

Functioning Of Teacher Education Institution: Enhancing Teachers' Competencies

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ABSTRACT

Teacher education is the cornerstone of the educational system, representing a profound journey towards enlightenment rather than just a simple process. District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), established under the National Policy on Education 1986, serve as guiding beacons for educational enlightenment by offering extensive teacher education programs at the district level. DIETs play a transformative role within the educational ecosystem, equipping elementary teachers with essential tools to manage classroom dynamics effectively. Their importance is further emphasized by the NEP 2020. A comprehensive study investigates the impact of DIETs on teachers' competencies in both tribal and non-tribal districts of Odisha. This study employs a descriptive research approach, drawing insights from diverse participants including principals, teacher educators, elementary school teachers, and student teachers, through rigorous data analysis. The findings affirm the tangible benefits of DIETs' in-service training programs, enriching the teaching-learning process and providing educators with the wisdom to navigate classroom dynamics effectively.

Keywords :- Teacher education, D.I.E.T., Elementary teachers, NEP

Introduction:

Teachers, the architects of tomorrow's leaders, hold the sacred responsibility of shaping the destiny of nations. Esteemed as the paragons of society, their revered stature is a testament to their noble calling. The very fabric of a nation's greatness is intricately woven with the threads of its educational framework. Aligned with the vision of NEP 2020, teachers stand at the epicenter of pivotal reforms, heralding an era of educational excellence. The pursuit of quality education in our country has recently brought the spotlight onto teacher education programs. However, in India, the current landscape of teacher education requires substantial enhancements to meet the demands of the 21st century effectively. Recognized as a cornerstone of quality education, teacher education assumes paramount importance as it directly influences the caliber of educators. Hence, there is a pressing need to fortify both teacher education programs and institutions for ensuring high-quality education. Empowering teachers through comprehensive training is imperative, as it equips them with the necessary tools to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies. This, in turn, enables them to embrace new technologies and innovative pedagogical approaches within their classrooms. A diverse array of teacher training institutions such as Regional Institute of Education (RIE), College of Teacher Education (CTE), Institute of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE), District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Block Institute of Education (BIET), and Elementary Teacher Education Institutions (ETEs) play a pivotal role in augmenting the competencies of educators through tailored training programs.

Teacher education programs

Teacher education programs serve as a fundamental pillar within any educational framework. They bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by fostering the development of both content expertise and pedagogical skills. These programs empower educators to employ a diverse range of methods and approaches in delivering course content, thereby enhancing the overall teaching and learning

experience. The overarching goal of teacher education programs is to equip teachers with the requisite attitudes, knowledge, skills, and methodologies essential for effective classroom instruction. By catering to the specific needs of the teaching profession and preparing educators to navigate its inherent challenges, these programs play a pivotal role in shaping competent and capable teachers. In our country, various types of teacher education programs are prevalent, each serving distinct purposes:

- 1) In-service Training;
- 2) Pre-service Training
- 3) Refresher Training
- 4) Induction Training

DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) plays a crucial role in our country by offering teacher training programs at the district level. It caters to both pre-service and in-service training needs for teachers of elementary schools and shoulders the responsibility for overseeing all aspects of elementary-level school education within its respective district. Initially structured with seven distinct departments, DIETs ensured efficient operations through the following departments: (i) Pre-service training, (ii) In-service training, field interaction, and extension, (iii) Work experience, (iv) Curriculum and material development, (v) Planning and management, (vi) Educational technology, and (vii) District resource center. However, the current configuration of DIETs comprises five departments, namely:

- (i) Pre-service Teacher Education (PSTE)
- (ii) Teacher Professional Development (TPD)
- (iii) Assessment and evaluation
- (iv) Educational Technology and Material Development (ET & MD)
- (v) Field Interaction and Action Research (FI & AR)

The core functions of DIET are multifaceted and integral to the enhancement of educational standards:- Providing both pre-service teacher training and in-service training for elementary school teachers within the district.

- Offering need-based training programs tailored to the specific requirements of elementary school teachers.
- Extending academic support to elementary schools within the district.
- Facilitating research activities to promote educational innovation and development.
- Organizing various orientation and leadership training programs for school heads, fostering professional growth and leadership skills among educational leaders.

