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A Study of the Problem Involved in Implementing the Curriculum for Primary Education in Kokrajhar District, Assam

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Abstract

Curriculum is the instructional and educative programme following which the pupils achieve their goals, ideas and their aspiration in life. Successful implementation of curriculum depends on a variety of factors that operate in the actual field settings, namely in various levels of education including primary schools. It also depends on the perception of the teachers as to the problems faced by them in implementing the curriculum.

This paper gives information regarding the problems involved in implementing the curriculum for primary education in Kokrajhar district with regard to physical facilities, time table, syllabus, resource for teaching, etc. It will certainly provide some future direction towards facing the problems involved in implementing the curriculum in the district.

Introduction

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A Study of the Problem Involved in Implementing the Curriculum for Primary Education in
Kokrajhar District, Assam

Kokrajhar district is one of the 27 districts of Assam. The district lies roughly between 89.46'E to 90.38'E longitude and 26.19'N to 26.54'N latitude. The district is bounded on the North by the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, by Dhubri district on the South, Bongaigaon district on the East and the Indian state of West Bengal on the West.

Originally Kokrajhar was a part of greater Goalpara district. Till 1956, it was a mere Village with a railway station. When Bimala Prasad Chaliha was the Chief Minister of Assam in 1957, due to the demand of the Bodo people led by Rupnath Brahma who was also a minister in the Chaliha Ministry, a new civil sub-division was created including the northern part of the Dhubri Sub-division and some parts of Goalpara Sub-division and it was named Kokrajhar Sub-division. Kokrajhar Sub-Division was upgraded into Kokrajhar district with headquarters in the Kokrajhar town on July 1, 1983.

After the formation of Bodoland Territorial Area District, certain areas of Dhubri district have been added to the Kokrajhar district. There are three sub-divisions in the district. They are Kokrajhar, Gossaigaon and Parbotjhora Sub-divisions. According to 2001 census, the total population in the district was 9,05,764 (Nine lacs five thousand seven hundred sixty four) and the literacy rate of Kokrajhar district was 52.55%.

Need and Importance of the Study

According to Thomas Raymont (*Principle of Education*, Orient Longman,1960), education means that process of development which consists of the passage of human beings from infancy to maturity, the process which he gradually adapts himself in various ways to his physical, social and spiritual environment. It is a continuous process of modification. It is a life-long process of development. According to *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, education is a process of training and developing knowledge, skill, mind and character, etc., especially by formal schooling. Education has a number of aims which varies from age to age from country to country.

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Usually the aims of education are of general and specific kinds. General aims are universally applicable to all times whereas specific aims are determined by the socio-economic conditions of a country. Again, educational aims are divided into individual and social aims.

Therefore, to achieve the aims of education for a society or for the nation, school education must provide knowledge and skills which would enable children to attain their greatest potential as individuals and as useful members of the society to which they belong. In order to meet these ends a well-planned school curriculum is essential.

Curriculum is a dynamic component of the complex phenomenon of education which itself keeps changing in response to the needs and values of life in any society. Curriculum is the instructional and educative programme following which the pupils achieve their goals, ideas and their aspirations in life. According to Raymont, “A curriculum is the outward expression of ideas and aspirations of a community not of an individual and the community has the right to lay down the broader outlines which instruction shall follow in its schools with due deference to the opinion of the professional elements as to what constitutes suitable mental food for children.”

A curriculum is not static but dynamic. It is constantly changing according to the changing needs, demands and aspirations of the society. So, curriculum of the past and today are different in many ways.

In the words of Kerney and Cook, “It is a complex of more or less planned or controlled conditions under which students learn to behave and to behave in their various ways. In it, new behavior may be acquired, present behavior may be modified, maintained or eliminated and desirable behavior may become both persistent and viable.”

Assam Curriculum of Primary Education

The present Curriculum of Primary Education in Assam (Kokrajhar) comprises:

- (i) Mother tongue
- (ii) Mathematics

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- (iii) Environmental Studies (EVS) {In classes III and IV: Social Studies as EVS I and Science as EVS II}
- (iv) Art Education
- (v) Physical Education

The new curriculum is child-centric, activity and competency-based related to the child's day to day environment and oriented towards the principle of joyful learning. Emphasis has been given to the development of skill and understanding as well as application rather than on mere gathering of knowledge and information as in traditional curricula. The curriculum is developed for all types of learners. Special importance is given to rural, first generation learners, learners of different communities like tea-workers, SC, ST, etc. Accordingly, textbooks have also been prepared, without any bias in respect of religion, caste or gender.

