

A Study on Growth and Development of Primary Teacher Education in Assam

SUMONA ROY*
SWARNALATA DAS**

Abstract

This study was conducted to find out the growth and development of teacher education at primary level in Assam from 1947 to 2007 in terms of status, number of training institutes, number of trained and untrained teachers, teacher enrolment in teacher training institutes and also initiatives taken by the State in the recent years for improvement of teacher training. Data were obtained from various official records, documentary sources, departmental reports and booklets prepared/published by the Directorate of Elementary and Secondary Educations/DPEP/SCERT office as well as interviews from concerned officials. It was found that in Assam, the percentage of trained teachers rose steadily from 23.03% to 41% and subsequently to 73.11% in 1951, 1961, 1971 respectively. However, the figure declined to 68% in 1981. Responding to this alarming trend, the State has initiated various policies and interventions for qualitative improvement of teacher education since 1986.

Introduction

Assam came under the British rule much later than the rest of India. During the British period, there was very slow progress in the growth of Teacher Education although importance was entrusted on regular instruction for training of Teachers which started first during the British period. The Despatch of 1854 or the Wood's Despatch of 1854,

passed by the East India Company gave a tremendous impetus to all aspects and sections 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, recommendation was made for training of teachers. It recommended the extension and improvement of the Monitorial system which was already

* Assistant Director SCERT, Guwahati, Assam-403 521

** Professor Deptt. Of Education, Guwahati University, Assam-781 014

prevalent in the country for a long time. The Despatch also recommended stipends for promising pupil-teachers and some payment to the masters for the instruction of pupil-teachers during out of school hours.

Another important landmark in the history of teacher education was the report submitted by Hunter Commission in 1882. The first recommendations for the establishment of Normal schools in the country with courses suitable for teachers of the school level from rural areas all over the country. A special system which also sprung up in Bengal and Assam in 1885-86 was that of the 'Guru System'. According to this system, the headmasters of middle vernacular schools, who themselves had undergone the prescribed course of training in normal schools, were to 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 were also 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 provincial government accepted the principle of establishing one Normal school in each district. But by 1888-89, only six such departmental schools came to be established one each in the districts of Kamrup, Sivasagar, Lakhimpur, Khasi and Jayantia Hills and two in Darrang. There were altogether 173 trainees in these schools and the number decreased to 127 in 1901-02. The smallest number of trainees was at the Sivasagar School. In the meantime

the Government also opened 16 teacher-training classes attached to MV and ME schools to train Gurus and Primary school teachers. But the enrolment of trainees in these classes were not encouraging and so the government had decided to abolish these classes with effect from 01-10-1903 from all the government training schools and the Guru training classes with the exception of the first grade schools in the districts of Kamrup and the 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 village schoolmasters in primary and secondary schools after the decision of the government to rationalise the system of teachers' training by abolishing a number of training schools. The missionaries also closed down two of other three 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 Government established 2 Normal schools, one each at Jorhat and Silchar, for the purpose of providing training to MV and ME school teachers. Special classes were also attached to these schools for the training of village schoolmasters. By 1920, there were altogether 11 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 the schools at Jorhat, Jowai, Tura and Silchar. The grounds for closing down the schools were stated as financial difficulties arising out of the worldwide economic depression prevailing at the time. However, in 1933, the Director Public Instructor (DPI), Assam reopened these schools considering the importance of teacher's role in social development.

It has already been stated that the missionaries took the lead in the establishment of teacher's training schools. Two such schools were established in Silchar and Nagaon for the purpose of providing training to women teachers. Before 1936, there were no teacher training agencies/institutions. 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 the training of teachers. Thus, during the period from 1942 to 1945, 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 teachers was mainly due to the appointment of untrained teachers in non-governmental schools and inadequacy of facilities for the training of low grade teachers.

Objectives of the study

The present investigation was conducted with the following objectives:

1. to study the growth and development of Teacher Education in Assam from 1947 to 2007 in terms of (a) number of school (b) student

enrolment (c) trained and untrained teachers (d) number of teacher training institutes at primary level.

2. to find out the initiatives taken by the state in the recent years for the improvement of teacher education.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was followed in conducting the present study. In order to give proper treatment to the collected Data and information both qualitative and quantitative analysis has been adopted. In quantitative approach data are presented by the process of tabulation and computation of percentages. Graphical representation of the data was made wherever required. Trend/Regression lines were also used for analysis of data.

