

"Voices from the Field: An Exploratory Study of Teacher Educators' and Principals' Perceptions and Suggestions on the Two-Year Secondary Teacher Education Programme in Manipur"

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This study highlights the perspectives of key stakeholders, including teacher educators and principals, on the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) curriculum, its implementation, and assessment mechanisms in Manipur. It underscores the gap between the prescribed curriculum frameworks and actual practice, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive reforms. Data collected through surveys and interviews reveal various systemic and infrastructural factors that influence the effective delivery of teacher education in the region. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the regional dynamics affecting teacher education and offer recommendations to strengthen curriculum implementation and assessment processes in alignment with contemporary educational policies.

Keywords: Secondary Teacher Education programme (STEP), Curriculum Implementation, Assessment, Teacher Educators, Principals, Manipur, Context-Sensitive Reforms.

Introduction

Secondary teacher education refers to a formal, structured programme that prepares prospective secondary school teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies to teach effectively. Beyond subject expertise and pedagogy, it aims to develop reflective, ethical, and committed professionals. The two-year B.Ed. programme introduced under NCTE (2014) regulations seeks a rigorous and holistic teacher preparation approach. As per the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009), teacher education is a transformative process that nurtures cognitive skills, emotional maturity, professional values, and a commitment to inclusive and democratic teaching.

In Manipur, however, this vision is constrained by institutional challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, faculty shortages, limited resources, and restricted autonomy. These factors hinder effective implementation of the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) and affect the professional growth of educators and student-teachers alike. Teacher educators and principals play a critical role in translating curriculum into practice and managing institutional resources. Their perspectives are essential to understand practical challenges and opportunities for improvement. Yet, national studies often overlook these institutional voices, especially in underrepresented regions like Manipur.

Although the two-year programme aims to enhance teacher competence, its implementation in Manipur faces issues related to curriculum delivery, resource mobilization, and assessment. Empirical research capturing the

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views of teacher educators and principals is scarce, limiting context-specific reforms and professional support in the state's teacher education system. So the researcher finds it interesting to study on *"Voices from the Field: An Exploratory Study of Teacher Educators' and Principals' Perceptions and Suggestions on the Two-Year Secondary Teacher Education Programme in Manipur"*

Objectives of the study

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the perceptions of principals regarding the curriculum, its implementation, and assessment practices in the two-year secondary teacher education programme in Manipur.
2. To explore the perceptions of teacher educators regarding the implementation of the suggested minimum of 20 weeks for internship in the school programme
3. To document the suggestions offered by teacher educators and principals for improving the programme in the local context.

Research questions

1. What are the perceptions of principals regarding the curriculum, its implementation, and assessment practices in the two-year secondary teacher education programme in Manipur?
2. How do teacher educators perceive the implementation of the recommended minimum 20-week school internship in the two-year secondary teacher education programme?
3. What suggestions do teacher educators and principals offer for improving the two-year secondary teacher education programme in the local context of Manipur?

Significance of the study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it brings to the fore the voices of those who are directly responsible for shaping the learning experiences of future secondary school teachers in Manipur. Second, it contributes to the limited body of region-specific literature on teacher education in Northeast India. Third, by focusing on curriculum, implementation, and assessment, the study offers practical insights for policymakers, institutional heads, and curriculum developers. Finally, the findings have the potential to inform context-sensitive reforms that align better with the socio-political and educational realities of Manipur

Review of Related Literature

The secondary teacher education programme in India has undergone significant reforms to respond to evolving educational demands, policy recommendations, and global trends in teacher preparation. This review focuses on four key domains relevant to this study: (1) curriculum of secondary teacher education, (2) implementation challenges, (3) assessment practices, and (4) stakeholders' voices in teacher education.

1. Curriculum of Secondary Teacher Education

The introduction of the two-year B.Ed. programme under the 2014 NCTE regulations aimed at deepening pedagogical understanding and professional readiness. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE, 2009) recommends a curriculum integrating foundational knowledge, subject pedagogy, and practicum components. A critical part of this practicum is the minimum 20 weeks of school internship, which the NCTE (2014) describes as essential for “providing sustained and meaningful classroom engagement to bridge theory and practice.” Kumar (2005) and Singh (2019) observe that many institutions still deliver content in a traditional, fragmented manner, which “limits the development of critical thinking and reflective practices among teacher trainees.” Aggarwal (2010) notes that “curriculum reforms have not adequately responded to local contextual needs, especially in remote and marginalized regions such as Northeast India.”

