

Joint Review Mission
On
Teacher Education
Jammu & Kashmir
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The Joint Review Mission Report on Govt. Colleges of Education

Colleges of Education

The Government College of Education, Srinagar was upgraded to a teacher training college in 1948 and subsequently to a College of Teacher Education in 1995. It is a well-loved institution and holds pride of place in the history of education and especially women's education in the State. It was the first Institution of higher learning for women in the State and for long remained the only institution for the training secondary school teachers. Currently, within the Kashmir Division, it is the only government institution offering a regular, full time B.Ed. as is the Government

College for Education in Jammu (established in 1954) for that division. Both institutions were upgraded to Colleges of Teacher Education only in 1995. Housed in a heritage building, the CoE, Srinagar and the State Institute of Education were formed a single entity up to 1994. They were subsequently bifurcated into two separate institutions concerned with higher and school education respectively. The College of Education in Jammu, although housed in spacious facilities is on premises which belong to another department of the Government and therefore finds itself unable to make any infrastructural changes on the premises or to make use of the large spacious grounds it occupies.

Faculty and students

The college of Education, Srinagar presently has 37 faculty members, 15 of whom are working on a contractual basis, since no new posts have been sanctioned even after the intake of students has been increased. It admits 500 students each year to the B Ed programme-- 300 from the open category and 200 from the category of in-service school teachers on deputation. Since initial appointment of teaching up to secondary level in the state does not require graduation or a B.Ed. degree, teachers are regularly deputed by the state to upgrade their qualifications. The college also has 60 seats for the M Ed programmes.

The CoE, Jammu has 21 faculty members and admits 400 students, with a component of 150 on deputation from government schools. Its M.Ed. program admits 16 students. Teachers are selected for this course by the directorate of Education on the basis of years of service. This is a regular and much sought after degree since it makes teachers eligible for promotion.

The recruitment and transfer policies of teachers and teacher educators however, are a source of concern and are creating serious problems for all institutions of teacher education in J&K. Faculty in the Colleges of education is appointed from degree colleges on a transferable basis with no specifications of any specialization. They are required to have a B.Ed. (although it was reported that in the Jammu college there are faculty members without even this qualification)

and a Masters degree but not necessarily any prior exposure, orientation, training or an expressed interest in Education. The B.Ed.degree, a preparatory programme for school teaching, does not necessarily train students to become teacher educators. Faculty who are brought in are not familiar with issues of curriculum and pedagogy, nor are they necessarily abreast of issues that are pertinent to school education. This has serious implications for teaching training and research in the college. There are no programmes to orient new faculty or any efforts for capacity building directed to their particular needs, and with or without any interest in school education they are forced to learn in the course of their tenure in the colleges. The average tenure in a college is 2 to 3 years which does not encourage nor reward any long term commitment to issues of teacher education. It requires a great deal of effort on the part of the Principal to retain good teachers. The lack of stability of the faculty and the transfer policy creates problems for developing and consolidating disciplinary work in specific areas of education with serious deleterious implications for both teaching and for research.

Infrastructure

The CoE Srinagar has fairly extensive infrastructure including classrooms, separate departmental rooms, laboratories for science, psychology and computer education, an auditorium, and a library managed by qualified staff. It also has space within the campus for curricular and extra-curricular activities like yoga and self-defence training for girls. In 2009 it acquired additional space in the erstwhile SIE block, and has utilized funds for expanding infrastructure including additional girls' washrooms, a boundary wall, a canteen etc. It has a language lab for English as well as Urdu. It also supports a UGC-supported Women's Studies Centre set up in 2006-2007 which has been upgraded to Phase II. The college was accredited by NAAC as 'A' in 2004, and re- accredited in December 2012.

The college has an ICT in education department. There is a well-designed computer lab with about 98 computers, and the library has 13 computers at work stations, where students can access e-resources through the Inlibnet and Sage journals. Efforts have been made to use technology in teaching, with e-glossaries in all subjects and website learning resources prepared by faculty. The college is in need of expanding infrastructure, particularly with regard to computer lab space and hostels. In the overall scenario of violent conflict, and periodic disruptions, students, most of whom are young women, are particularly at risk in the absence of campus accommodation. A proposal was sent to UGC and the state government for establishing hostels in 2009, but no progress has been made on this front. The college has also put up a proposal for a playground, especially since they are interested in setting up a department of physical education in the college.