Related Literature Review:

Panda (1997) delved into the role of DIETs in teacher education, emphasizing the necessity for enhanced infrastructure and skilled personnel. Subrahmanyam (2001) explored the impact of DIETs on primary school teachers in Kerala, specifically highlighting the positive influence of in-service training programs on their professional efficacy. The Azim Premji Foundation's 2010 report shed light on the status of DIETs in India, revealing shortcomings such as inadequate infrastructure, faculty vacancies, and program inefficiencies. Presidha's (2011) study on DIET functioning in Garo Hills, Meghalaya, outlined various challenges, including infrastructural deficiencies and staffing shortages, while advocating for activity-based learning and improved faculty qualifications. NCERT's (2012) report proposed critical modifications for DIETs, including filling vacancies, bolstering infrastructure, and providing robust support for teacher training programs. Peitthush's (2014) investigation into DIET student teachers' attitudes in Meghalaya emphasized the need for tailored approaches in fostering positive attitudes toward value-based education. Lata's (2014) evaluation of DIETs' role in enhancing in-service elementary school teachers' knowledge and skills highlighted positive impacts on teaching-learning processes and teacher communication. MHRD's (2016) recommendations aimed at strengthening SCERTs and DIETs through addressing vacancies, enhancing linkages, and establishing a dedicated academic cadre for teacher trainers. Rajonna and Taj (2018) explored elementary teachers' perceptions of DIET role performance in Karnataka, revealing varying perspectives among teachers from different districts. Singh, Patel, and Mishra's (2019) study emphasized the importance of teacher education and professional development programs in shaping teacher quality. Jishtu and Grover (2020) focused on in-service teachers' perceptions of DIET training programs in Himachal Pradesh, underscoring their positive impact on teacher competencies, professional efficiency, and knowledge updates. This review of related literature offers a comprehensive overview of diverse studies, providing insights into key concepts and findings, which serves as a foundational basis for further investigation in the present study.

Significance of the Study:

Teachers are pivotal in ensuring quality education, and DIETs serve as crucial support systems for educators at the grassroots level, aligning with the objectives of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). Therefore, understanding the impact of DIETs on teacher competency development at the elementary level is paramount. In this context, the researcher aims to investigate the effect of DIETs on elementary teacher competency development in Odisha.

Study Objectives:

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Study the impact of DIETs on the enhancement of quality elementary education at the district level.
- Study the effectiveness of DIET operations in specific districts of Odisha.

Study Scope:

The study was confined to four districts in Odisha, namely Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj. It included four blocks from each district, representing both tribal and non-tribal areas.

Methodology:

Research Method: A descriptive survey method was applied for the study.

Variables:

- **Dependent Variable:** DIET functions

- **Independent Variable:** Locality (tribal and non-tribal areas)

Sampling Procedure:

- **Selection of Study Area:** Four districts in Odisha were selected as the study area, with a focus on two tribal and two non-tribal districts.

- **Selection of DIETs:** Four DIETs from the selected districts were chosen for the study.

- **Participants:** The study included four DIET Principals, 20 DIET Teacher Educators, 200 DIET Student Teachers, 160 elementary school teachers, and 40 community members from the selected districts. Stratified random sampling was employed for participant selection.

ANALYSIS OF DATA:

The gathered data were analyzed by using basic statistical methods, namely mean and percentage calculations.

TABLE 1 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' VIEW ON FUNCTIONING OF DIET

SL. No.	Statements	Non-tribal		Tribal	
		N	%	N	%
1	Well planned in-service teacher trainings	96	60	64	40
2	Well-trained resource persons give training	88	55	72	45
3	DIET conducts ICT training	136	85	24	15
4	Need-based trainings given by DIET	104	65	56	35
5	Subject specific trainings are organised by DIET	96	60	64	40
6	Professional commitment of teachers developed by trainings of DIET	88	55	72	45
7	Coordination of trainings of DIET with BRC and CRC level	104	65	56	35
8	Organization of training programmes are informed in advance to the teachers	120	75	40	25
9	Content based trainings given by DIET	144	90	16	10
10	School leadership for school heads, capacity building trainings for teachers	96	60	64	40

The table shows that status of various activities related to quality education done by DIETs of non-tribal districts was higher in comparison to tribal districts.

TABLE-2 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' VIEW ON FUNCTIONING OF DIET

SL. No.	Statements	Non-tribal		Tribal	
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The table shows that effective working of DIET for capacity building of teachers, development of FLN materials, e-content, continuous professional development, academic support, ICT integration and linkage with other institutions. The strength area of non-tribal area is higher than the tribal area.

