



Teacher Education in Assam: as it stands

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ABSTRACT

Today teacher is more than a nation builder and constantly contributes to re-shaping and re-establishing a new world of global teaching and personality efflorescence necessitating a new beginning with all care and caution, involvement and perseverance. Teacher Education is one of the burning issues of education today. The present study highlighted the challenges of teacher education of Assam, and some suggestions to tackle these challenges so that teacher education track many more miles in our country in doing justice to the multi-dimensional world of pupil-creativity and teaching awareness to rise up to a minimum expectation of pupil-effulgence in accordance with individual creative talent and critical ingenuity. Assam is considered to be the educational hub for entire North East India. Assam had a distinct and independent political existence with a flourishing literary tradition. But the progress of education in Assam before Independence was not remarkable. It is, therefore, obvious that in the field of Teacher Education also Assam was lagging behind other States of India.

Index Terms: **Teacher, Education, Teacher Education, Assam.**

Introduction

We always talk about teaching in social context where interaction of two or more persons is involved. The term 'teacher' has been variously interpreted by various educationists and thinkers. The simple meaning of the term teacher can be taken as – a friend, philosopher, guide to the child, who is responsible for the overall development of the child's personality (Kaut, 2014). **The Secondary Education Commission (1952)** makes an excellent point that, "we are convinced that the most important factor in the contemplated educational reconstruction is the teacher - his personal qualities, his educational qualifications, his professional training and the place that he occupies in the school as well in the community." The teacher plays a vital role in society because he ensures that the intellectual tradition is carried down from generation to generation (Saxena, 2019). It is the teacher education institutes that have been entrusted with the critical task of raising educational standards by preparing effective teachers.

Teacher Education

The backbone of the any educational system is the Teacher Education. The main objective of Teacher Education Programme is to prepare teachers for imparting effective and quality education. Continuous efforts are being made in the program for Teacher Education to improve the status and quality of Teacher Education in India. Teacher education refers to policies and processes aimed at providing teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they need to fulfil their duties effectively in the classroom and at school (Behera, 2018).

The purpose of the study is to highlight the present status of Assam's Secondary Teacher Education Institutions.

Need of the study

Although there were a variety of institutions imparting Secondary Teacher Education in India, most of them are not up to the standard and are not in sync with the actual requirements. To make matters worse, more and more self-financed secondary teacher education institutions continue to mushroom throughout the country. This state of affairs is having serious repercussion on the Teacher Education scene in the entire country, including Assam. So it requires thorough research to dive deep into the causes, consequences and subsequent remedies of the whole issue. The secondary teacher education programme is not fulfilling the societal needs expected to be fulfilled by it. The state governments, NCTE, UGC and universities have to rethink and redefine their roles. A detailed research needs to be done in this direction.

Brief History of Teacher Education in Assam (pre-independence period)

The first Normal School was set up at Serampur (West Bengal) by Carey, Marshman and Ward in 1793. It was the Wood's Despatch of 1854 passed by the East India Company which gave a tremendous impetus to all sections and aspects of education in the country. It was the curtain raiser in the area of growth and development of Teacher Education, where for the first time; recommendations were made for training of teachers. It recommended the extension and improvement of the monitorial system which was already prevalent in the country for a long time. The Despatch also recommended stipends for promising pupil-teachers and some payments to the masters for the instruction of pupil-teachers during the course in the normal schools and if they proved worthy, and on the completion of the training they were awarded certificates and employed as school masters with sufficient salary.

Another milestone in the history of Teacher Education was the report submitted by Hunter Commission in 1882. The first recommendation of this commission for the establishment of Normal Schools in the country was that a special system which also sprung up in Bengal and Assam in 1885-86 was that of the "Guru System". According to the system, the headmasters of middle vernacular schools, who themselves have undergone the prescribed course of training in Normal Schools, were try to impart instruction to Gurus in neighbouring pathshalas. Accordingly, in the first decade of 20th century, Normal Schools came into existence. Subsequently a few Guru training schools also were established.