The Government College of Education, Jammu has a NAAC accreditation of B+. The infrastructural facilities here are stated to be adequate, with classrooms and lecture halls, a well equipped library, a computer laboratory with 20 computers, a psychology laboratory and an EDUSAT facility. The Principal here has recently taken over and is currently orienting herself to the Professional Training aspect of the Institution. In the discussions, there was

dissatisfaction expressed with the fact that the college does not own its premises as a result of which the College cannot undertake any infrastructural improvements and expansion. The need for an auditorium, up gradation of its canteen facility, and for a hostel facility for candidates coming from outside the city, is being seriously felt by this college.

Academic programmes

The primary academic programme in both colleges is the B.Ed. programme and M.Ed. programmes are also offered. The curricula for these programmes are framed by the university faculties of education, although the colleges participate in this exercise. Both are one year programmes with a theory and a practice component. The CoE, Srinagar has a regular and acceptable 30 day “practice teaching’ component, at the CoE Jammu however, the practice teaching component is limited to 10 days only which is which is not all appropriate for the function that this component is meant to serve.

The CoE, Srinagar proposes to start three new programmes- a 4 year B.A.+B Ed, Masters in Education and a M.Ed. evening course. They also intend to establish an independent Physical Education Department. The college is a partner institution with IGNOU since 2008, and acts as a study centre for many of its courses. The college prides itself on good results at the B Ed and M Ed level, and the fact that their students are rank holders from the university. The college offers merit-cum- means scholarships for open candidates. A faculty initiative has also seen the setting up of a fund for poor students. This college has framed additional self-financed courses as optional and students are expected to opt for these. English as a medium of instruction and computer courses are offered as certificate courses and are popular with students. We were informed that the language labs are presently not used since phonetics was taken out of the curriculum under pressure from private B Ed colleges. Discussions with graduating student teachers in Kashmir revealed some dissatisfaction. Linkages between courses and school classrooms seem to be missing with overdue stress on skill-based component of teaching. Most students are women with graduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as in-service teachers with long years of teaching experience. The programme has no component to incorporate these strengths into the programme or to moderate teaching accordingly. Teachers feel inadequately prepared to face the challenges of teaching in government schools, which is where they would be seeking employment. The course does not seem equipped to help students deal with challenges related to teaching of the poor, the psycho-social effects of conflict on children, diversity, etc. All of these concerns are equally applicable to the CoE, Jammu. The course itself follows the traditional B.Ed curriculum and innovations such as the certificate course and optional courses do not allow space for discussion of contemporary issues in education such as the RTE or NCF 2005, or indeed the social and political contexts of education in Kashmir that affect teaching-learning in schools.

The college teachers claim that they address these issues through their own model lessons, which is no substitute for serious theoretical engagement on these complex dimensions of education. There is a perception among the student teachers that theory is irrelevant to

classroom practice. This reflects on the general nature of the B Ed course as it is framed and taught everywhere. Another concern was that the curriculum does not focus sufficiently on the secondary school level. Although most student teachers would be aspirants for employment under the ReT scheme as elementary school teachers, building expertise within the institution is necessary under the RMSA and therefore needs strengthening within the curriculum. This would need a cadre of teacher educators drawn from a variety of academic disciplines such as the social sciences, sciences, mathematics who are subject experts but with an awareness of special pedagogies related to these disciplines.

Curriculum

The teacher education Curriculum and syllabi for the B.Ed., M.Ed. and M.A. Education courses is the responsibility of the University departments both in Kashmir and Jammu. The teacher education curriculum follows the traditional format of such courses throughout India, which according to the NCF 2005 has been characterized in the following terms: “though the professional preparation of teachers has been recognized as crucially important since the 1960s, the ground reality remains a matter of great concern... the teacher programmes today train teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as transmission of information. Attempts at curricular reform have not been adequately supported by the teacher education Programmes that neither accommodate the emerging ideas in context and pedagogy nor address the issue of linkages between school and society...”. Although the exercise of revising the curricula is undertaken regularly, and is done with the collaboration of the Colleges of education, perusal of the curriculum documents, courses, syllabi and readings as well as research conducted by the institutions do not seem to have come out of all the limitations mentioned above. Sociology, social issues and the philosophical underpinnings of education, that are critical to understanding of Education in India and in the many complex regional variations, is covered in a few perfunctory and unimaginative topics. An awareness of research in child development and cognition that has advanced phenomenally in the last few decades is not evident in the courses or the research. The debates around newer pedagogies and contexts of assessment are also missing. The large amount of current writing on a diverse range of issues that are important in the context of the subcontinent do not find place anywhere. The prescribed references are out date and unimaginative and very little current research material is reflected in the courses. Original readings of classic and important emerging texts and inclusion of current research based literature is not evident anywhere including the post-graduate courses. The curriculum and syllabi do not reflect any engagement with the NCF 2005, or the NCFTE 2009, although the claim that the textbooks have been revised on the basis of the NCF 2005 was made by the J&K BOSE and by the Universities and colleges of education. A textbook revision was carried out in 2007 on the basis of the NCF 2005 but this seems to have been done without a thorough understanding or any sustained discussion and analysis of the original document and its theoretical or philosophical underpinnings. Discussions with the faculty made it clear that there has been no effort to study either of these documents in any systematic way. This is not surprising given the lack of