The state government has introduced a one-year pre-primary course in all primary schools of Assam from 1999, following which SCERT (State Council for Educational Research and Training) has developed a curriculum-cum-activity book for teachers for handling the pre-primary class called 'ka Shrenee.' No textbook or formal evaluation has been envisaged for this class.

Place of English

Another development in primary education is the introduction of the learning of English in classes III and IV as an additional subject from the year 1999. No formal evaluation of learner's attainments in English has been prescribed by the government. Only three periods per week are allotted for teaching English. The curriculum prepared by SCERT for the purpose is restricted to learning of the English Alphabet, numerical recognition (from 1 to 100), some common vocabulary for beginners and some understanding of regular learning of English as readiness for class V.

The Focus of This Paper

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The present paper would throw light on the problems involved in implementing the curriculum in Kokrajhar district with regard to physical facilities, time-table, syllabus, resource for teaching etc. Thus the paper has some specific implications for the promotion of quality education at the primary level in Kokrajhar district.

Statement of the Problem

A Study of the Problem Involved in Implementing the Curriculum for Primary Education in Kokrajhar District.

Definition of term used in the present study

The key term used in the study are defined as follows:

Primary School- Primary school means a school offering education from Class I to class IV.

Objectives of the Study

To Study the Problem involved in implementing the curriculum in Kokrajhar district with regard to:

- (a) Physical facilities.
- (b) Time table.
- (c) Syllabus.
- (d) Resources for teaching.
- (e) Achieving qualitative improvement.
- (f) General Problem.

Delimitation of the Study

- (i) The study was delimited only to curriculum practice in lower primary schools (class I-IV) of Kokrajhar district.
- (ii) It was restricted to 71 provincialised lower primary schools of Kokrajhar district.
- (iii) It was restricted to a sample of 195 teachers of the selected primary schools.

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Methodology of the Present Study

Population - The population of the present study comprised the teachers of various primary schools of Kokrajhar district.

Sample – In Kokrajhar district there are five educational blocks, namely, Kokrajhar, Dotma, Gossaigaon, Kachugaon and Parbotjhora block. The researcher selected three of the blocks, namely, Kokrajhar, Dotma and Gossaigaon. In total 710 primary schools were there in this block in 2007 and out of which 10% were randomly selected. Stratified random sampling method was followed for the present study. Accordingly, 71 primary schools were selected and 195 teachers were the respondents for the study.

Tools – In order to collect data for the present study, the investigator developed a problem check list for all the teachers.

Data Collection - After selecting the sample and prepared the tools, the investigator personally visited each of the selected schools and gave the problem check list to the teachers of the sampled schools.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data have been presented and analysed under six major heads, namely, problems related to physical facilities, time-table, syllabus, resources for teaching, achieving qualitative improvement and general problem.

Problems Related to Physical Facilities

Responses related to the problems of physical facilities are presented in terms of percentages in table 1.

Table 1: Problems related to physical facilities.

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S.I No.	Problems	Always(in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)
1.	Insufficient building for classroom.	35.9	6.7	57.4
2.	Lack of professional library.	100	----	---
3.	Absence of room for keeping teaching aids.	15.9	46.7	37.4
4.	Lack of furniture in school.	34.4	29.7	35.9
5.	Classroom are over-crowded	16.4	33.9	49.7

The table above indicates that 35.9% teachers considered that insufficient building for classroom always created problems in implementing the curriculum. Lack of professional library always create problem to all the teachers. Absence of room for keeping teaching aids always create problem to 15.9% teachers, sometimes to 46.7% and not at all to 37.4%. Lack of furniture in school always create problem to 34.4% teachers, sometime to 29.7% and never to 35.9% teachers. 16.4% teachers always faced the problem of over-crowded teachers, which was sometimes to 33.9% and not at all to 49.7% teachers.