In Assam, missionaries took the lead in the establishment of training schools at Nagaon, Shillong and Tura (in undivided Assam, Shillong and Tura now included in Meghalaya state). After 1884, the local government accepted the principle of establishing one Normal school in each district. But, by 1888-89, only six such departmental school came to be established, one each in the district of Kamrup, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Khasi and Jayantia Hills and two in Darrang. There were all total 173 trainees in these schools and the number decreases to 127 trainees in 1901-02. The smallest number of trainees was at the Sibsagar School. In the mean time, government also opened 16 teacher training classes attached to MV and ME schools to train Gurus and Primary school teachers. But the enrolment of the trainees in these classes were not encouraging and so government had decided to put an end to these classes with effect from 01-10-1903 from all the government training schools and the Gurus training classes with the exception of the first grade schools in the district of Kamrup, Khasi and Jayantia Hills (at Shillong). It was proposed that the specially selected candidates would be trained in the Middle and High Schools partly as pupils and partly as monitors. At the end of such apprenticeship, they would be appointed as a village school masters in primary and secondary schools after the decision of the government to rationalize the system of teachers' training by abolishing a number of training schools. The Missionaries also closed down to 2 out of 3 training schools due to financial difficulties and poor attendance.

However, with the government of India adopting teacher training as a regular policy in 1904, the government of Assam had to revise their earlier decision in the matter of maintaining only a small number of training schools. In 1905, the Assam government established 2 Normal schools, one at Jorhat and another one at Silchar. Special classes were also attached to these schools for the training of village school masters. By 1920, there were altogether 1 Normal schools, 7 government, 2 government aided and 2 other government aided women's Normal schools. But the number decreased to 7 in 1931 due to the closure of schools at Jorhat, Jowai, Tura and Silchar. The grounds for closing down the schools were stated as financial difficulties arising out of the world wide economic depression prevailing at the time.

It has already been stated that the Missionaries took the lead in the establishment of teachers' training schools. Two such schools were established at Nagaon and Silchar for the purpose of providing training to women teachers. Thus, the Missionaries could also take the credit for promoting the cause of female education in general in the state. In 1930, 46 Mistresses were trained out of which 9 secured senior and 20 secured junior teachership certificate. As for stipends, the government stopped these payments again on grounds of economic crisis in 1932. However, in 1933, the DPI, Assam reopened these schools considering the importance of the teachers' role in social development. But the ultimate result was that the number of trainees fall-down sharply to only 19 by 1933-34. But, after the revival of the stipends in 1935, the number of female trainees increased to 43 in 1936. Though general progress was made in the field of primary and secondary education, the expansion of education was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in the facilities for training of teacher. Thus, during the period from 1942-45, the number of teachers at every stage (primary, middle and secondary) increased but the number of trained teachers diminished. The decline in the percentage of trained teacher was mainly due to the appointment of untrained teachers in non-governmental schools and in-adequacy of facilities for the training

of low grade teachers. It was reported that many trained teachers in primary and middle schools left the teaching profession and joined some other jobs with better pay and prospect.

History of Teacher Education in Assam (post-independence period)

In 1946-47, provisions were made for training of teachers in Basic Education in India. Assam also proposed to open some Basic Training Centres at that time. Consequently, in 1948, some Basic Training Centres at Titabar, Dudhnoi Udarbandh, Raha and Shillong (Lady Reid) were started. One centre at Sootea and another at Biswanath Chariali were also proposed but due to shortage of fund and trained personnel, these were postponed. Ultimately a Normal School was started at Sootea. In 1953, the 9th All India Basic Education Conference was held successfully at Titabar Basic Training Centre. This centre was raised to the standard of post-graduate basic training college.