Findings and Discussions

(A) Growth and development of teacher education at the primary level

- Since Independence, primary education system in Assam has expanded tremendously, as against 7574 schools in 1947, it had 31,703 primary schools in 1996 (a fourfold increase). Subsequently in 2007, the figure climbed to 85,881 schools (an eleven fold increase compared to the 1947 figures). Though general progress was made in the field of primary education, the expansion of education was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in the facilities for the training of teachers at primary level.
- With the increase in enrolment, the number of teachers has also grown up considerably. Against 10,015 teachers in 1947 the number of

school teachers has gone up to 83,712 in 1996 and the number of teachers at primary level stood at 85,316 in 2007

- In 1946-1947, provision was made for training of teachers in basic education. In 1948, six BTCs were established by Govt of Assam at Kamrup (Mirza), Nagaon (Raha), Jorhat (Titabar), Sonitpur (Sootea), Cachar (Udarbond) and Shillong (erstwhile capital of Assam)
- All the Primary schools which were recognised under the Assam Primary Education Act 1947 were recognised as Basic schools under

the Assam Basic Education Act 1954. As a result of this Basic Education Act the Govt had to make provision of basic training for all primary school teachers and made a plan to train up the staff member of the Guru training school in Basic education.

- In 1954-55, all Guru Training schools were equipped with basic trained staff. In 1955, some Guru Training Centres were abolished and rest were converted into Junior Basic Training Centres In 1962, eighteen more BTCs were taken by the government.

Table 1
**Growth in number of Schools, Enrolment and number of Teachers
(trained and untrained) from 1951-1991**

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of Institutions</i>	<i>Enrolment</i>	<i>Total Teachers</i>	<i>Trained Teachers</i>	<i>Untrained Teachers</i>
1951	7574	626282	17303	3985	13318
1952	11466	660514	17946	4707	13239
1953	12233	705474	19073	5395	13678
1954	12689	742373	20578	5816	14762
1955	12610	762851	21250	6478	14772
1956	13561	862502	20578	7130	13448
1957	13223	845959	21760	7929	13831
1958	13593	890449	23062	8466	14596
1959	15015	980250	24924	9270	15654
1960	15979	1046530	26354	10365	15989
1961	16961	1136317	27980	11522	16458
1962	17942	1213434	29588	12444	17144
1963	18861	1299067	32012	14181	17831
1964	18953	1337212	32511	16454	16057
1965	18928	1348627	32875	18673	14202
1966	19429	1373692	33539	20075	13482
1967	19611	1411640	34983	21325	13658

1968	19876	1454676	35232	22671	12561
1969	19889	1498717	35636	24036	11600
1970	17723	1359098	32961	23961	9000
1971	18040	1398796	32794	23977	8817
1972	19213	1471336	35442	25306	10136
1973	19595	1487931	40515	26110	14413
1974	19745	1500794	42936	26932	16004
1975	20248	1510873	44544	26655	17889
1976	20251	1540463	44512	27397	17115
1977	21350	1537375	45981	27931	18050
1978	21603	1564974	46908	31071	15837
1979	21723	1624759	47142	31461	15681
1980	21723	1692083	47142	32169	14973
1981	21729	1751125	48471	33065	15406
1982	24384	1921259	51146	34437	16709
1983	25076	2026061	51828	34818	17010
1984	25930	2232740	54655	35852	18803
1985	25900	2324916	55796	36514	19282
1986	25873	2310202	55913	35152	20761
1987	26670	2642426	60007	36588	23419
1988	27287	2634753	62134	39688	23419
1989	27693	2658169	63042	41238	21804
1990	27712	2726812	63373	41516	21804
1991	28323	2756232	65801	43111	22690

Source: Statistics Branch, Directorate of Secondary Education, Assam

- In 1954-55, total number of teachers in the state engaged in 12,610 primary schools was 21,250 with a total number of 76, 2851 pupils enrolled. The percentage of trained teachers rose steadily from 23.03% to 41% and subsequently to 73.11% in 1951, 1961 and 1971 respectively. However, the figure declined to 68% in 1981 and again during 1984-85 it becomes 65.44%. This decline in the percentage of

trained teachers was mainly due to the appointed of untrained teachers and inadequacy of facilities for the training of low grade teachers. in 1961-'62 also, the minimum qualification required for the post of teacher of primary school was a Middle School Pass certificate. From the Annual Report on the Progress of Education in Assam during 1961-'62, it is seen that during this period, a very large

