

## **Human Resource Development Department, a Glimpse of its Programmes and Initiatives**

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History of Sikkim could be traced back to the records available during the late decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Monastic Education was then recently introduced. The Monastic Education system was introduced by the then Chogyal Chador Namgyal in order to promote Lepcha literature and language apart from the teachings of the three R's. Later during 1872-73, one Reverend Macfarlen is said to have opened a Mission House at Chidem in South Sikkim.

As written in his article **Educational Changes in Sikkim** by Sri Norden Tshering Bhutia (Gensapa), "Education, therefore, appears to have started in two lines: First, religious education for monks in monasteries to prepare for priesthood and secondly, pioneered by the Christian missionaries."

Education of the common people was later taken up by the Scottish Universities' Mission. Students were taught the three R's and once they qualified, they were sent to the villages to further teach other students. Later, landlords in the villages are known to have donated their lands for establishment of schools where other general subjects like English, Hindi, Tibetan, History etc. were also taught.

Modern education system in Sikkim may be said to have taken remarkable shape when Sir Tashi Namgyal High School was started in 1924, where Tashi Namgyal Academy stands today. With free education upto primary level and considerably low fees for upper classes, Sikkim had almost 10,000 students in the late years of 1950's. prior and during the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union in 1974-75, Sikkim had 228 Primary Schools, 30 Junior High Schools and 08 Higher Secondary Schools.

After Sikkim became the 22<sup>nd</sup> State of the Indian Union, educationists like Dr NK Jangira took over as the Director and transformed education system in Sikkim. Kothari Commission's recommendation for universalization of education in 1963 could see some implementation during the time of Dr Jangira and later during the time of Madhusudan Singh and MC Mathur.

Sikkim further progressed into new era in the education sector after the Sikkim Democratic Front Government was installed in Sikkim in 1994. Efforts towards improvement of education, training of teachers, provisions for the students in the schools and infrastructural development became priority of the Government.

Earlier during the 70's, 80's and 90's, Education Department had an administrative pattern of Secretariat with Secretary at the apex to deal with the administrative affairs and directorate with a single Director to deal with educational affairs of the State. Later, when the political leadership of the State underwent change in the 1994, the system of Education Department saw multi-directorate system with different Directors for different sections. In the third lustrum of the SDF Government, the name of the Education was re christened as Human Resource Development Department in order to give a wider meaning of the

education sector. This was intended in order to ensure that the Department is not only meant for education but also to develop human resource in all respects.

Today, the Human Resource Development Department has the following directorates each independently headed by a Director:

01. Directorate of Primary Education: deals with Pre-primary and Primary Education in the State
02. Directorate of School Education: deals with education upto Class XII
03. Directorate of Higher Education: deals with post Class XX education in the level of college and higher education
04. Directorate of Language: caters to all notified State languages of Sikkim including Nepali and Hindi
05. Directorate of Textbook and Uniforms: deals with textbook, uniforms, schools shoes and bags
06. Directorate of Scholarship: deals with pre metric, post metric and higher educational scholarship
07. Directorate of Technical Education: provides schemes and facilities in the area of technical education and conduct of Common Entrance Tests
08. Directorate of SCERT: State Council of Educational Research and Training is the sister concern of the National Council of Educational Research and Training in the State which caters to the training and research needs of education sector.
09. Directorate of Capacity Building: looks into the affairs of capacity building of the human resource of the State.
10. Directorate of Planning: looks after planning, monitoring and evaluation scope in the Department.

Apart from this, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, Rashtriya Maadhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan and Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyaan are the three major flagship programmes of the Government of India which are being executed in the State.

Since 1994 till 2016, Government have been concerned enough in order to provide quality education to the children of Sikkim. Attention has been provided to all the levels of schools viz; primary, junior, secondary, senior secondary, higher education, technical education and capacity building. In order to cater to the educational needs in the remote areas, a large number of schools were upgraded in the last 22 years in Sikkim. Against roughly 265 schools and 01 college in the late 1970's, today we have 403 Primary Schools, 182 Junior High Schools, 114 Secondary Schools, 65 Senior Secondary Schools totaling to 764 schools and 10 colleges with one central university.