2. Implementation Challenges

Curriculum implementation faces numerous practical obstacles. Venkataiah (2000) and Buch (1983) highlight problems such as faculty shortages, inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher-student ratios, and lack of exposure to inclusive and ICT-enabled pedagogy. These challenges are particularly acute in resource-poor and conflict-affected areas like Manipur. Zama (2015) and Chatterjee (1993) note that institutions in Northeast India are often “hampered by limited institutional autonomy, bureaucratic delays, and socio-political disruptions,” which undermine effective programme delivery. Furthermore, the mandated 20 weeks internship is frequently compromised, as Zama (2015) reports, “institutional and logistical constraints often reduce the intended duration and quality of practicum, limiting teacher trainees’ authentic classroom experiences.”

3. Assessment Practices in Teacher Education

Contemporary teacher education frameworks advocate for comprehensive assessment strategies that include formative tools such as portfolios, reflective journals, peer evaluations, and practicum observations (NCERT, 2005; NCTE, 2009). Basu (1974) and Mukherjee and Kumar (2005) critique the prevailing overreliance on theoretical examinations, stating that “the emphasis on written tests undermines the assessment of actual teaching competencies, resulting in inadequately prepared teachers.” This disconnect between policy and practice raises concerns about the true readiness of teacher trainees to handle classroom complexities.

4. Stakeholders’ Perspectives in Teacher Education

The perspectives of teacher educators and institutional leaders are critical for understanding ground realities and crafting context-sensitive solutions. Much of the literature, however, takes a top-down approach, often overlooking these stakeholders’ voices. Singh (2019) and Zama (2015) call for “localized, empirical studies that foreground the experiences and insights of principals and teacher educators, especially in under-researched states like Manipur.” While national-level reports and studies provide broad policy frameworks and analyses, localized, empirical research that incorporates stakeholders’ voices in Manipur remains limited. This review highlights ongoing gaps in curriculum contextualization, practical implementation—including the critical 20 weeks internship—and authentic assessment practices. It also underscores the lack of systematic inquiry into the lived experiences and perceptions of teacher educators and principals. This study aims to fill

these gaps by documenting their insights and recommendations regarding the two-year secondary teacher education programme in Manipur.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design with an exploratory orientation to examine the perceptions and suggestions of teacher educators and principals regarding the implementation of the two-year Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) in Manipur. This design was selected to enable in-depth, field-based data collection from key institutional stakeholders actively involved in curriculum delivery and academic leadership.

Population and Sample

The study targeted teacher educators and principals from NCTE recognized 14 secondary teacher education institutions affiliated to Manipur University offering the two-year B.Ed. programme across Manipur. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from a total of 270 respondents, which included: 256 teacher educators from government, private, and aided institutions located in various districts of Manipur. 14 principals serving as heads of these institutions and involved in both academic and administrative aspects of STEP implementation.

Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The tool comprised: Closed-ended (Likert-scale) items to assess perceptions on curriculum relevance, pedagogical practices, internship implementation, and assessment mechanisms. Open-ended questions to gather detailed feedback on institutional challenges and suggestions for programme improvement. The questionnaire underwent expert validation by senior faculty members in teacher education and was pilot tested on a small sample prior to full deployment.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a three-month period from March to May 2022 through both online and offline modes, depending on the accessibility and preferences of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and ethical considerations such as anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained. Follow-up communications were conducted as needed to clarify responses or gather further insights.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to identify trends in perception across the sample. Qualitative responses were analyzed thematically to uncover recurring patterns, particularly regarding institutional challenges and stakeholders' suggestions for enhancing the programme.

Limitations of the Study

The study was confined to 14 secondary teacher education institutions in Manipur, affiliated to Manipur University and recognized by NCTE.

Given the self-reported nature of the data, findings may reflect personal biases or institutional constraints that influenced the openness of participant responses.

Findings and Discussion

Objective 1: To explore the perceptions of principals regarding the curriculum, its implementation, and assessment practices in the two-year Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) in Manipur

1.1 Perceptions on the Curriculum

A significant proportion (71%) of principals/HODs from 14 institutions under survey expressed concerns about the existing curriculum. Among them, 57% shared similar critical viewpoints, which are summarized as follows:

Overemphasis on Theory: The curriculum is predominantly theory-oriented, resulting in student-teachers focusing more on scoring marks than on acquiring practical teaching skills.

Lack of Contextualization: The curriculum fails to reflect the regional, social, and cultural realities of Manipur, reducing its relevance and effectiveness.

Uneven Semester Load: The distribution of courses across semesters is imbalanced, with certain semesters becoming academically overloaded.

Repetitive and Poorly Sequenced Content: Many topics appear repeatedly across papers and lack logical sequencing, which affects the learning continuity.

1.2 Perceptions on Curriculum Implementation

57% of principals/HODs from 14 surveyed institutions acknowledged difficulties in implementing the curriculum effectively. Major concerns included:

Rigid Academic Timelines: The 100 working days per semester often result in a rush to complete theoretical portions, sidelining meaningful engagement with the practical components.

