

District Institutes of Education and Training (Diets) in Odisha: A Transformative Paradigm

Dr. Premananda Biswal

Associate Professor in Education, Department of Higher Education, Odisha, India

Abstract: *The concept of DIETs came into existence in response to the recommendation of NPE 1986 and the POA 1992. DIETs were established in the State as a decentralized district level institution mostly during the late 1980s & 1990 with a focus to provide teacher education system to elementary education and also provide support system which would be “closer to the field” and therefore more alive to its problems and needs. The main objectives of the study were: i) to study the growth of the DIETs ii) to know the Sanctioned Posts of Teaching faculties iii) to know the Academic Branches iv) to realize mechanisms for continuous professional development and v) to study various issues related to elementary education.*

Keywords: DIETs, Transformative, NEP 1986 & PoA, 1992

1. Introduction

The District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), originally conceived and conceptualized by NPE 1986 and PoA 1992. These institutions were established to ensure supply of qualified prospective teachers to the elementary education system, to equip the existing teaching workforce with enhanced professional competencies and skills, and to provide onsite academic support to teachers for effective pedagogical practices. Two inescapable compulsions led to establishment of DIETs for each district: first, the elementary and adult education systems were too vast to be adequately supported by national and state level institutions; and second, need for decentralized institutional arrangements to be closer to the field and therefore, more alive to its problems and needs (MHRD, 1989). Being located at an important level of decentralization-the district, they are expected to be receptive and responsive to the district specific issues and concerns in elementary education. Though the Guidelines (1989) of the MHRD, Government of India formed the cornerstone of DIETs with their exclusive responsibilities for universalisation of elementary education and non-formal and adult education in the districts, the mandates of DIETs have continued to evolve, over years, to effectively meet the challenges thrown up by emerging developments- concerns for quality, equity and diversity. In this sense, the role expectations from DIETs are characterized by fluidity, flexibility and dynamism. Briefly put, DIETs are viewed as decentralized institutional structures at the district level, with an overriding thrust on composite aspects of universalisation of elementary education, to work as resilient and robust hubs for pedagogical renewal in the district. While striving to accomplish their mandated tasks, they are required to establish and sustain their institutional identity and credibility. Their roles and responsibilities have, over the last two decades, been enormously expanded to include:

- Pre-service teacher education with its renewed thrust on constructivist pedagogy, interactive and reflective professional practices, school-based extended internship, school relevant projects and collaborative conversations among student-teachers and faculty.

- Continuing professional development of teachers and teacher educators: in-school and out-school opportunities, structured and open mechanisms for sharing, space for debate and dialogue, putting in place professional learning communities, networking etc.
- Creating a favourable culture for undertaking district and state relevant research studies for informing educational practices and policy formulation, both action research (reflection on practice) and small and large scale researches.
- In order to break isolation and insularity, the DIETs need to be strongly linked to and engage with other academic and resource institutions to broaden and deepen their forward and backward linkages.
- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education having made inroads into wider public consciousness, its diligent implementation puts enormous responsibilities on DIETs, calling for proactive action for ensuring equitable quality education for all children.
- Going beyond a wide range of professional development programmes for teachers, the DIETs are expected to continuously monitor how effectively the training inputs are being translated into professional practice in schools and classrooms, being principally informed by supportive rather than evaluative feedback.
- DIETs are expected to be transformed into living-learning organisations-developing DIETs into teacher resource centres enriched with an extended range of materials, both print and non-print.
- With the creation of sub-district level structures, such as Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs), Block Resource Centres (BRCs), School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and others, the DIETs have to be actively connected and engaged with such academic fora.
- DIETs as new generation teacher education institutions are required to do different things and doing things differently, i.e., to innovate and experiment to enhance the quality of professional practices.

DIETs in Odisha:

The MHRD, Government of India's draft Guidelines 1987, accepted by the state, set the stage for establishment of DIETs. Based on these Guidelines, Government of Odisha

Volume 11 Issue 12, December 2022

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

formulated the Personnel Policy for DIETs in 1989. The details of establishment of DIETs are given in Table no.1 below:

Table 1: Establishment of DIETs:

Phases	Districts	Year of Est.	Government Notification No.	Location other than district headquarters
Phase I	Kalahandi, Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh	1988	49032/EYS dated 11.11.1988	DIET Koraput at Jeypore, DIET Sundargarh at Sankara
Phase II	Balangir, Sambalpur, Kandhamala, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Khordha and Dhenkanal	1989	45712/EYS dated 24.10.1989	DIET Kandhamal at Tikabali, DIET Jajpur at Dolipur
Phase III	Balasore, and Ganjam	1997	1591/SME dated 14.01.1994	DIET Balasore at Remuna, and DIET Ganjam at Kholikote
Phase IV	Bargarh, Gajapati, Rayagada and Puri	2005	10701/SME dated 25.05.2005	DIET Bargarh at Govindpur, DIET Rayagada at Bisamcuttack
Phase V	Kendrapara, Nawarangpur, Jagatsinghpur, Angul, Nayagarh, Bhadrak, and Cuttack	2005	23775/SME dated 29.11.2005	DIET Kendrapara at Balia, DIET Angul at Chendipada, DIET Nayagarh at Rajsunakhala, DIET Bhadrak at Agarpada, DIET Cuttack at Narasinghpur
Phase VI	Malkangiri at Chitrakonda, Sonapur, Nuapada, Boudh, Jharsuguda at Panchapada, and Deogarh	2014	23891/SME dated 01.11.2014	DIET Malkangiri at Chitrakonda, DIET Jharsuguda at Panchapada

The state has 30 DIETs, established in different phases, the first phase 11 DIETs being established during 1988-1989.04 BIETs such as BIET Gunupur in Rayagada, Gorumahisani in Mayurbhanj, Kuanrunda in Sundargarh and Umarmkot in Nabarangpur tribal Districts. These DIETs have been established in the form of up-gradation of selected Elementary Teacher Education Institutions, earlier called Secondary Training Schools. The choice of upgrading an ETEI to DIET was largely restricted by the availability or otherwise of an ETEI / ETEIs in the district located at the district headquarters. Alongside DIETs were established under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education. There are 31 state-managed ETEIs, which

exclusively offer two-year pre-service D. El. Ed. Programme.

DIETs were established in the state in four phases: Phase I: 1988-89 (11), Phase II: 1997 (02), Phase III: 2005 (11) and Phase IV: 2014 (06). Hence, different DIETs are at different state of development.

The absence of consistent policy with regard to faculty strength for DIETs in terms of number of faculty positions-Principal, Senior Teacher Educator and Teacher Educator-is evident from Table No.2 below:

Table 2: DIETs and their Faculty Strength

Phases	DIETs / BITEs	Year of Establishment	No of Sanctioned Posts			Total
			Principal	Sr. TE	TE	
Phase I	Kalahandi, Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh	1988	01	07	14	22
Phase II	Balangir, Sambalpur, Phulbani, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Khordha and Dhenkanal	1989	01	07	14	22
Phase III	Balasore and Ganjam	1997	01	02	08	11
Phase IV	Bargarh, Gajapati, Rayagada and Puri	2005	01	07	09	17
Phase V	Kendrapara, Nawarangpur, Jagatsinghpur, Angul, Nayagarh Bhadrak and Cuttack	2005	01	07	09	17
Phase VI	Malkangiri and Nuapada	2014	1	7	8	16
	Sonapur and Deogarh		1	7	9	17
	Boudh and Jharsuguda		1	7	10	18

Faculty Composition of DIETs:

- Government of Odisha in the School and Mass Education Department formulated a Personnel Policy on DIETs in 1989 in light of DIET Guidelines (1989) of MHRD, Government of India. The State’s Personnel Policy for DIETs 1989 envisaged recruitment of qualified persons with experience, aptitude, merit, enthusiasm and dedication for faculty positions in DIETs. The Personnel Policy for DIETs provided for posts, such as Principal, Senior Teacher Educator and Teacher Educator. This is not in conformity with the MHRD Guidelines 1989 and the MHRD Guidelines 2012. This is also at variance with the designation and scale of pay for the DIET faculty in major Indian states. These designations and scale of pay tend to work as a de-motivating factor for the faculty.
- The faculty in DIETs represents an assorted mix: Principals from the Odisha Education Service (School

Branch) as well as from the DIET internal staff and faculty comprising Lecturers from erstwhile defunct B. Ed. Colleges as well as in-service teachers recruited through State Selection Board, and Teacher Educators appointed on contract as well as selected through Selection Committees of SCERT. This diversity in faculty composition creates professional tension, affecting effectiveness of DIETs. This is found to have affected the social capital of DIETs.

- The distribution of faculty among DIETs in terms of years of experience appears to be largely asymmetrical. In some DIETs, the concentration of senior faculty is fairly large, whereas in most DIETs the faculty predominantly consists of relatively less experienced Teacher Educators with only three to four years of service. This kind of imbalance creates constraints for accessing high quality learning opportunities mentoring,

peer-twinning, collective reflective conversations, collaborative dialogues etc.

- With NCTE Regulation 2014 in force w. e. f.01.12.2014, it is found that many faculty members of DIETs do not possess the NCTE prescribed qualifications-A Master's Degree in school subjects and Master's Degree in Education. This has further exacerbated the position that obtained prior to the NCTE Regulation 2014.
- After long years of non-recruitment of faculty to DIETs, a substantially large number of young men and women have been inducted into DIETs through selection by SCERT. Quite a few of them seem to be bright, professionally motivated and committed. This lot of faculty needs professional nurturing to sharpen their professional competence.
- Future recruitment of Teacher Educators for DIETs needs to move objective, stringent and rigorous.