After independence, in 1947, the second legislative action was taken for making Primary Education Universal, free and compulsory. The provincial legislature of Assam passed the Assam Primary Education Act, 1947, which shifted the responsibility from local and municipal boards for introducing free and compulsory primary education to sub-division and school boards created under the provisions of the Act, there being a provincial advisory boards for primary education headed by the DPI to advise the government under the control and direction of school boards, recruitment of primary school teachers and attendance officer, teacher training curriculum of primary education, test books etc. Although the 1947th Act also failed to achieve the objective of compulsory primary education, it paved the way for increased opportunities for primary education. The Assam basic education act 1954, received the consent of the Governor of Assam on 28th August, 1954. Under this Act, all primary schools which were recognized under the Assam primary education act, 147 were recognized as Basic schools. As a result of Basic education Act, the government had to make provision for Basic training for all primary school teachers. Therefore, the government made a plan to train the staff members of the Guru Training Schools in Basic Education. By the end of 1954-55 all the Guru Training Schools were equipped with Basic Trained staffs. So, in 1955, some Guru training centres were abolished, the rest were converted into Junior Basic Centres, while some new centres also came into being. The new centres were Morigaon, Mangaldoi, Kohima and Margherita. Implementation of intensive improvement project in five Basic Training centres were a new experiment aiming at capacity building of teacher-educators in curriculum transaction.

In Assam also like rest of India, teacher education has grown and developed reasonably since independence. Teacher education has evolved from its initial dismal structure to become a complex network of organizations and programmes in the six decades after independence. When we look at the number of teacher education institutions, and the expansion of pre-service teacher education in general, as well as secondary teacher education in particular is pretty significant. In 1948, there were only ten secondary teacher training colleges; by 2010, there were 1084 in the country as a whole. In Assam, the number of training colleges increased to 20 in 1951. However, because of the shortage of qualified teachers, it was phased out in the 1970s. Although Assam saw enormous overall growth in secondary teacher education following independence, there had been a two-decade period after 1971 when secondary teacher education grew at a near-zero pace. However, in Assam, as well as the rest of the country, since 1999, the number of secondary teacher education institutes has increased dramatically. With the advent of NCTE Regulations, the growth of secondary teacher education surged considerably across the country. Gauhati University and the Government of Assam established B.T. colleges under its direct management after independence to educate secondary level teachers. The Government of Assam founded the first postgraduate training college in Jorhat in 1957 affiliated to Dibrugarh University. Later in 1960, with the efforts of several local residents of Silchar, established a training college at a nearby school which is now a part of Assam University, Silchar.

In Assam, there are institutions imparting secondary teacher education, out of which some are run by the state government, others by the universities and others are run by private bodies. But most of the self-financing Institutions charge heavy fees as compared to the Government Institutions. Further, it is interesting to note that what type of people are coming forward to start self-financed teacher education courses on Institutions.

In Guwahati, Assam's first private B.T. College, Banikanta B.T. College, was established in January 1967, with the sole aim of catering to Teacher Education in the North Eastern Region of India. The college was affiliated to Gauhati University in the same year. The Government of Assam, with the aim of expansion of teacher education in the state, on April 1, 1983, took control of the college. It has now been renamed the Institute of Advanced Study in Education (IASE). The B.T. course was given by the university under the Education Department when the Second University of Assam was established in Dibrugarh in 1965. Some locals founded the Teachers' Training College, Nagaon, which is now known as Sikshan Mahavidyalaya, in 1968 college was affiliated to Gauhati University. "In the meantime, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), a non-statutory body, has taken many initiatives to improve teacher education quality. On the basis of specified norms and standards, it began to grant recognition to the teacher education institutions. As a result, the number of B.Ed. colleges has decreased.

The government of India implemented a new economic policy with the acceptance of neoliberal economic policies, and financial allocations for total higher and professional education were slashed. As a result, the federal government no longer funds the establishment of new colleges. State governments have also put a halt to the establishment of new government and government-aided colleges. The government's policy supported the establishment of self-financing institutions. As a result, entrepreneurs established a huge number of self-financed institutes of education, which are now springing up in large numbers. The popularity of the B.Ed. degree among graduates has led to the expansion of self-financed teacher education institutes, owing to the focus on universalization of education, education for all, and the right to education, which appear to improve job opportunities for teachers. However, there is a risk that self-financing colleges would attract students with lower ability but higher income. This will have an impact on secondary teacher education, which will, in turn, have an impact on future school education quality. Many educationists are opposed to the idea of self-financing teacher education institutes because of the risk of commercialization and corruption coming into the system. Furthermore, the privatization of teacher education has resulted in its commercialization. However, the Indian people have not voluntarily chosen privatization. As a result, they are curious as to what factors compelled India's government to commercialize higher education, including teacher education (Kaur, 2012).

