



Problems of Elementary School Teachers in the Hill Areas of Manipur

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to find out the various problems and difficulties face by elementary school teachers in the hill areas of Manipur. Necessary information regarding problems of teachers was collected through questionnaires from a total of 500 teachers teaching in 90 different elementary schools. The results indicated that elementary school teachers in the hills areas of Manipur faced enormous problems in relation to various aspects of education which hamper their competency and development in the teaching learning activities. These include poor classrooms partition, lack of proper sanitation, non-availability of teacher's quarter, insufficient teaching aids, shortage of time to carry out academic assignments, lack of proper in-service training facility, frequent transfer of teachers, lack of community involvement, insufficient and delayed payment of teacher's salary, etc. The study also suggested various important measures to solve the existing problems of elementary school teachers.

KEYWORDS

Elementary Schools. Hill Areas, Problems, Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the maker of the society and form the backbone of any educational system. All the administrators, statesmen, physicians, engineers, lawyers, and other worthy citizens are the product of teachers. The importance of teachers cannot be over emphasised and therefore, so many commissions and committees have acknowledged the important role of teachers and recommended for the upliftment of their status in the society. Unfortunately, the condition of our teachers is not satisfactory in view of the present-day demands of life with over-rising prices and other related problems. Teachers' problems are real and will not go away with the accumulation of teaching experience. If these problems are extremely bothersome they will affect teachers' performance and job satisfaction (Engelking, 1986; Leslie, 1989). In addition to that, problems in the workplace or 'environmental stressors' and job dissatisfaction contribute to stress and teacher burnout (Gold et al., 1992). There are many variables which act as a detrimental factor in developing teachers into competent and efficient teacher such as poor working environment, faulty administration, poor salary, etc. All these factors together give a psychological and social blow to the teachers which in turn make them dissatisfied with their teaching profession.

According to Cruickshank and Myers (1975), there is a common assertion that if you can find out what teachers' problems are, you have gained enormously valuable insight into their world and are in a position to help them at some level to consider and thus accept, reduce, or eliminate those problems. Therefore, this study has been undertaken with an aim to identify the various problems which bothers elementary school teachers in rural hill areas of Manipur.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the various problems of elementary school teachers in the hill areas of Manipur.
2. To suggests measures to solve the problems of elementary school teachers in the study areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the hill areas of Manipur. The state of Manipur can be geographically divided into two regions: the hill and the valley. The hill comprises of five districts while the valley comprises of four districts. In the present study, two hill districts namely, Senapati and Chandel were selected to represent the entire hill areas of Manipur with the assumption that teachers in all the hill districts faced similar situations or problems.

The present study adopted descriptive survey research method in which the investigator visited different elementary schools in the hill areas of Manipur. A sample of 90 schools and 500 elementary school teachers were drawn by following simple random sampling method. Necessary informations regarding the existing problems of teachers at elementary schools were collected through questionnaire. The data collected were entered and then analysed systematically by using appropriate statistical techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Problems Relating to Physical Facilities

4.1.1. Classroom partitions

The study found out that majority of the elementary school teachers in the hill areas of Manipur faced problem due to the poor system of classroom partitions. Although 80.40% of the elementary schools had separate rooms for each class, majority of the classroom partitions were not sound proof partitions such as plywood, wooden plank, mud and bamboo. The remaining 19.60% elementary schools did not even have partition between classrooms and therefore, classes of different standards were conducted in a hall without any partition.

4.1.2. Teaching staff-room

Majority (84.40%) of the elementary school teachers reported that teaching staff-room was provided in their schools. Infrastructure such as chairs, tables, benches, desks, cupboards and Almirah were provided to the teaching staff-room. However, in many cases, the conditions of the staff-rooms were pathetic and the infrastructural facilities were below average.

4.1.3. Teacher's quarter

Teacher's quarter has been one of the major problems especially in the hill areas of Manipur. Due to frequent transfer and posting to far places, teachers felt that they should be provided accommodation. However, a large number (92.40%) of elementary schools teachers in the study reported that teacher's quarter was not provided, while the remaining 7.60% reported that the same was provided in their school.