Limited Institutional Capacity: Institutions often lack adequate resources, staffing, and support to fully implement the diverse components of the curriculum.

School Resistance to Internship: Many schools are reluctant to collaborate for internship placements, viewing it as a disruption to their academic calendar.

1.3 Perceptions on Assessment Practices

Approximately 71% of principals/HODs from 14 surveyed institutions were dissatisfied with the existing assessment system. They noted:

Quantity over Quality: There is excessive focus on the number of assignments and lesson plans submitted, rather than on assessing actual teaching competencies.

Lack of Standardization: Variations in assessment practices across institutions result in inconsistency and potential bias in evaluating student-teachers.

Objective 2: To explore the perceptions of teacher educators regarding the implementation of the suggested minimum of 20 weeks for internship in the school programme

Based on the responses of 145 teacher educators, of the 14 surveyed institutions several challenges and insights emerged regarding the 20-week internship requirement:

2.1 Challenges in Internship Implementation

School Unwillingness: Many schools, particularly reputed ones, hesitate to host interns for an extended 20-week duration. They perceive interns as untrained, unfamiliar individuals who may disrupt school routines and affect student performance.

Internship Treated as Formality: A considerable number of institutions conduct internships simply to fulfill regulatory requirements, lacking structured planning or supervision.

Mismatch with School Schedules: The fixed internship calendar often clashes with school events or examinations, making coordination difficult.

Lack of Pre-Internship Preparation: Student-teachers are often underprepared for tasks like addressing assemblies, managing classrooms, or organizing school activities.

Objective 3: To document the suggestions offered by teacher educators and principals for improving the programme in the local context

3.1 Curriculum Improvement Suggestions

From Principals/HODs:

- Revise curriculum with contextual relevance tailored to Manipur's socio-cultural realities.
- Ensure coordination between theoretical and practical aspects.
- Redistribute course load for balance across semesters.
- Eliminate content repetition and emphasize pedagogical over content knowledge.
- Add a new course on secondary school management.

- Equally distribute practicum activities across semesters to reduce burden during internships.

From Teacher Educators:

- Curriculum revision must meet the needs of 21st-century learners.
- Focus on experiential learning and personality development.
- Encourage curricular debate and faculty participation before implementing reforms.

3.2 Suggestions for Improving Implementation

- Avoid overlapping of practical work and internship tasks in the timetable.
- Strengthen community and school engagement components with adequate guidance.
- Promote professional development activities including ICT training, yoga, reflective reading, and drama.
- Develop uniform observation formats for teacher educators and school principals.
- Provide ample infrastructure and instructional materials to facilitate quality teaching and learning.

3.3 Suggestions for Improving Assessment**From Principals/HODs:**

- Introduce portfolio-based assessment to ensure ongoing performance tracking.
- Conduct assessment training for all teacher educators to reduce subjectivity.
- Establish an assessment monitoring committee in accordance with NCTE regulations.

From Teacher Educators:

- 76% recommended shifting focus to continuous in-semester assessment with reduced terminal exams.
- Suggested maintaining cumulative record cards for each learner.
- 17% called for strict adherence to Manipur University B.Ed. Regulations (2017).
- Advocated for autonomy in assessment, emphasizing performance over theoretical tests.
- Called for transparent evaluation of professional conduct, currently missing from the formal structure.

3.4. Educators' suggestions for Strengthening Internship

Home-Town Based Placement: Institutions should classify student-teachers by home district and collaborate with the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur to assign cooperating schools accordingly. This would improve acceptance by schools and foster better contextual understanding among student-teachers.

Pre-Internship Orientation: Workshops should be conducted on essential school practices like:

- Assembly management
- Public speaking and storytelling

- Report writing and diary maintenance
 - Planning academic calendars and lesson plans
- 2 Simulated Teaching: Scheduled simulated teaching sessions throughout Semester IV should prepare student-teachers for real classroom settings.
 - 3 Lesson Plan Innovation: Move beyond traditional Herbartian and 5E models to include constructivist and student-centric lesson plan formats.
 - 4 Feedback Mechanism: Incorporate subject-teacher and peer feedback for each student-teacher's performance to provide multi-dimensional evaluation.
 - 5 Phased Internship: Adopt an intermittent or progressive model to allow gradual skill acquisition and practice.