Problems Related to Time-table

Time table is calculated exercise of tabulated precision, correlated cohesion and worked-out specification in terms of the school subjects and their relative weightage which is determined by an apportionment of teaching periods at different levels, by a fixation of special teachers and by a proper placement of periods. The problems related to time table are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Problems related to time-table

SI. No.	Problems	Always (in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)

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1.	Time table is very rigid.	7.18	44.62	48.2
2.	Class load is heavy.	45.64	9.74	44.62
3.	Time allotted for various subjects is not adequate.	3.59	51.28	45.13
4.	Irregular attendance among students.	9.23	66.67	24.10
5.	Time table is not consonance with local needs.	----	45.13	54.87

It can be observed from the table that rigid time table, heavy class-load, inadequate allotment of time for various subjects, irregular attendance among students, were always considered as problems by 7.18%, 45.64%, 3.59%, 9.23% teachers respectively, while 44.62%, 9.74%, 51.28%, 66.67% and 45.13% felt that these sometimes became problems. It was 48.2%, 44.62%, 45.13%, 24.10% and 54.87% teachers who did not consider these problems at all. Thus, it appears that the time-table followed in the schools did not provide appropriate scope for properly implementing the curriculum.

Problems Related to Syllabus

The syllabus if not prepared properly lead to the problem of curriculum load. Responses related to the problems of syllabus are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Problems related to Syllabus

SI. No.	Problems	Always (in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)
1.	Prescribed content of syllabus is excessive.	13.85	28.2	57.95

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2.	Course of study is rigid.	2.56	52.31	45.13
3.	Course of study is vague.	6.7	47.80	46.50
4.	Lack of knowledge of objectives of different subjects.	7.69	48.72	43.59
5.	Lack of knowledge of content among teachers.	1.5	46.5	52

It was found that 13.85%, 2.56%, 6.7% considered that the contents of the syllabus were excessive, rigid, vague causing problems in the implementation of the curriculum while 57.95%, 45.13% and 46.50% teachers not at all faced the problems. Teachers in general did not consider their own lack of knowledge with respect to objectives of different subjects and prescribed content as causing serious problems in their work. In this regard 43.59% and 52% teachers who felt that these items were not at all problems for them.

Problems Regarding Resources for Teaching

The problems regarding resources for teaching in implementing the curriculum are presented in table 4. Items under this were related to two specific aspects namely teaching aids , and textbooks and teacher's handbooks.

Table 4 Problems Regarding Resources for Teaching.

SI.No.	Problems	Always (in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)
1.	Non-availability of teachings aids for teachings.	----	22.56	77.44
2.	To improve teachings aid is a problem.	1.54	40.0	58.46

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3.	Many students do not have text book.	5.13	29.23	65.64
4.	Teacher's handbook are not available.	68.22	13.83	17.95
5.	Lack of skilled in the use of teaching aids.	-----	51.28	48.72

From the data it was observed that improving teaching aids, lack of textbooks among students, non availability of teachers handbooks were always considered problem by 1.54%, 5.13% and 68.22% teachers respectively while 22.56%, 40%, 29.23%, 13.83% and 51.28% sometime faced the problem of non-availability of teaching aids for teaching, problem to improve teaching aids, lack of textbooks among students, non availability of teacher's handbook and lack of skill in the use of teaching aids and 77.44%, 58.46%, 65.64%, 17.95% and 48.72% did not consider these as problems at all.

Thus, from the observation we can say that regarding resources for teaching it requires further in-depth investigation to analyse and pinpoint the malady underlying the production and distribution mechanism.

Problems in Achieving Qualitative Improvement

The teacher plays the pivotal role in teaching learning process. The teachers should adopt their teaching in such a way as to facilitate the development of inner abilities in each individual child and also to prepare him for the practical life outside the school. The real situation can be observed in table 5.

Table 5; Problems in achieving qualitative improvement.

SI.No.	Problems	Always (in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)
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1.	Slow and passive pupils in class.	3.1	81.0	15.9
2.	Motivating the under achievers.	4.1	61.54	34.36
3.	Identify the cause of pupils poor achievement.	0.5	59.5	40.0
4.	Lack of skill in remedial teaching.	10.26	46.15	43.59
5.	Lack of skill in preparing.	----	62.56	37.44

Teachers (3.1%) admitted that slow and passive pupils in class always create problem, which was sometimes to 81% teachers. 4.1% always found the task of motivating the under achievers as problem, which was sometimes to 61.54% teachers. To identify the cause of pupils poor achievement was always a problem to 0.5%, sometimes to 59.5% and not at all to 40% teachers. 10.26% always faced the problem of lack of skill in remedial teaching, 46.15% sometimes faced the problem and 43.59% never faced the problem. Lack of skill in preparing was sometime problem to 62.56% teachers and never to 37.44% teachers.