Key Findings of the Study:

- Among the four DIETs analyzed, 75% of them successfully conducted and met targets in training courses, orientations, and capacity-building programs.
- A majority of non-tribal elementary teachers expressed a positive perception of DIET programs, particularly praising their performance in in-service teacher training, organization of training programs, coordination with BRCs-CRCs, and subject-oriented training.
- Some elementary teachers highlighted the effectiveness of DIETs in enhancing teacher competency through content-based training, although there were differences in perception between non-tribal and tribal teachers, with the former showing a higher level of satisfaction.
- Workshops and seminars organized by DIETs, especially in areas like material development and action research for teachers, were acknowledged as having a positive impact on teachers by some elementary teachers.
- Effective monitoring and supervision by DIETs were recognized by a significant number of elementary teachers as contributing to the development of teacher competencies.
- DIETs in tribal districts displayed lower engagement in various learning activities compared to those in non-tribal districts.
- Data analysis also revealed that DIETs in tribal districts had more weaknesses compared to their counterparts in non-tribal districts in Odisha.
- Data collected from elementary teachers provided insights into the effective functioning of DIETs in areas such as capacity building of teachers, development of local-based teaching materials, e-content, continuous professional development, academic support, and content enrichment programs.

Suggestions from elementary school teachers to enhance the In-Service Training Programmes at DIET include:-

- Integrating ICT into training sessions.
- Inviting trained, experienced, and subject expert resource persons.
- Extending the duration of training programs.
- Introducing new and innovative teaching methodologies.
- Scheduling training sessions during school breaks.
- Customizing training programs to meet teachers' specific needs.
- Ensuring regular and mandatory attendance for training sessions.
- Ensuring training venues have adequate facilities.
- Selecting convenient and accessible training venues.
- Using teaching aids effectively during sessions.
- Incorporating activity-based training methods.
- Timing training sessions before or after school terms.
- Providing timely communication about training schedules.
- Updating training content to align with classroom requirements.
- Conducting pre-training surveys to understand teachers' challenges.
- Implementing robust monitoring of training programs.
- Offering subject-specific training for teachers.
- Arranging substitute teachers during training periods.
- Addressing elementary school-level issues during training.
- Providing incentives, such as credit, for attending training sessions.
- Maintaining accurate records of teachers' training attendance to avoid redundancy.

Educational Implications of the Study

Drawing from the study's findings, the following educational implications are proposed for consideration by educational planners, administrators, policymakers, SCERTs, DIETs, and teachers:

- Recognizing the infrastructure hurdles faced by DIET faculty and in-service teachers during training sessions emphasizes the necessity for adequate infrastructure and facilities at DIETs and training venues before program implementation.
- These insights can guide DIETs/SCERTs in optimizing the effectiveness of in-service training initiatives.
- Encouraging mandatory participation in training for all in-service teachers and maintaining detailed records of training sessions is advised.
- Thorough monitoring and follow-up of training programs are imperative.
- Ensuring timely disbursement of funds is vital for seamless execution of teacher training initiatives.
- Scheduling training sessions during breaks can minimize disruptions to students' academic schedules.
- Addressing the challenges encountered by DIET members and teachers during training is key to effective problem-solving.
- Tailoring training programs to align with teachers' needs fosters active engagement.
- Developing an academic calendar in advance that encompasses all DIET-organized trainings is recommended.
- Prioritizing the implementation of the four-year integrated B.Ed program in line with the National Education Policy 2020 across all educational levels is crucial.

- Offering short-term courses and training sessions for in-service teachers aligns with the National Education Policy 2020's guidelines.
- Promoting workshops, seminars, and online training platforms like DIKSHA/SWAYAM can efficiently reach a broad spectrum of teachers in a condensed timeframe, aligning with the NEP 2020 recommendations.
- Engaging local experts as 'master instructors' in various subjects enhances the quality of training sessions.
- Equipping outstanding teachers with leadership and management skills as per NEP 2020 prepares them for leadership roles in academia.
- Emphasizing innovative and ICT-based training programs organized by SCERTs, DIETs, and training institutions equips teachers to tackle education challenges effectively.

Conclusion:

The District Institute of Education and Training plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality education at the elementary level and enhancing the capabilities of elementary teachers. Consequently, the reinforcement of DIETs is imperative. As per the National Education Policy 2020, teacher education institutions are instrumental in bolstering teachers' competencies through various capacity-building programs, refresher courses, and orientation sessions. Acting as an apex body at the district level, DIETs provide essential academic and resource support to elementary teachers. To fulfill their mandate effectively, DIETs require adequate infrastructure, human resources, and sufficient funding. Additionally, establishing a comprehensive annual academic plan for DIETs is crucial. This strategic planning guides their activities aimed at the professional development of elementary teachers within the district.

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