4.1.4. Drinking water and toilet facilities

According to 55.40% elementary school teachers in the study, safe drinking water was provided in their schools, while the remaining 44.60% teachers reported its absence. Regarding toilet, only 30.00% teachers reported the availability in their schools, while the remaining 70.00% reported the absence of this facility. The situation revealed the poor hygienic condition

of elementary schools in the study areas and the difficulties faced by teachers and students under such circumstances.

4.2. Academic Problems

4.2.1. Text-books, teacher's guide book & magazine

In the present study 93.00% teachers reported that textbooks were available in their schools. However, other materials such as guide books and magazine were scarcely provided in the study areas. Only 28.80% teachers responded that teacher's guide books were provided while 21.40% of the reported that monthly magazines were provided.

4.2.2. Completion of syllabus

The study found that 61.00% of the elementary school teachers completed their syllabus within the stipulated time. However, the remaining 39.00% of them could not complete their syllabus in time owing to attending extra duties, such as election duty, awareness programmes, etc.

4.2.3. Teaching aids

Majority (96.20%) of elementary school teachers reported that teaching aids were provided in their school although insufficient. Among them, only 25.20% reported that pictorial chart and plain chart were available in their schools.

4.2.4. In-service training facility

It is very unfortunate to observe that in-service training facility was not readily available among the elementary school teachers in the hill areas. Most of the DIETs (District Institute of Education & Training) in the hill district headquarters were reported to be non-functional. As a result, majority (57.77%) of the elementary school teachers responded that in-service training facility was not provided. Besides, some teachers reported that they were not permitted to attend such training programmes by the school authorities, due to shortage of teachers.

4.2.5. Examination and evaluation

Regarding examination, cent percent of the elementary school teachers responded that examinations were conducted in English medium. Also, 81.00% of the teachers reported that marking system of evaluation was followed in their schools, while the remaining 19.00% responded that they followed grading system of evaluation.

The study also revealed that 60.80% of the elementary school teachers did not have problems while evaluating student's performance. However, the remaining 39.20% teachers stated that language problem, bad handwriting, too many students and shortage of time were the main problems faced by them while evaluating student's performances.

It was also found out that progress report card was maintained by all the elementary schools in the study areas. All the teachers also opined that maintaining progress report card is useful for the students as well as teachers and parents. Despite its importance, 48.00% of the teachers were reported to face problem while preparing the progress report card due to time constraint.

4.2.6. Co-Curricular activities

The study observed that 50.40% elementary school teachers were not satisfied with the type of co-curricular activities conducted in their schools. The main problems include lack of financial aids, insufficient sports materials, lack of first-aid supply, shortage of teachers and lack of adequate space to organise.

4.3. Administrative Problems

4.3.1. Interference of the headmaster

In the present study, 46.20% elementary school teachers reported that headmasters usually interfere in the work of the teachers, giving them very little freedom in performing their duties.

4.3.2. Participation in school administration

Table 1: Showing teacher's participation in school administration

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Types of activities	Conducted		Not conducted	
	N	%	N	%
Yearly basic planning	85	17.00	415	83.00
Time table preparation	214	42.80	286	57.20
School accounts	13	2.60	487	97.40

Table 1 depicts the participation of teachers in school administration. It is observed that teacher's participation was highest in preparing the school time table with 42.80% of them involved in it. Only 17.00% and 2.60% of them were involved in yearly basic planning and maintaining the school accounts respectively.

4.3.3. Leave facility

The study also found out that 91.60% elementary school teachers enjoyed one or more leave facilities. However, the remaining 8.40% teachers reported that they did not enjoy any leave facilities. The different types of leave provided were casual leave, medical leave, maternity leave, special leave and earned leave.

4.3.4. Interaction with managing committee

Table 2: Showing the frequency of interaction with managing committee

Frequency of interaction	No. of respondents	%
At least once in 2 months	90	18.00
3- 4 times a year	95	19.00
1-2 times a year	211	42.20
No interaction	104	20.80

As seen in Table 2, there were 79.20% elementary school teachers who had interaction with the School Managing Committee while the remaining 20.80% have never had interaction with the Managing Committee. Of the 79.20% teachers, the highest percentage (42.20%) had interaction with the School Managing Committee for 1-2 times a year, followed by 3-4 times a year (19.00%) and at least once in 2 months (18.00%).

