springboard for developing enhanced induction and professional learning opportunities for this professional group (Murray, 2008). The nature of study of education, being a multi-disciplinary endeavour, allows for a collaborative culture to thrive. A collective articulation may help teacher educators develop shared understanding and commitment to improve their practice. It allows to examine the professional concerns of the community. The voluntary formation of *teacher educator collectives of practice* within small geographical clusters or districts or states could lead to a sustained dialogue among themselves and a self-regulation of the profession. Teacher educators need to become reflective practitioners themselves. They have a moral obligation to ensure children's learning and contribute to the improvement of public education through their work of preparing teachers.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Notes

1. Seshadri (2003) and Goodwin et al. (2014) use the phrase *teacher educating* to differentiate teaching teachers from teaching students.
2. A similar analysis of the professionalism of teacher educators is made by Snoek, Swennen, and Klink (2011) in the context of European teacher education policy debates.

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