Thus, the observation highlight the need for imparting necessary orientation and training to teachers through appropriate in-service programmes.

General Problem

Attempt was also made in the checklist to obtain the responses of teachers with regard to certain general problems faced by the teachers. Data in this regard are given in table 6.

Table 6: General Problem

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SI.No.	Problems	Always (in%)	Sometimes (in%)	Not at all (in%)
1.	In-service training is too theoretical and traditional.	10.3	55.9	33.8
2.	Lack of skill in handling pupils.	1.54	57.44	41.02
3.	Lack of environment to teach children.	8.7	34.9	56.4
4.	Lack of reading habits among students.	1.02	59.49	39.49
5.	Lack of support from parents and community.	22.56	34.36	43.08

The analysis of the data shows that in the opinion of 10.3% teachers in-service training was always too theoretical and practical, which was sometime to 55.9% and not at all to 33.8% teachers. Lack of skill in handling pupils was always a problem to 1.54% teachers, sometimes to 57.44% and not at all to 41.02% teachers. 8.7% teachers pointed out that their work was hindered by lack of appropriate environment for carrying out teaching activities and which was sometimes to 34.9% and never to 56.4% teachers. Majority of teachers (59.49%) sometimes faced the problem of lack of reading habits among students. 22.56% always faced the problem of support from parents and community for education of their children.

This observations highlight that it was not only the factors within the school that need improvement but also several aspects that fall outside the school such as teacher training, community support and so on also have to be dealt with if the curriculum has to be implemented in an effective and efficient manners.

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Findings and Conclusion

1. So far as problems related to physical facilities in implementing the curriculum were concerned, insufficient building for classrooms creates a problem to 35.9% teachers, lack of professional library was always a problem to all the teachers. Similarly, lack of furniture in the school was always a problem to 34.4% teachers and 16.4% teachers faced the problem of overcrowding students.

The teachers mainly perceived that insufficient building and lack of furniture was the main problem in implementing curriculum for lower primary schools in Kokrajhar district.

2. As regard problem related to time table, 7.18% teachers faced the problem of rigid time table, 45.64% teacher always faced heavy class load, irregular attendance among students create problem to 9.23% teachers. The study reveals that teachers generally faced rigid and heavy class-load problem.

3. Major findings included the problems relating to syllabus . Excessiveness of prescribed content of syllabus create problem to 13.85% teachers. Lack of knowledge of the objectives of different subjects always creates problem to 7.69% teachers. Similarly, rigidity and vague course of study create problem to 2.56% and 6.67% teachers.

4. Regarding resources for teaching, it was observed that lack of textbooks among students creates a problem to 5.13% teachers. Similarly non-availability of teachers handbook creates problem to 68.2% teachers.

5. In respect of the problem in achieving qualitative improvement, slow and passive pupils in class and motivating the under achievers create a problem to 3.1% and 4.1% teachers. Lack of skill in remedial teaching creates problem to 10.26% teachers.

6. Insofar as general problem was concerned, the study reveals that 10.3% teachers viewed that in-service training was too theoretical and traditional. Lack of environment to teach children and lack of support from parents and community create problems to 8.72% and 22.56% teachers.

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To Conclude

In conclusion, we can say that creation of a sound primary education system appears to be a basic component of any strategy for social, political and economic development of a country. In fact, it is primary education which develops the basic innate abilities of a person to live a full personal life of an individual and as a member of a family, and an economically productive life as a worker, and a socially useful life as a citizen. The development of an appropriate curriculum is indispensable for improving the quality of primary education. Successful implementation of curriculum depends on various factors that operate in the actual field settings, i.e., at the primary schools. These include physical facilities, resources for teaching, etc. Curriculum implementation also depends on the perception of the teachers as to the problems faced by them in implementing the curriculum. For the smooth functioning of the curriculum in the district, necessary considerations have to be taken of the problems.

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