- number of non-Matriculates were still engaged in teaching posts in all the stages of school education. The residual effects of the phenomenon of under qualified teachers are likely to have persisted up to the 1980's or so. Meanwhile, the minimum qualification for primary school teachers was raised to a Pass in the Secondary Examination.
- Professional training is not a prerequisite for entering the job of a teacher at any level of School education in Assam, although some weightage is given for pre-service training at the time of selection of teachers. This has led over the years to the phenomenon of recruitment of batches of untrained persons as teachers. Pre-service training along with in-service training for Middle school teachers was introduced in the 1970s in the Normal schools. But the arrangement was discontinued sometimes in 1978-79 because of problems relating to jobs for such trained teachers. As a result, Primary, and Middle schools too are suffering from lack of trained teachers
 - Till 1988, there were twenty four BTCs, but with the implementation of NPE in 1986, the scheme of up gradation of BTCs to DIETs was adopted in Assam. Therefore, in the first phase, six DIETs were established in 1988, by upgrading five existing Basic Training Centres and one Senior Basic Training Centre. In the second and third phases, twelve more DIETs have been established in the state, bringing the total number of DIETs to eighteen and the remaining nineteen BTCs too are still functioning.
 - Initially the Basic Training Certificate (BTC) examination was conducted by the Basic Education Board, which later transferred to the office of the DPI under the direct control of joint Director. Again, when a separate Directorate was established for elementary education, the BTCs came under the direct control of the Directorate of Elementary Education. Though SCERT was set up in 1985, yet the control of BTCs came under it as late as 1991.
 - In the context of teacher education programme, at present SCERT Assam has been conducting Junior Basic Training programme of 1 year, 8 months', 6 months' and 3 months' durations from time to time for in-service teachers of primary schools through DIETs, BTCs, 7 Normal schools and 1 PPTC.
 - A total of 40,980 teachers so far have been trained through the Junior Basic Training (JBT) course from 1991-2007. Evaluation results of trainees coming out of the training courses conducted by sampled TTIs is satisfactory during the period 1997 to 2004. The DIETs sampled reported pass percentage ranging from 76% to 95%. Similarly, BTCs and NSs sampled reported pass percentage varying from 76% to 95% and 84% to 95% respectively. However, if we analyse these outcomes in a qualitative aspect,

it is seen that during the period 1997-2004, only 12.74% trainees secured 1st Div. marks.

(B) Besides the training of teachers through teacher training institutes various policies have been implemented and number of interventions introduced for qualitative improvement of teacher education programme since 1986.

- One of the most important centrally sponsored schemes undertaken as a follow-up of Universal Elementary Education (UEE), 1986-the Operation Black Board has been implemented with good success.
- In respect of training of teachers, the programme of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST) was implemented during 1986-89. During this period, about 55,000 primary, upper primary and secondary school teachers were oriented about the new approach to education as enunciated in NEP 1986.
- PMOST was re-launched as a Special Orientation for Primary School Teachers (SOPT) during 1993-94 and continued during 1995-96. About 35,000 primary school teachers oriented about child centred education, Minimum level of learning and the use of teaching learning materials.
- Since the last three years before the advent of the new millennium, SCERT Assam has evolved a new strategy for training of teachers by the formation of State Level Resource Group (SLRG), District level Resource Group (DLRG) and Block Level Resource Group (BLRG). With the help of this cascade strategy, the SCERT could train up a large number of teachers under special orientation programmes for primary school teachers (SOPT) within a short period of time
- One of the strategies for increasing efficiency and effectiveness of school system was the introduction of a two years' duration PSTE (pre-service teacher education) course in 17 DIETs under SCERT, Assam in 2000-2001.
- Establishment of 18 DIETs is an extremely important step taken in the field of teacher education for improvement of quality of Elementary Education as envisaged in the National Policy on Education and Programme of Action, 1986.
- DPEP, a flagship project of the Government of India, launched in 1994 for quality improvement of teachers through training as an effective national strategy to pursue the Education For All objectives.
- Strengthening of SCERT: SCERT Assam, had suffered long time neglect got strengthened under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) in relation to infrastructures, staff development and programme component.
- SCERT Assam conducted a few Mass Teacher Training (MTT) programmes using cascade method of training covering about 81,000 primary teachers during March-April 2003.

