

Title of the Study : **The Teacher Education Programmes in National Colleges of Education**
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Objectives / Terms of Reference

This report is the outcome of a request made by the National Education Commission (NEC) to conduct a study on the teacher education programmes conducted by the National Colleges of Education (NCOE) of Sri Lanka. The report consists of three sections.

The first section will examine-

- The functions and relative powers of the Colleges of Education Board and the powers of people in authority,
- The distribution of courses in NCOEs,
- The entry requirements for admissions to NCOEs,
- Distribution of students on the basis of gender, institutions and subjects and whether the particular NCOE has the capacity to meet the demands made,
- Curriculum and its quality
- An evaluation of the teaching methodologies adopted
- Student output, standards and procedures adopted for evaluation
- The quality of the teaching staff
- Programmes for staff development
- The role played by the NCOEs in adult education.

The second section will –

- Identify the shortcomings and the factors if any which inhibit the development and prevent the NCOEs from playing the role expected of them.

The third section will suggest-

- The measures to strengthen the role and functioning of NCOEs while at the same time improving the quality of teacher education programmes offered by the NCOEs.

Conclusions

Shortcomings and constraints faced by the NCOEs

Many shortcomings and constraints faced by the NCOEs were identified during the course of this study. The academic staff of the NCOEs during their discussions too pointed out certain constraints which hinders the progress of the NCOEs. These points will be dealt with in what follows.

Problems –Powers and duties and the functions

It was evident from the data that emerged that the NCOEs were fashioned and moulded with a vision to achieve certain objectives. Therefore an attempt was made to examine whether these objectives are been achieved and whether the power structure has been sensibly constructed. It was felt that the objective of forming a developed professional is not yet been fully achieved due to certain problems.

The course distribution

The main drawback that was identified in this sector is linked to the course distribution and resource management. Some of the courses conducted in the NCOEs have very few

students. For instance there are only five students for the Western Music course at Mahaweli College. Similarly there are several other colleges and courses where only a few students are registered.

Entry Requirements

The entry requirements to the NCOEs are quite high. Some academics were of opinion that the student shortage is due to the high requirements. They were of opinion that entry requirements should be lowered as there is a shortage of students for some courses

Distribution of students

There seems to be a strong disparity based on gender among the student teacher population with a high proportion of female student teachers. It is essential to attract males to the teaching profession so as to maintain a gender balance in the schools. It was also evident that there is an acute shortage of students for certain courses. This creates difficulties in maintaining standards.

Quality content of the curricula

There were many complaints about the curriculum content of several courses. It was revealed that the content of some of the courses were very broad while some others had a limited content. The latter characteristics were denoted in the curriculum content of Western Music and Environment Related Activities. This imbalance has to be rectified if similar standards are to be maintained across the curriculum.

Quality of staff

There was an acute shortage of academic and non-academic staff in certain NCOEs while the more popular ones had an excess staff. This drawback was identified in most of the newly created colleges like Pulasthipura and Dharga Town NCOEs. These voids were temporarily filled in by visiting lecturers. Since most of these temporary visiting lecturers were selected based on personal likes and dislikes the quality of the course could not be maintained. Since age is considered as an important criteria when selecting lecturers to the NCOEs it is very much doubtful whether the selected teacher educators had the necessary experience to coach up future teachers.

There were difficulties pertaining to attracting the best to the staff of the NCOEs due to lack of incentives and irregularities.

Since some of those who had been selected for overseas training had abruptly left in the middle of a term the students had to undergo lot of hardships.

There were problems pertaining to the practical training as well. Though an experienced teacher from the school is supposed to be a mentor to some of these young student teachers it was very seldom that this role was enacted meaningfully and effectively.

The administrative staff had their own set of problems. The finances were often not available in time and most of them who handled administration had not undergone any managerial or administrative training. Consequently there were many lapses.

The hostel superintendents were not qualified in the job and some lecturers were doing the superintendents job thus adding up too many responsibilities

Recommendations

1. Students should be admitted to all the courses only in January. Attempts should be made to avoid a gender imbalance when admitting students. Teaching of English should be given more prominence in the first year to all groups of students. Students should be made aware of new courses and the advantages of studying subjects like Library Science and Information Technology
2. Attempts should be made to attract more intelligent creative students to the teaching profession by providing facilities for those who satisfactorily complete to go in for further education by establishing link programmes with universities and other institutes of higher education.
3. When lecturers are appointed priority should be given to the academic qualifications and experience rather than the age. Their track record should be examined as to their commitment. Their appointment should be on a probationary period of two years and at the end of it their performance as teacher educators should be evaluated giving emphasis to commitment , creativity, English language proficiency and their ability to teach effectively. The policy of sending them abroad as soon as they are recruited should be immediately stopped.
4. Curriculum adopted should be revised and a competent board who could do this drawn from universities for different subject areas must be constituted for this. The NIE should not be given the sole responsibility for this task. Along with the curriculum revision the other requirements like the hand books, teacher guides too should be produced. Unless all these are ready the new curriculum should not be introduced. Whatever curriculum is adopted all these items should be made available to the students and the lecturers by the time the academic year starts.
5. Closer links with the school system should be formulated and a few selected schools should be affiliated to each NCOE and the lecturers and the student teachers should be given easy access so that they could try out new innovations without problems.
6. Administration structure needs re-organising and some of the posts that are already in existence with high sounding titles must be suppressed. Acting appointments in both academic and non- academic structures must be avoided and individuals with experience should be selected to run the institutions. There should be only two posts , one to be incharge of the administration and the other to be held responsible for academic affairs.
7. Unnecessary posts that have been created to accommodate certain individuals must be suppressed and each and every individual who is appointed to a post (from top to the bottom should be provided with a job description. Their performance should be evaluated at least once in six months and warnings issued to the person. If improvements do not take place there should be provision for suspension, interdiction or even dismissal.
8. Improvements to the physical plants also is an important aspect. Residential facilities should be provided to all the students. The halls of residence should be maintained properly and whatever repairs are needed must be immediately attended to. A post should be created for this task as it was noted that some of the buildings were not properly maintained at all. The chief administrative officer must be held responsible for these tasks.