specialized expertise and the temporary nature of faculty's involvement with education and its many complex facets. This is evident in both Jammu and Kashmir. It needs to be noted however that this is not a problem of teacher training in J&K alone. Teacher education programmes and curricula across the country as a whole have consistently resisted serious attempts to reform and have failed to evolve with an academic rigour. There is little awareness of the advances in understanding children and learners or to incorporate a social awareness and sensitivity of the many complex issues that are pertinent to an understanding of disparity, marginalization and diversity in developing countries and economically and socially unequal societies. The NCFTE 2009 is an attempt to address these issues (as was the NCF 2005) and a beginning towards making teacher education relevant while keeping its academic standards intact.

Research

The CoE, Srinagar has established a Research Committee and conducted research sponsored by the UGC minor research projects scheme (6) as well as research under the WSC (24). Seminars and workshops are regularly conducted, although it was not possible to assess them. There has been a focus on looking at issues of adolescent girls, (such as the effects of delayed age at marriage on account of prolonged conflict in the valley). There are also plans to introduce a compulsory dissertation at the Masters level. We noted that there has been less attention to conducting research on educational issues related to curriculum, or teaching-learning. The college brings out an education research journal 'Inquiry', published since 1972,

a student magazine and a newsletter. Perusal of the journal revealed that papers do address issues of contemporary concern in education, although the research methodology is out dated and does not analyze the issues substantively. An aspiration in the college is to set up a research centre in education but this seems difficult since it needs to be sustained by a recruitment policy that allows for some degree of JRM - TE, Jammu & Kashmir, April 2013 19 permanence that would encourage a sustained engagement with research. There is no evidence of any research activity in the CoE, Jammu. Faculty in both colleges claimed to be participating in seminars and conferences related to education but given that their expertise and engagement in education is of a short duration, this appears to be a procedural endeavour rather than an engaged academic one. Linkages with other TEIs and the school system Collaboration of the CoE, Srinagar with other institutions in teaching and training, including SIE Srinagar, different DIETS , JK BOSE and Kashmir University, remains at an individual level and the relationship is strictly hierarchical with the higher education institutions acting as experts and school education institutions as recipients of this expertise. The college also conducts outreach programmes and an effort is also being made to connect with other institutions. The college has collaborated with WISCOMP for programmes in Peace building and runs outreach programmes such as slum adoption under the WSC. B Ed students are involved in NSS and other outreach activities of the college. The college also offers free coaching for NET and SLET for students from marginalized communities. Apart from these activities, the relation to the

larger school system and the contemporary policy changes in the school sector is weak. No outreach activity or active linkages with other institutions are reported by the CoE, Jammu. However, faculty from the College has been involved in educational programs as resource persons, but this happens at an individual level. **The CoE Srinagar is desirous of being upgraded to an IASE.** This would entail granting of permanent academic positions in the institution. In a situation where strengthening of research capabilities and linkages with the school system are being hampered by the lack of academic expertise in different areas owing to the existing policies which treats teacher educators on par with subject teachers in degree colleges, upgradation will help to consolidate work in the area of teacher education in Kashmir.

On the whole, the College of Education, Srinagar must be commended for its investment in academic, research and outreach activities and its institutional dynamism. We must recognize the constraints within which the COE has been functioning, primarily in terms of unstable staff tenure arising out of the state's recruitment and transfer policy, and the disruptions arising out of the conflict situation. Up-gradation of COE to an IASE under the TE Scheme is strongly recommended but with the condition that a dedicated cadre of qualified teachers is associated with the programme.