DIETs and their Academic Branches:

- As envisaged in the DIET Guidelines 1989, all DIETs of the State instituted seven academic Branches. Since then, there has never been review of branch-wise functions either at the level of institutions or at the SCERT level.
- It is found that two academic Branches viz, Pre-service Teacher Education (PSTE) and In-service Teacher Education (ISTE) were the only Branches working in almost all DIETs. Other Branches were found to be largely non-functional. Majority of DIET faculties do not have role clarity about different Branches.
- Despite existence of Branches and Branch-specific recruitment, all faculties were engaged with pre-service and in-service education. Therefore, widespread public perception is that DIETs are ordinary teacher training institutions.
- It is commonly observed that the DIET faculty, almost without exception, were unable to differentiate the traditional Branches (DIET Guidelines 1989) from the focus areas (MHRD, GoI Guidelines for Implementation 2012) based on NCF 2005, NCFTE 2009, the Reflective Teacher, NCERT 2007 etc. This reflects the lack of clarity among the DIET faculty about some of the important developments in the education landscape. This lack of understanding is evident from interactions with the DIET faculty during different academic training programmes organised by SCERT.
- There is an urgent need to revisit the academic Branches and their roles in the light of the emerging expectations from DIETs. In consideration of the focus areas envisaged in several national level documents, the original Branches need to be restructured. Not necessarily, all DIETs are required to have similar focus areas. SCERT has to take a lead in reorganisation of DIETs.

Decentralization, Autonomy and Accountability

- Though DIETs have been established as district level decentralised academic structures, they appear not to have autonomy to take decisions on academic matters. Absence of functional autonomy and authority-academic, administrative and financial-affects their effective functioning.

- Delegation of authority to take decisions at the institutional level is found to have been constrained by: (i) considerations about the capacity of DIETs, and (ii) relative reluctance of authorities in the vertical hierarchy to delegate powers, to lower levels.
- Though there exists a monitoring mechanism to oversee the functioning of DIETs, monitoring data and information are rarely utilised for institutional development. Enforcing accountability for poor performance or non-performance appears to be very weak. Monitoring feedback is largely found to be 'evaluative', rather than 'supportive'.
- "Decentralisation and creation of a spirit of autonomy" envisaged for DIETs rarely works for DIETs. In other words, there exists a culture of dependence and looking up for instruction from above.
- Smooth and effective transition from a centralised to a decentralised system requires building a culture of faith and freedom, trust and support, and more importantly capacity building.
- In-service training programmes organised by DIETs for teachers, Headmasters, CRCCs, BRCCs and others are decided by the DIETs, barring a few, with scant regard to the genuine professional needs of teachers and classroom realities. Programmes are, not un-often, expert-driven and decided at this state levels.
- Except a few DIETs, depending on the faculty competence and commitment, in all DIETs training needs are not systematically identified. Therefore, many teachers complain about the repetitive nature irrelevance and quality of such programmes.
- Feedback from monitoring visits, classroom observations, reflective conversations with teachers, analysis of children's performance, school visits, findings of research studies, etc are not used for identification of needs of teachers.
- Teachers the core consumers of in-service education programmes are rarely involved in deciding the training programmes to be organised by DIETs. Therefore, distance from the decision-making process has found to have led to their disengagement with the programmes.
- District specific and contextual capacity building programmes are rarely organised by DIETs. Near uniform programmes across DIETs are indicative of the top-down selection of themes for training programmes. Scarce resources available for building professionalism in teachers and others need to be intelligently used for maximising intended outcomes.
- Opportunities for professional development of Teacher Educators are limited. However, during recent years, there had been a spate of programme for them. This positive development notwithstanding, post-capacity building planning, monitoring and learning are not in place.
- Conceptual clarity and deeper understanding, about professional learning community (PLC) among DIET faculty is found to be largely lacking. This is evident from the activities some DIETs have undertaken non-response from many DIETs and proposed initiatives to be taken by DIETs where PLC is still non-existent.
- With SSA in operation through a parallel institutional arrangement, DIETs as district resource centres for

pedagogical renewal and innovations have been sidelined. However, SSA has developed the professional capabilities of a select group of DIET faculty at the experts of DIETs as a set of institutions.

- Authentic professional development is intermittently inner-driven. The willingness to learner, unlearn and relearn are the defining characteristics of lifelong learning. This desire to stay relevant is, by and large, missing among DIET faculty. The phenomenon of

professional obsolescence needs to be redressed through appropriate mechanisms.

- Contributions of DIETs as institutions and faculty as individually to the contemporary discourses on education are negligible.