However, understanding education as a state function is impossible without acknowledging the competing demands imposed on it. The Indian government has allowed the private sector to expand alongside the public sector. In terms of freedom of choice, private initiative was allowed, but state efforts were focused on meeting constitutional expectations for equality and justice. This dichotomy must be investigated. Furthermore, the acceptance of economic individualism in India's liberal democratic set-up has encouraged competitiveness as a respectable approach for improving one's fortunes. Profit as a standard in business or commerce hasn't been ruled out. However, in the context of free competition, private ownership, and profit incentive, the notions of "freedom" and "equality" become "commercial" rather than "democratic." (Apple 1989: 9) Also, due to a mushrooming of self-financed secondary teacher education institutions in India in general and in Assam in specific, a need of co-ordination in the area of reallocation of manpower planning for the requirements of teachers, teacher educators and administrators etc. according to the demand and supply was felt badly. Further, after the recent constitutional amendment to make education a fundamental right and in the context of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) demand for teachers has increased in the country. Whereas on the other hand, many newspaper reports and articles on teacher education indicate that in the flush of enthusiasm for quantity, quality of teacher education has largely been sacrificed.

Method

Analytical Method of research was applied for the present study as it helps to collect more information on teacher education in India in general and Assam in particular which involves a method of investigation on the basis of relevant documents with description and interpretations. Researcher has surveyed different books, magazines, journals, articles, research papers, reports, internet sites etc. for the study.

Teacher Education Institutions under SCERT, Assam (Source: Annual Report 2019-2020 S.C.E.R.T., Assam).

1. **District Institutes of education and Training (DIET)** – District Institutes of Education and Trainings were formed with the purpose of erecting a quality education edifice from the ground up, starting with the elementary stages of formal education. In Assam, DIETs were built in each district. It began with only 06 numbers in 1989, in order to meet the targets set forth in the NEP of 1989. DIETs provide elementary school teachers with in-service (district primary teacher education for two years) and pre-service (bachelor of elementary level education B.EL.ED for two years) teacher education. In Assam, there are now 23 DIETs.
2. **College of Teacher Education (CTEs)** – The College of Teacher Education was established following the national policy on Education (NEP), 1986. At present there are 8 CTEs in Assam providing in-service teacher education (B.Ed) for graduates.
3. **Institutes of advance Studies in Education (IASEs)** – The Institute of Advance Studies in Education is a centre of excellence in the preparation of teacher trainees consisting of both pre-service and in-service teachers for developing quality secondary education. There are 2 IASEs in Assam.
4. **Basic Training Centre (BTC)** – Basic Training Centre were established in Assam in the year 1948 by the Government of Assam. BTCs are based on Gandhian philosophy of Basic Education. At present there are 19 BTCs in Assam.
5. **Normal School** – In 1835, courtesy of William Robinson, Inspector of Schools, a Normal Training class was established in English Seminary, Guwahati. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan petitioned Jorge Aldrumost Mills of the Calcutta Dewani Court on July 4, 1853, asking the establishment of a Normal School in Assam. Permission to construct Normal Schools in Assam was given in response to his petition. Mr. William Robinson, the Inspector of Schools, recommended that Normal Schools be established at Guwahati, Sibsagar, and Tezpur. (<http://www.nsjorhat.in>). At present there are 7 Normal Schools in Assam. Normal Schools provides pre-service and in-service teacher training programme for elementary school teachers.