This article endeavours at focusing on each of the directorates of the HRDD. To begin with, this chapter will focus on the Directorate of Primary Education and its initiatives. The other directorates will be dealt with in the subsequent issues.

## **Directorate of Primary Education:**

### **Mission/Vision**

Carved out of the Directorate of School Education with the objective of revamping the Pre-Primary and Primary Education landscape of Government Schools and to foster a knowledge based society, the Directorate of Primary Education came into existence vide Notification No. 168/HRDD/(HQ) Dated 20/09/2013.

In deciding to bifurcate the jurisdiction of these Directorates, the Government of Sikkim has taken cognizance of the linkage between facilitation of sound foundation to the State's human capital at the primary level and their performance in subsequent levels.

Since the quality of education imparted and acquired in early years determine the distance a child can travel on his/her journey of continuous learning, creation of an environment conducive for learning becomes the cornerstone for realization of this vision. Hence, in order that government school children receives the required head start and polishes their competitive edge, a multi-dimensional improvement plan has to be drawn up on priority.

As of now, most developmental initiatives envisioned for education sector has primarily focused on improvement of JHS/Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools. The resultant secondary importance accorded to Pre-Primary/Primary Schools has unwittingly impacted its general health prompting this department to re-strategies the entire planning process. Significant and far reaching results can thus be expected from this bottoms-up planning suggested for the latter category of schools.

Out of a total of 764 Government schools in the state, there are 403 stand-alone Primary Schools.

While the policy implementation as mandated by RTE Act, 2009, Sikkim Education Rules and other project guidelines in force, uniformly addresses most core infrastructural and organizational issues, an intensive and extensive interventionist approach is proposed to be adopted to raise government Primary School standard holistically. Nevertheless, the instant initiates also conforms to the projections made by this Department for implementation during the Twelfth Five Year Plan period, which, besides targeting the training need of Teachers also includes strengthening of the physical/technological/organizational infrastructure of all schools.

Although this Department directs concerted efforts in making the formative years spent in pre-primary and primary classes as balanced and wholesome as possible, delivery quotient in measurable terms vis-à-vis quality learning outcomes remain largely debatable.

A way forward could therefore be to identify the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges faced by the primary school system today and accordingly prepare a realistic restructuring plan encompassing all key areas.

Today we have reached a decisive crossroads whereupon it cannot rest on its past laurels alone to preserve its status as one of the best performing states in the field of education, today's teaching –

learning scenario in the state definitely warrants a lot of introspection and innovation to raise the bar to keep pace with the demands of an efficiency and merit driven world.

## **A Brief SWOT Analysis on Government run Pre-Primary / Primary Schools:-**

### **1. Strengths:-**

- (a) A forward looking Government.
- (b) Infrastructural adequacy in terms of standard school buildings, spacious campuses, toilets, plays grounds.
- (c) Material sufficiency like equipped classrooms/premises.
- (d) Deployment of professionally qualified Teachers.
- (e) Presence of informed stakeholders.
- (f) Prescribed teacher pupil for quality classroom interaction.
- (g) Dedicated District/GVK/Panchayats /SMC functionaries.
- (h) Autonomy to devise School Development Plans.**

### **2. Weaknesses:-**

- (a) Faulty and obsolete infrastructure, underutilized assets.
- (b) Lack of age appropriate furniture for children.
- (c) Drab uninviting classrooms.
- (d) Lack of teacher motivation/commitment.
- (e) Sizable presence of disgruntled/under-qualified teachers.
- (f) Disproportionate complementary infrastructure/utilities/Teaching Learning Materials etc.
- (g) Disconnect between policy and execution.
- (h) No contextual planning.

### **3. Opportunities:-**

- (a) May capitalize its thrust sector status t
  - \* Accelerate Teacher Development Programmes.
  - \* Invest in turning around school environment.
  - \* Forge lasting partnership with the stakeholders and thereby inculcate a sense of Purpose, ownership and community.
- (b) Work in tandem with all line Departments to achieve a common goal by dovetailing their education centric projects to plug urgent gaps.
- (c) Usher in systematic reforms and attitudinal shift by:
  - \* Stressing on use of English as a medium of communication both by teachers and students.
  - \* Introducing edu-camp for smart classes.
  - \* Gradually weaning the schools away from gravitating towards HQs for mundane matters.
  - \*Decentralization of certain administrative powers of routine nature.

