



A Study On The Challenges And Prospects Of Public Education System In Peren District Of Nagaland

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Abstract

This paper examines the current state of public education in Peren District, Nagaland. It focus on the challenges and prospects for improvement in the education system. Declared as a full-fledged revenue district in 2004, Peren has achieved significant progress in its educational infrastructure through centrally sponsored schemes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rastriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA). Despite all these achievements and increased enrolment, numerous issues such as teacher absenteeism, inefficiency of local education committees in carrying out their role and responsibilities, inadequate monitoring, and political interference has continue to hinder the effective functioning of the public education system in the district, especially in remote areas. This paper is based on secondary data gathered from government sources and previous studies done by researchers in the related field. The study highlights the significance of the public education system in the district, challenges faced by both the community and the concern authorities, and proposes strategic recommendations for improving the quality in management and execution of the programs; ranging from teacher recruitment and training, rationalizing teacher postings, strengthening local governance, and upgrading infrastructure. The findings also underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions in school education system so as to ensure sustainable educational development and impart quality education for the students in the district.

Index Terms: Peren District, public education, teacher absenteeism, educational infrastructure, local governance

Introduction

Peren District was elevated to a full-fledged revenue district on January 24, 2004. The district covers a spans of 1799 square kilometers with a population of 94,954 (2011 census), giving a population density of 41 persons per square kilometer. The district is primarily inhabited by the Zeliang Nagas and Kukis with other Naga tribes making up a little portion in the total population of the district. Historically, formal education system was non-existent among the Nagas until the early 20th century, when informal learning activities were taken up in the village Morungs. By the advent of Christian missionaries followed by government initiatives, formal education gradually sprout out in the district. Past records revealed that the first Lower Primary School was started in 1912 at Benreu village with Mr. Lt. Haiswageing as the first Government Teacher. Subsequently, the British Administration sent Government Teachers Mr. Lt. Zhadiu of Khonoma to Peren village in 1922 and Mr. Lt. Nsarangbe of Benreu to Ntuma in 1935. Then in 1946, a

Lower Primary School was set up at Poilwa Old Village. After Independence of India from the British, there were gradual changes in the growth of educational institutions year by year in the district. Today, Peren District has a network of government-run primary, middle, high, and higher secondary schools. At the moment Peren District has a total of 72 Govt. Primary Schools, 42 Govt. Middle Schools, 14 Govt. High Schools and 4 Govt. Higher Secondary Schools with the total enrolment of 9092(4394 Boys and 4698 Girls) students and total strength of 852 (438 Males and 414 Females) Teachers across these Schools as per the District Education Officer Peren report of 2024. Despite these advances and the significant push from centrally sponsored schemes like SSA and RMSA, persistent systemic challenges have led to disparities in educational quality, particularly in remote villages, resulting in student migration to urban centers.

The Present Status- Issues and Challenges

The Department of School Education oversees and manage public education in Nagaland. Managing school infrastructure development, teacher recruitment, curriculum planning and financial comes through grants from district officials. However, the decentralization of school management which was mandated by the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institution and Services Act of 2002 passed down certain responsibilities of managing Public Schools to respective Villages, Towns and Ward Councils by setting up Education Committees in line with Village Development Board (VDB) of the Rural Development to ensure public participation in the management, supervision and control of Public School System in the State.