6. **Pre and Primary Teacher Training Course (PPTTC)** – Pre-primary Teacher Training Course, run under the auspices of SCERT, is a teacher training course for aspiring teachers who want to learn how to teach children aged 2 to 12 years. Pre-primary education is changing all the time, and it allows for a smooth transition of children into formal education. This pre-primary teacher training course is important in equipping instructors with the skills and competences needed to teach young children. PPTTC is in Dibrugarh, Assam.
7. **Hindi Teacher Training College (HTTC)** – Hindi Teacher Training College is located in North Guwahati, Assam.
8. **Hindi Training Center (HTC)** – Under the auspices of SCERT, Assam and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, the Hindi Teachers Training Center was established. HTC is intended to teach Hindi teachers the Hindi language as well as correct Hindi pronunciation and grammar usage. HTC's objective is to promote Hindi as a second language throughout the state of Assam through a training programme. HTC is situated in Diphu, Assam.

Present Status of Secondary Teacher Education in Assam.

The quality of school education lies on qualified and trained teachers. Assam possesses one of the largest systems of Teacher Education in entire north-east India. Besides, the university departments of education and their affiliated colleges, government and self-financed colleges and open universities are also engaged in this venture with varied standards. Education which could serve as a major problem-solving instrument is itself beset with inner contradictions and suffers from inertia and misdirection. The major drawbacks or the deficiencies of the Teacher Education System that it stifles curiosity and creativity, it emphasizes certification, its grading of individuals rarely reflects their potential, and the number of failures or dropouts produced by it is always in excess of successes and so forth (Rao, 2018). At the present time, the conditions of service and working and working condition of teachers are truly pitiable. Today, we have two kinds of schools: 1. Government administered, and 2. Privately administered. Both kinds influence the conditions of service and work in their own respective ways (Sharma, 2007). There is uncontrolled quantitative expansion and commercialization of Teacher Education in India. In Assam also, unprecedented expansion of teacher education institutions and programmes during the past few years characterizes the teacher education scenario of today. At present there are 64 Secondary Teacher Education Institutions in Assam, among them 11 are Government or aided Institutions, 53 self-financed Teacher Education Institutions in Assam. Out of which, 2 IASE, 2 University departments, and 60 CTEs in the State (NCTE, 2021). The affiliating body, state government and central government totally failed to ensure the quality of teacher education program. Policies are made for proper and smooth functioning of TEIs but in practical it is for a way to achieve its objective.

Challenges for Teacher Education Institutions in Assam.

Teacher Education is not up to the desired standards, with various lacunas and complications, as on date. The reason dates back to the cusp of pre and post independence where education itself was meant for the privileged and not for the larger population. With limited avenues of education, Teacher Education never got the importance and priority it deserved. With all round increasing focus on 'Education for all', Teacher Education needs the thrust and impetus to overcome the constraints to achieve satisfactory and promising avenues of excellence in the education of teachers.

Teacher Education Institutions of Assam have numerous issues, including a lack of suitable infrastructure and regular maintenance, adequate laboratory equipment, available competent staff, hostel facilities, and proper toilets with running water, among others. The majority of teacher education institutions lack an I.C.T. laboratory. The majority of them do not have access to a sufficient number of computers with internet access. There is no match between theory and practice in elementary and secondary teacher preparation curriculum. Apart from inadequate teaching methods, low academic backgrounds of student teachers and insufficient financial grants are the key issues confronting Teacher Education Institutions in Assam. Candidate selection procedures in majority of secondary Teacher Education Institutions are faulty, only formalities are observed in the name of practical exercises. Research in education has been a severely underserved area when it comes to professional development.

Dr. Mukherjee has expressed his views on Teacher Education and said that it has expanded and developed so rapidly in the last few years, but its present condition is by no means is satisfactory. This expansion and development has also resulted in some problems (Saxena, 2020). The following are some of the major problems faced by Teacher Education Programme in Assam :

1. **Faulty course of study:** In keeping with a pattern established more than a quarter-century ago, teacher education courses at all levels include course content is not helpful in preparing an effective teacher. There is no connection between the theory courses and the practice. There is no focus on honing pupils' interests, aptitudes, attitudes, imagination, creativity, leadership, or other skills. The application of theory to practice allows for ample potential for adjustment and rearrangement.
2. **Isolation of Teacher Education Departments:** According to the Education Commission, Teacher Education at both the elementary and secondary levels has become detached from schools and current developments in school education. The

teacher education department is seen by the schools as a foreign institution. The teacher education departments just follow the method of completing the required number of lessons, paying little attention to the quality of the pedagogy used.

