

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR IMPROVING QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION OF GARO HILLS REGION OF MEGHALAYA

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Education Institutions play an important role in shaping the destiny of the country. The success of any educational system depends largely on a sound programme of teacher education and quality of teachers produced by Teacher Education Institutions. Teacher competence, accountability, aptitude and favorable attitude to the profession are to be ensured before teacher training or recruitment takes place. It is important that the right kinds of teachers are engaged in the teaching profession with the best possible training to ensure students' achievement and progress. Hence enhancing the quality of teacher education programme to ensure quality education is the need of the hour. The existing teacher education programme however is not being considered adequate to meet the demand for quality education. There is a wide range of issues and concerns being expressed about teacher education. Keeping this in view the paper has been prepared on some of the issues and problems of Teacher Education Institutions in Garo Hills. Suggestions made in this paper if implemented may help to improve the quality of education and Teacher Education Institutions in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the greatest assets and backbone of any education system. They are responsible for equipping the future citizens with the prospect of helping them in acquiring knowledge and skills to be a worthy member of the society, thereby helping in shaping and reshaping the society and determine the quality of life in the community and the nation as a whole. The National Policy of Education 1986 rightly accepted the influence of teachers in these words, "The status of the teacher reflects the socio cultural ethos of a society. It is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers..." Teacher quality is therefore crucial and has been globally accepted to be significantly associated with the quality of education in general and students' learning outcomes in particular. Moreover, in order to develop teachers and raise the standard and quality of education it further asserted that teachers should have

freedom to innovate, to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities relevant to the needs and capabilities of and the concerns of the community. The success of any educational institution depends on sound programmes of Teacher Educational Institutions. The role of Teacher Education Institutions in providing quality teachers for national development is well established, by providing the teachers with the opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity and equipping them with specialized knowledge and skills to help the young learners to tackle these problems. The most effective way to develop quality teachers in a dynamic and changing environment is to begin with a well-developed pre-service teacher education programme and with continuous professional development opportunities.

STATUS OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MEGHALAYA

In Meghalaya, Teacher Education makes some provision for pre-service education and continuous professional development of teachers in order to help them contribute in the growth of society. They have a tremendous responsibility of enhancing the quality of teachers by constantly developing the competency, skills and efficiency of the teachers in their given profession. In order to engage the right kind of teachers in the teaching profession with the best possible training and to produce best quality teachers, a person's favorable attitude towards the teaching profession, his/her aptitude, accountability and teaching competency are to be ensured before teacher training or recruitment takes place. However, several seminars, study groups and even teacher educators and principals of Teacher Education Institutions in Meghalaya from time to time have expressed concern over the poor quality of teacher education, and its isolation from the mainstream of concerned authorities, Resources Support Centers, University and the ground realities of school situations. As a result, basing on the recommendations made by the various Commissions like the University Education Commission (1948) and Secondary Education Commission (1953) and several seminars and study groups that stressed on the need for flexibility, local specificity and strongly felt the need of the whole teacher education programme to be remodeled to strike more balance between the theory and practice, and assessment of students' performance. The issues are discussed in this paper, which may highlight whether the quality, responsibility and relevance of Teacher Education Institutions in Meghalaya are being able to meet the regional, national and global demands.

BACKGROUND OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GARO HILLS

Realizing the need to clear the backlog of untrained teachers in the state, several Teacher Education Institutions have been set up in Meghalaya. Different Teacher Education Institutions which were set up in different parts of Garo Hills Region of Meghalaya are presented below:

Table 1: Teacher Education Institutes in Garo Hills Meghalaya

Sl no	Name of The Institution	Year of Establishment	Intact Capacity	Administration and Financial Management
A.	Basic Training Centre's for Elementary Teacher training (one year course)			
1.	Basic Training Centre, Rongkhon, West Garo Hills	1955	50	Government
2.	Basic Training Centre, Resubelpara, East Garo Hills	1974	50	Government
B.	Upper Primary Teacher Training Institutes (two years course)			
1.	Normal Training School, Tura	1968	40	Government
C	Secondary Teacher Training Institution (one year B.Ed course)			
1.	College of Teacher Education, Rongkhon, Tura.	1993	100	Government
2.	College of Teacher Education, Don Bosco, Tura	2005		Private
D.	District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) for Primary School Teachers (1&2 years course)			
1.	Tura, DIET, West Garo Hills	2000	50	Government
2.	Resubelpara DIET, East Garo Hills	2000	60	Government
3.	Baghmara, DIET, South Garo Hills.	2000	50	Government

*Source: Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT), Meghalaya, Shillong. Educational Statistics related to Teacher Education (2008).

In Garo Hills, the first ever training institute for teachers was set up in Tura. Basic Training Centre (BTC) was set up at Tura in the year 1955, and another Basic Training Centre (BTC), was set up in 1974 at Resubelpara; East Garo Hills by the State Government for the purpose of training the Primary School Teachers. Secondary Teacher Training institutes like College of Teacher Education (CTE) Rongkhon, Tura, was set up by the Government in 1993 and Catholic Missionaries established College of Teacher Education, Don Bosco, (CTE) Tura, in 2005, where large number of both in-service and pre-service students are being trained. From among these training institutes the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) have been set up to train field inspecting staff and teacher educators at elementary level and to serve as a resource centre. They also play an important role to upgrade the quality of elementary education in the district and block level.