- Another MTT for introduction of English in *Ka-Shreni* and English at the lower primary level was conducted by SCERT, Assam using cascade method of training covering 30,499 primary school teachers of the state during 2007-08.
- Besides in addition to the above SCERT Assam extends cooperation as Resource person to various institutions and NGO's in organising short term in-service teacher training programme as a part of their extension service programme.
- The quality education envisaged in the scheme for UEE by and large depends on the development of professionalism in education. It is therefore, the Government of Assam has arranged a variety of training programmes for growth of professional competence among the primary teachers. In addition to JBT course short-term training programme of altogether 20 days duration in a year on different school subjects, new trend in education, innovative practices, TLM preparation, micro teaching skill, action research, school readiness, community mobilisation etc. were also organised under the aegis of SSA with the help of field level functionaries such as ABRCC, CRCC, RT etc. As per SSA norms, all the primary school teachers have to undergo 20 days training programmes in an academic year.
- Another intervention for enhancing professional competence of primary school teachers was the conduction of 'Certificate in Primary Education (CPE)' programme under IGNOU through distance mode package for untrained teachers. 950 primary teachers were trained through CPE in the year 2003 in 10 DIETs. A total number of 4000 primary teachers were trained up in 2007-08 through distance mode by IGNOU for which 20 centres had been activated in DIETs and DRCs in Assam. The entire cost of training programme was borne by SSA, Assam.
- Distance Education Programme (DEP), an integral component of SSA is another major intervention for strengthening professionalism among the teachers and other educational practitioners through distance mode of learning. DEP-SSA was launched on 1st July 2003. It aims at providing need-based local specific in-service training to teachers, teacher educators and other practitioners focusing on review and monitoring of SSA interventions through teleconferencing. Production of audio visual programmes and community training through multimedia approach under this project, a self-learning material named 'Prayash' an integrated Education for Disabled was also developed for teachers and Teacher educators.

Present Status of Teacher Education in Assam

At present, the state has the following TTIs with intake capacity for the training of teachers at primary level.

Table 4.6
No. of TTIs and intake capacity since independence till present

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Institution/Organisation</i>	<i>No. of Instt.</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Intake capacity</i>
1	Basic Training Centres (BTCs) Established since 1948	19	Primary (In-service)	950
2	Pre-Primary Teacher Training Centre Established since 1964	1	Initially Pre-primary (Pre-service and In-service) but now Primary (In-Service)	50
3	Normal Schools Established since 1906	7	Initially Primary (In-service), now Elementary (In-service)	400
4	DIETs Established since 1989	18	Both Primary and Elementary (In-service)	900

Conclusion

After the attainment of independence, the national government accepted basic education as the national pattern of Primary Education in India and declared that in accordance with the Article 45 of the Indian Constitution, the government would provide for free and compulsory primary education of children of the age group of 6-14 years. In pursuance with the Directive Principles of the Constitution, all the states have introduced free primary education in the age group of 6-11 years. It is an admitted fact that education plays a vital role in national reconstruction. Success of democracy to a great extent depends upon the diffusion of light of knowledge among the masses. In case of Assam, however, the progress of primary education is very much discouraging. Though the latest figures indicate some progress in case of literacy of the sexes, yet this progress is far from satisfactory. This is due to the reason that a large majority of our primary school teachers lack education and training because training is not a prerequisite for entering

at any level of school education in Assam. Though teacher training in the country has a long history of more than a century and a half, where we stand today is very disturbing in that teacher training programmes have not responded to the changing scenario in the field of primary education. To bring about a sustainable improvement in the quality and management of Primary Education in the country, continuing education of teachers, teacher educators and other personnel associated with it is very essential.

Over the years, several innovative steps and contributions of state and national level organisations towards revamping teacher education have been appreciable. It has been observed that training organisations have hardly been developed any mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of training quality on a continuous basis. If some kind of monitoring is undertaken, it is with regard to achievement of targets in terms of number of teachers and resource persons trained or training material supplied to the participant.

Training activity, therefore, in many a case has become a number driven exercise while the quality of training has taken a back seat.

The long awaited tool for drastic social change 'Education for all' has now been made a fundamental right by an act of parliament. In spite of education being a state subject, the proactive role played by the MHRD through its Department of School Education and Literacy, has taken up the responsibility of developing and enforcing standard for teacher education in the country.

However, the state government as well as local authorities would provide training facilities for teachers. It has been made mandatory for all untrained teachers to acquire prescribed qualification within five years and the recommended teacher-pupil ratio is 1:30 for primary level school. It may be concluded on a positive note by hoping that the preparation and up-gradation of human resources in any field requires a long term and sustained effort. Hence, a strategic vision towards quality teacher education is essential to transform teacher education as a strategy in itself.

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