3. **Student teacher's poor academic background:** In the institutes, proper entrance procedures are not followed. The majority of people applying for teacher education programmes lack the motivation and intellectual basis essential for a well-deserved professional start. As a result, they have moved on to other jobs.
4. **Lack of proper facilities:** In Assam, approximately 20% (source) of teacher education institutions are in rented premises that lack the necessary resources for a practice teaching school or laboratory, a library, and other equipments. There are no accommodation facilities for student-teachers.
5. **Lack of interaction with the main academic stream:** Because state teacher education departments are isolated, they cannot serve as examples for university departments. Other university departments consider the teacher training program as something else. They are not involved in any program funded by the teacher education departments. Even in areas such as evaluation, instructional methods, and curriculum creation, teacher education departments have been unable to make a dent.
6. **Lack of facilities for professional development:** There is a lack of sufficient facilities for teacher educators' professional development. Even the Association of Teacher Educators has made little contribution to the country's professionalization.
7. **Lack of Empirical Research:** Education research has received a lot of attention in India. Whatever research is being done is of very low quality. The teacher education program has not been thoroughly researched through systematic study. The guiding concepts of the teacher education program are unwarranted ideas based on guesswork.
8. **Insufficient financial grants:** The money received from student-teachers is used to fund self-financed teacher education institutions and hence it is a challenge to manage all the required aspects of the institute. In the Government run institutions, as well, due to improper mobilization and utilization of grants the condition of the same are not up to desired standards.

Suggestions to the problems of Secondary Teacher Education Programme

1. **Reorganization of the course:** Universities should perform pragmatic research to determine the best course structure for achieving the aims of teacher education. The ratio of theory to practical work should be studied, and a special program for tracking various forms of practical activities necessary in school should be devised.
2. **Innovations:** A teacher education department should organize specific innovative programmes in the following areas to boost learning in various areas such as seminars, seminars and discussions along with lectures, panel debates, team teaching and faculty-sponsored projects.
3. **Co-operation of the practicing schools:** The faculty members of Teachers Education Institutions should have a tight relationship with the schools. Senior Secondary school teachers should be brought into the fold of the teacher education department, and mutual discussion should begin. Study courses, practice teaching, practical work etc. should all be managed to improve school operations..
4. **Planning Unit:** The State Education Department should establish a planning unit to manage demand and supply of teachers at all levels of education.
5. **The Research Nucleus:** The departments of Teacher Education should establish a hub for research in various spheres like teaching, curriculum, and evaluation with the obligation of financing community outreach programmes and bringing community members into close contact with academic minds etc. It should be upgraded with the assistance of eminent university Professors. To improve the quality of teacher education programmes, scholars should be able to freely move from one department to another, particularly in the areas of natural and biological science and language.
6. **Provision for funds:** The state government should make sufficient finances for teacher education programmes.
7. **Staff College:** A staff college for in-service education of college and university professors should be established.
8. **Documentation Centre:** A documentation centre must be established to code all educational research materials.

Conclusion

Teacher education in India and Assam has changed dramatically as a result of the implementation of excellent teaching practices. During the last five years, the functions of NCTE as an apex national statutory authority has greatly contributed to a positive understanding of sensitive topics in teacher preparation and promotion of teaching quality. Apart from the fact that the country has yet to register and guarantee zero percent illiteracy, many thorny issues relating to teaching environments, infrastructure, community consciousness, institutional constraints, anomalies in teacher appointments, lack of desirable teaching standards, imbalance in teacher-pupil ratio, and so on pose serious challenges in the arena of teacher education. The responsibility of overcoming this humongous challenge lies not only with the NCTE but all concerned to make concerted, synchronized and focused efforts to prioritize and streamline Teacher Education for the betterment of Education in particular and the society in general.

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