PROBLEMS OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GARO HILLS REGION

The existing teacher education programme in Garo Hills Region is inadequate to meet the demands for quality education. The following are the problems faced by the teacher education in Garo Hills:-

1. There is lack of connection and coordination among various Teacher Education Institutions in Meghalaya and between the Resource Support Centers, Education Department in Universities and the Schools, creating a situation where the teacher training institutions in Garo Hills are far removed from the ground reality of the actual situations.
2. Change in the quality of the education can come only when the institutions develop a vision. However, most of Teacher Education Institutions in Garo Hills have no vision. Hundreds of student teachers are being trained every year without any vision, which in turn teaches thousands of children who will have no vision or development.
3. Most of the Teacher training Institutions in Garo hills are lacking in basic minimum facilities like classrooms, hostels, staff quarters, furniture, laboratory equipment etc. besides, required number of qualified staff is also not available in most of the institutions and posts are lying vacant for years.
4. The existing curriculum of Teacher Education Institutions hardly equips the teachers for their profession in the areas like counselors, supervisors, administrators etc.
5. Not only schools but also Teacher Education institutions in Garo Hills still base their teaching on 'Chalk and Talk' method. As most of the teacher educators themselves are not well equipped in modern technology like multimedia, internet, World Wide Web (www), etc., providing training for school teachers for the same still seems to be a distant dream.

6. Most of the teacher educators appointed by the State Government in the Teacher Education Institutions have master degree in the school subject and another master degree in education. They are no doubt well equipped in theory but are not trained to give training in teaching strategies and methodologies. It may be easy to learn for oneself but quite different to articulate and train another when one is not fully well equipped.
7. In Meghalaya, till today the one-year Bachelor's degree (B.Ed) is still in practice. Since the course is only one year there is shortage of time for practical works to be completed within a year. The existing duration of teacher education programme for elementary and secondary stages is inadequate to produce quality teachers.
8. There is absence of training programme on professional competencies and skills for student teachers which are essential to tackle various learning situations of children in different stages of learning, which differs qualitatively from stage to stage.
9. The teaching practice programme which is a part of the training programme of the teacher education, has been envisaged as the most powerful intervention of the teacher's professional programmes. However, it is sad to note that 90% of the training is theoretically imparted through lecturing, while only 10% of the training period is concentrated in engaging the student teacher in the practical exercise of the training. Moreover, practice teaching is neither taken seriously nor it is supervised sincerely and systematically. There is also lack of co-operation and support of schools for practice teaching.
10. Every year large number of young graduates and postgraduates take admission in Teacher Education Institutions without having genuine interest in teaching profession. Moreover, many teachers resort to teaching profession as the last resort. Hence, we cannot expect quality education from such disinterested teachers even though they are trained.
11. Majority of the teacher educators both at the elementary and secondary stage do not get involved in the research work due to lack of motivation, expertise, and apathy of the State Government to grant study leave, etc.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION IN GARO HILLS REGION

The following suggestions may help to improve the quality of teacher education program in Garo Hills:

1. There is a need to build a reality-based teacher education programme by developing proper connections and coordination between Teacher Education Institutions, resources support center, policy makers, Universities and schools. Programme should be designed for regular meetings, discussions and joint activities for improvement of quality education.

2. The Teacher Training Institutions should take up the responsibility to ensure that children are taught by effective teachers with vision and hence develop a plan and vision to ensure that these goals are met.
3. Sufficient fund should be provided by the State and Central Government to see that the Teacher Educational Institution do not lack in infrastructure facilities. Vacant and required post should be filled up as early as possible to ensure proper functioning of the institutions.
4. Along with foundation courses, a number of special papers like human rights education; value education; administration, management and supervision; elementary education, guidance and counseling and many other new subjects which is relevant to the society should be included in the curriculum.
5. There is a need on the part of teacher educators to equip themselves with the knowledge of modern technologies so as to train student teacher on the same.
6. It will be well suited if the teacher educator after appointment, undertake continuous professional development programmes in new innovations like micro teaching; diagnostic testing; action research; group-based teaching; co-operative teaching, constructivists approach in teaching and learning, etc.
7. The existing B.Ed programmes should be enhanced from one year to two years duration.
8. There is a need to introduce stage-specific teacher education programmes. At present, there are three separate programmes for each stage of learning. One for the pre-primary teachers, the second for the elementary teachers and the third for the secondary teachers. However there is a need to have one more category of programme i.e. for the teachers teaching in higher secondary classes (class 11 to 12).
9. Adequate time should be allotted to organize and develop micro teaching skills; to develop instructional support materials; encourage peer-group observation programme, observation of practice teaching through observation schedule and follow-up discussion with the student teachers.
10. Admission in Teacher Education Institutions should be provided only after genuine interest of the candidate to undergo training is ascertained by the expert. Admission seats should be filled up on the basis of the merit of the entrance test.
11. Teacher educators at different levels should be encouraged to undertake action research, doctoral and post-doctoral research for improving the quality of teacher education programmes. State Government should provide a provision for study leave to undertake research works and research based projects.
12. There is a need to conduct a survey at the state level to get a clear picture of the trained teacher's area-wise and subject-wise.

CONCLUSION

In this era of globalization, industrialization and liberalization 'Quality' is chanted as a catchword from household products to the service. Quality of education is the end result and outcome of the quality of teachers and teacher education programme. It is the teacher who is trained from the portals of Teacher Education Institutions that will largely influence the educational system; as one is delegated with the responsibility for producing teachers who are capable and competent to educate contemporary students and the other with the role of producing students to be worthy members of the society. Hence, Teacher Education Institutions should shoulder the responsibilities of producing such quality teachers who can keep abreast with the new knowledge and information in the field of education. However, it is sad to note that the quality of Teacher Education Institution is deteriorating and there is a need for a change in all the aspects of teacher education programme to equip the teachers to meet the quality demands of the society. Improvement in the quality of teacher education cannot be envisaged in isolation, it will require support and collaborative efforts from schools, peer institutions, concerned authorities and the community at large.

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