Implications of the Study

- 1 CurriculumRevisionandContextualization: The study underscores the urgent need for curriculum revision that is contextually relevant to Manipur's socio-cultural and educational realities. Policy makers and curriculum developers should prioritize integrating local perspectives and practical components that foster meaningful teacher preparation beyond theoretical knowledge. This will help bridge the gap between academic learning and classroom applicability.
- 2 BalancedTheory-PracticeIntegration: The findings reveal an imbalance between theoretical instruction and practical training in the current two-year STEP. Teacher education institutions must ensure equitable distribution of practical activities throughout the programme to enhance experiential learning and skill acquisition, thus preparing student-teachers for real-world classroom challenges.
- 3 Strengthening School-Teacher Education Institution Partnerships
The reluctance of secondary schools to fully cooperate during internships highlights the need for formal partnerships and collaboration frameworks between teacher education institutions and schools. Engaging bodies like the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur, can facilitate structured placements and shared responsibility, improving the internship experience for student-teachers and schools alike.
- 4 EnhancedPre-InternshipPreparationandSupervision: Proper orientation and rigorous training prior to internship are critical. Incorporating workshops on essential teaching and school management skills can increase student-teachers' confidence and effectiveness during field practice. Additionally, systematic supervision and multi-source feedback (from cooperating teachers, principals, and peers) should be institutionalized to ensure quality internship experiences.
- 5 Assessment ReformsforContinuousandObjectiveEvaluation: The study highlights dissatisfaction with existing assessment practices, emphasizing quantity over quality. Implementing continuous and portfolio-based assessments will encourage ongoing reflection and improvement among student-teachers. Training teacher educators in assessment methods and establishing monitoring committees will help ensure fairness, transparency, and alignment with professional competencies.

- 6 Policy-LevelSupportforImplementationChallenges. Challenges related to workload, resource constraints, and school cooperation necessitate policy interventions. State education departments and regulatory bodies should provide necessary resources, incentivize schools for hosting interns, and streamline academic calendars to facilitate smoother implementation of the programme.
- 7 CapacityBuildingforTeacherEducators. Teacher educators need ongoing professional development to effectively implement revised curricula, supervise internships, and conduct fair assessments. Empowering educators with updated pedagogical skills and assessment knowledge is vital for sustaining programme quality.
- 8 HolisticTeacherPreparation: Emphasizing personality development, communication skills, and holistic education aligned with 21st-century teaching demands will prepare student-teachers not just as subject specialists, but as well-rounded educators capable of meeting diverse learner needs.

Conclusion

- This study explored the perceptions and experiences of principals and teacher educators regarding the curriculum, implementation, assessment practices, and the 20-week school internship prescribed in the two-year Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) in Manipur. The findings revealed significant concerns over the theoretical orientation of the curriculum, uneven distribution of content across semesters, limited contextualization, and challenges in implementing the extended internship period. Furthermore, issues such as non-cooperation from secondary schools, inadequate preparation of student-teachers for field practice, and inconsistent assessment methods were frequently highlighted.
- Despite these challenges, the study also documented a wealth of constructive suggestions from stakeholders, indicating a strong desire for meaningful reform. The insights offered underscore the importance of curriculum contextualization, robust pre-internship training, institutional collaboration, and objective, continuous assessment mechanisms. Importantly, this study brings to light the voices of those directly responsible for delivering teacher education in Manipur, a region that remains underrepresented in national-level educational research.
- The findings suggest that without revisiting and strengthening key aspects of the programme, its intended goals—developing professionally competent, reflective, and contextually sensitive teachers—may remain unmet.

Recommendations

- **For Curriculum Developers and Policy Makers**
- Incorporate local educational challenges, cultural realities, and regional pedagogical needs into the curriculum design to make it more meaningful and applicable in Manipur's context.
- Reorganize the curriculum to distribute theoretical and practical components evenly across semesters, thereby reducing academic overload and enhancing experiential learning.

- Include modules that address school administration, communication skills, and professional ethics, preparing student-teachers holistically.
- **For Teacher Education Institutions**
 - Conduct mandatory workshops on lesson planning, classroom management, co-curricular activities, and use of ICT before the internship begins.
 - Allocate regular time in the timetable for simulated and micro-teaching activities, especially in the final semester, to ensure preparedness for real classroom situations.
 - Formalize partnerships with schools through collaboration with the Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BOSEM) for smooth placement and mutual understanding.
 - While maintaining the essence of the 20-week internship, institutions may adopt intermittent or block teaching models with mutual consent of partner schools.
- **For Teacher Educators**
 - Encourage alternative lesson planning models (e.g., 5E, integrative, experiential) and assessment strategies (e.g., portfolios, peer review, observation checklists).
 - Portfolios should include reflective journals, feedback records, and continuous performance documentation to monitor growth and professional behaviour.
 - Teacher educators should be given opportunities and incentives to attend training workshops and seminars on curriculum design, assessment strategies, and use of ICT.
- **For Regulatory Bodies (NCTE, Universities, State Councils)**
 - Establish monitoring committees at the university or state level to regularly evaluate the implementation of STEP and guide corrective actions.
 - Develop uniform assessment protocols and ensure all educators are trained to reduce subjectivity and bias in student evaluation.
 - Encourage action research and documentation of field experiences by teacher educators and principals to build a localized knowledge base.

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