With the introduction of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) Scheme to universalize elementary education in Nagaland in the year 2003-2004, and the subsequent launching of Rastriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) by Government of India in 2007 for universalisation and improvement of quality education at the Secondary and higher secondary level, the overall enrolment of students in primary level has increased considerably especially in urban areas. Subsequently, school infrastructures have also improved significantly in the district. But in spite of this significant push from these Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), there is no sustainable improvement seen in the working of Public Education System in the district particularly in remote villages and towns due to various reasons. This led to migration of economically weak students from sub-divisional towns and villages to more urbanised towns like Jalukie, Peren and also to Dimapur and Kohima Towns to study in Public Schools. Several factors can be attributed to this present trend of out-migration of the young students from the village and towns. Firstly, the prevalence of teacher absenteeism significantly undermines the quality of education, where absent teacher is often replaced with unqualified proxy teachers. Teacher absenteeism and the practice of putting proxy teachers compromise academic quality and negatively impact student learning and their future. No doubt, only qualified teachers were appointed as a subject teacher in a particular school. But when he is being replaced with less qualified teacher, it undermines the quality of education. Moreover, Village Education Committees (VECs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) often function inefficiently due to a lack of training, resources, and clear guidelines about their roles and responsibilities. Inefficiencies in education governance by the local authorities also have equal bearings and weaken community participation and accountability, which are vital for maintaining effective school management. Political interference in the education system also breed inefficiency in management and in the transfer and posting of teachers further exacerbates these problems by creating imbalances in teacher allocation and distribution of resources by undermining the authority of local committees. The practice of using powers through influential persons in the matter of allocation and transfer and posting of subject teachers has been prevalent since time immemorial in the education department. Political interference not only disrupts the rational allocation of qualified teachers but also aggravates the disparities between urban and rural schools. Besides, persistent infrastructural deficits such as insufficient buildings and classrooms, staffrooms, basic amenities like adequate water supply and toilets and educational resources continue to impede the progress and delivery of quality education, especially in rural areas. These challenges not only hinder educational growth but also contribute to the migration of economically disadvantaged students to urban areas like Kohima and Dimapur.

Suggestion for Improvement of Public Education System

Addressing the above mention issues in public education system is crucial for ensuring equitable educational opportunities. Following are some suggestive measures that can be employ to ensure equitable distribution and impart quality education in the district.

1. The department should vehemently condemn and deal with the problems of unprofessionalism and absenteeism of teachers and engagement of their proxy by teachers. Mostly proxy teachers were found to be untrained or without requisite qualification to teach in schools.
2. Rationalisation: The department should do in-depth research before the new posting and rationalisation takes place. This is to ensure that subject teachers are allotted to all the schools without leaving any schools with no-subject teachers. For those working couples, it is also recommended that both the spouse be posted in the same place for their humane convenience and regularity.
3. Political interference in the transfer and posting of teachers with favouritism greatly undermines the role of local VECs/SMCs. This practice should be discourage and stopped immediately for equitable education.
4. Regular monitoring by the respective block's School Inspectors (SIs) of schools by visiting the schools at regular intervals and checking the teacher's working copies and providing guidance to the local VECs/SMCs on their roles and responsibilities will greatly foster quality education.
5. The state government department must initiate a mechanism to assess and provide adequate infrastructure facilities viz, classrooms, staffrooms, furniture, white boards, toilets and sufficient water supply, lab equipments and library in every school in a phase manner.
6. There should be transparency method to differentiate the performing and non- performing DEOs and SDEOs which must be accompanied by rewards, recognition for excellency performances including the teachers.

Hence, it is pertinent that the concern department should strive towards enhancing teacher professionalism, rationalizing in postings and transfer, rigorously eliminating the practice of putting proxy teachers and upgrading school infrastructure which are essential measures for bridging these gaps and fostering sustainable educational development.

Conclusion

Despite numerous issues and challenges ranging from lack of adequate infrastructure to inefficient governance and mismanagement, public education system has made tremendous strides in line with the new education policy of the country. While centrally sponsored schemes like SSA and RMSA have led to notable improvements in enrolment and infrastructure, systemic challenges persist that undermine the effectiveness of public education system in the district, especially in rural areas. Addressing the persistent issues such as teacher absenteeism, inefficient local governance, political interference, and inadequate infrastructure is imperative for achieving equitable and sustainable educational development and to achieve the objective set in the New Education Policy 2020 in the district. Therefore, it is urgently necessary to call for comprehensive policy interventions, strengthened monitoring mechanism and enhanced community involvement which are critical to ensuring that every student in the district receives quality education.

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