4.3.5. Transfer and posting of teachers

Regarding transfer and posting, a large number (80.00%) of elementary school teachers were found to have faced problems due to lack of proper transfer and posting policy by the state government. Teachers were frequently transferred and posted at different places even in the middle of the academic sessions, which definitely obstruct the quality improvement of the educational system.

4.3.6. Parent/community participation

Participation of parents/communities in children's education at elementary schools was very unsatisfactory. Majority of the teachers reported that there was lack of parents/community involvement in the educational process as parents completely depend on teachers for their children's education. Most of the parents were even ignorant about the importance of education which resulted in a sub-standard attitude towards educational values.

4.4. Financial Problems

4.4.1. Teacher's salary

Table 3: Showing the time for payment of teacher's salary

Payment of salary	No. of respondents	%
Regular	108	21.60
After 2-3 months	213	42.60
After 4-5 months	140	28.00
After 6-7 months	39	7.80

Table 3 depicts the irregularities of receiving teacher's salary at elementary schools in the study. Only 21.60% teachers reported that they received their monthly salary in time. However, 42.60% teachers received their salary after 2 to 3 months, 28.00% teachers received after 4 to 5 months and 7.80% teachers received the same after 6 to 7 months.

4.4.2. Sufficiency/insufficiency over salary

Majority (63.00%) of the elementary school teachers in the study reported that their salary was sufficient to meet their basic requirements. In the contrary, 37.00% teachers stated otherwise forcing them to take up some other part-time jobs including extra tuition to supplement their salary.

4.4.3. Allowances

With respect to allowances, 62.40% of the elementary school teachers were given annual increment while only 17.40% and 7.80% were given house rent and medical allowances respectively. However, 12.40% of the elementary school teachers reported that they were not granted any allowance.

4.5. Law and Order Problems

The educational system is adversely affected due to the government's inability to handle law and order situation in the state. There were numerous general strikes/bandhs called by different organisations which limit the numbers of working days. Teachers posted in remote areas of the state could not stay in their place of posting due to the problem of law and order situation, and ultimately, students in the hill areas were the worst affected. There were too many political issues and problems prevailing in the entire state and under such circumstances, the smooth functioning of the educational institutions was badly affected which definitely act as a deteriorating factor for substantial qualitative development.

MEASURES TO SOLVE THE EXISTING PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

1. The concerned authority must provide proper physical facilities such as school building, sufficient rooms and furniture, etc.
2. The government must provide quarter/accommodation to teachers.
3. Teaching staff room along with safe drinking water and toilet facilities should be provided.
4. Sufficient teaching-aids and teacher's guide book should be provided to every teacher.
5. Each school must be given adequate number of teachers according to their requirements.
6. Teachers should not be engaged in extra duties besides teaching; they should have ample time for academic purposes like teaching, examination, evaluation, etc.
7. In-service training facility must be provided and made compulsory to all the elementary school teachers
8. Co-curricular activities must be improved and sufficient sports materials must be provided to each school.
9. Teachers must be given more opportunity to take part in the educational planning and administration.
10. Definite transfer and posting policy should be adopted and followed by the state government.
11. Parents/guardians of students should give full co-operation to the teachers to uplift the quality of education.
12. Awareness programme on educational values must be arranged for parents.
13. The state government must pay teacher's salary regularly, and the salary of private teachers should be increased so as to meet their basic requirements.
14. The Government must tackle effectively the problem of law and order and ensured safety to the people.
15. Political interferences to the educational system should be minimized to the greatest extent.

CONCLUSION

Elementary school teachers in the hill areas of Manipur faced enormous problems due to poor working environment, improper administration, academic related problems, financial aspects, etc. The study would ensure the state government,

local governing body, school authority, community, non-governmental organisations, and educationists to gain insight on the various problems encounter by the elementary school teachers and enable them to provide a better working environment and help them in solving those problems that bothers the teachers.

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