In order to facilitate suitable structure to implement the innovative concept of DIETs the following Academic branches has been suggested from time to time. The detail is given in Table No.3 below:

Table 3: Academic Branches

DIET Guidelines 1989, MHRD	Guidelines for Implementation of CSSTE 2012, MHRD *	Guideline for Strengthening of DIETs 2017, MHRD
1) Pre-Service Teacher Education (PSTE)	1) Pre-Service Teacher Education	1) Pre-Service Teacher Education
2) In-Service Teacher Education (ISTE)	2) In-Service Teacher Education	2) Teacher Professional Development
3) Curriculum and Material Development (CMDE)	3) Direct Field Interactions and School Improvement	3) Educational Technology and Material Development
4) Planning and Management (P & M)	4) Studies on Education	4) Assessment and Evaluation
5) Educational Technology (ET)	5) Annual Academic Planning and Reviews	5) Field Interaction and Action Research
6) Work Experience (WE)	6) Resource Centre / Teacher Learning Centre and Material Development	
7) District Resource Unit (DRU)		

DIETs’ Forward and Backward Linkages

Teacher Education Institutions in general, and DIETs as decentralised district level sites in particular are found to be delinked or weakly linked to schools-the sites for teaching and learning and teachers.

- At the other end of the spectrum, DIETs are rarely linked to institutions of higher education and research. This disconnects affect, DIETs and other institutions at the both ends of the spectrum.
- Even with the placing back of designated Practicing Schools with DIETs, the disconnect is largely a reality. This is a serious concern in dire need of redress.
- The linkage between DIETs and SSA or RMSA (both at the state and lower levels) is far from satisfactory, for institutionalisation and sustainability of project inputs, the linkage needs to be strengthened, putting an end to the practice of working in isolation and insularity.

- There exists linkage between SCERT and DIETs. The linkage appears to be more of command and control with little co-ordination and support. This link needs further strengthening.
- Even peer-DIET linkage in there of collaborative, co-operation, reflective dialogue and sharing is non-existent, if existent is feeble. Absence of inter-DIET further affects, development of genuine professionalism
- The suggestions offered by the DIETs for strengthening linkages appear to lack collective reflection and perspectives. To obviate this, there is a need to have reflective conversation and policy decisions at the state level.

With regard to professional development of DIETs faculty is given in Table No.4 below:

Table 4: Professional development of faculty

Sl. No.	Professional Learning Mechanisms	No. of DIETs reported having the Mechanism	Remarks
1	Professional Learning Community (PLC)	25 (83.3)	Almost all DIETs, with exception of two to three, lacked conceptual clarity, purpose, and mode of functioning of PLC, TLC and Mentoring for professional development of teacher educators and student-teachers.
2	Teacher Learning Centres (TLC)	09 (30)	
3	Mentoring	12 (40)	
4	Newsletter	06 (20)	The utility of Newsletter as a potential means of sharing diverse activities and experiences with other DIETs has not been appreciated by a large number of DIETs.

2. Conclusion

No educational institution can achieve a measure of success in reaching its intended goals and objectives unless it changes in sync with the changes occurring in its ecosystem, often at an accelerated space. In other words, the “ecological paradigm” needs to be in tune with the designing of the human system. DIETs as a set of new generation teacher education institutions were established and are in existence in different states in response to the National Policy and Education (1986), almost for three decades. Now, time is quite opportune to examine if they are still relevant or they

are in need of root and branch transformation. Each DIET needs to be nurtured as a “learning organization”, where its faculty does not learn in isolated and disconnected ways; rather the members of the learning community learn together through reflective conversation. The basic article of faith is that deep down we have an intense hunger for learning. Let us sit together, engage ourselves in constructive thinking, listening to others with our head and heart and arrive at an eclectic vision of building a learning organization. With the new National Education Policy 2020 in operation, there is a need to reconstruct our teacher education institutions, including DIETs, so as to help them respond to invading

developments. Our educational institutions change only when the thinking and actions of people working in the ecosystem change. Most importantly, change occurs only when we think and act ecologically, not in isolation.

References

- [1] Report of the Committee Constituted by the Central Advisory Board Of Education (CABE) On the National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (NMTT), 2013.
- [2] District Institutes of Education and Training: A comparative Study in Three Indian States, Caroline Dyer with Archana Choksi, 2014 DFID
- [3] Restructuring and Reorganization of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education: Guidelines for Implementation, 2012
- [4] Impact of In-Service Teacher Training On Classroom Transaction, S. K Yadav, Department of Teacher Education, 2012, NCERT.
- [5] Joint review Mission on Teacher Education Maharashtra, 2014
- [6] Education and National Development, Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66 Ministry of Education
- [7] National Curriculum for Teacher Education, 2009
- [8] Government of India DIETs guideline New Delhi 1989
- [9] NPE 1986 and NEP 2020.
- [10] Browsing internet.