### **4. Threats:-**

- (a) Parallel education being imparted by private players.

- (b) Dwindling enrolment at every level.
- (c) Indifferent stakeholders and sagging teacher morale.
- (d) Complacent workforce/people problem.
- (e) Resistance to change.

### **Restructuring Plan:-**

In proposing to align priorities to overhaul Pre-Primary and Primary Education Sector, this Department anticipates meaningful collaboration and convergence with several related Departments like Health, PHE, RM&DD, SJE&WD, LR&DMD, UD&HD etc.

Having thus settled for cradle to grave approach of planning to spruce up this sector, District-wise perspective plan has been prepared to ensure relevant and contextual remedial measures.

The proposed restructuring plan would encompass the following thrust areas:-

1. Teachers and their training needs.
2. Physical infra structure:
  - \* Provision of hazard proof school buildings including MDM kitchens.
  - \* Separate toilets for girls and boys.
  - \* Uninterrupted water supply for drinking/cooking/sanitary requirements.
  - \* Boundary walls/fencing for all schools.
  - \* Playgrounds.
  - \* Well-stocked libraries/sports kits/materials/TLM.
  - \* Ramps for CWSN under inclusive education.
  - \* Furniture/Fixtures and other utilities.
  - \* Utensils for MDM.
3. Strengthening of technological infrastructure.
4. Deployment of Night guards/Safaikarmachari.
5. First aid facility/Counselling.

Activities under the Directorate of Primary Education are elucidated in the following paras:

**Pre Primary Education:** Pre primary education in Sikkim was initiated in Sikkim since Sikkim started educational journey and took better shape in the modern age in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While functioning as the Director of Education Department in the late 1970's, Dr NK Jangira initiated a concept called School Mother in the schools of Sikkim which aimed at having somebday to care of the pre school kids in the school as their mother would do at home. Therefore, school mothers were appointed to take care of the kids in the schools until they reach formal schooling in Class I level. This system continued till 2010 until the Right to Education Act was implemented in the State of Sikkim. As known to all, the RTE Act provides the Right to Free and Compulsory Education for the children in the age group of 06 and 14 years, the system of enrolling children under the age of 06 years was done away with in Sikkim in 2010. Thus, pre primary schooling came to a halt then. Although the pre primary schooling was under the direct control of the HRDD till 2010, during the period of 2 years from 2010-2012 Pre- Primary was under ICDS. Thereafter in 2013 it was shifted under HRDD.

Previously the pre-primary were addressed as School Mothers. From 2013 onwards they are readdressed as Pre-Primary Teachers. The required qualification of the teachers is Class X/ Class XII pass. In fact, the National Council of Teacher Education requires a pre primary teacher to be a holder of Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (D ECCE) , but in the dearth of no institute offering the D ECCE, the SCERT has included ECCE in the curriculum of the Diploma in Elementary Education (D El Ed). A very unique feature in Sikkim education system is that the Pre-Primary section existent in all the government schools.

The pre-primary years are crucial time for the children. By encouraging the development of essential skills at an early age we can help to improve children's learning ability throughout school life. In the light of this, the government has formulated the following:

- ❖ To strengthen the primary schools by introducing LKG and UKG in all the government schools.
- ❖ A core committee has been formed to monitor the developments. This includes curriculum development; training of teachers; implementation of project and other related logistics.
- ❖ Curriculum for the same is in the process of development .This includes skills and concepts to be developed in the pre-primary level such as visual skills; listening skills; early language skills; early mental mathematical skills; early manipulative skills, self help skills; social and emotional development skills; concept of position, direction and time; variety of learning situations and activities.
- ❖ 1997 - 400 Pre Primary Teachers/ School Mothers trained, 100 in each districts
- ❖ Components of the training - 1. Method of teaching/Teaching of Environmental Studies/Teaching of English/ Teaching of Mental Arithmetic/ Nursery Rhymes/ Action Songs/ skills of Writing (Pattern practice, Air writing, Scribbling, Spelling)/ Teaching aids/Spoken English/Writing letters of alphabets and numbers/Teaching of Languages.
- ❖ The training aimed to develop teachers professional competence and teachers' own proficiency
- ❖ 2013 - 256 PPTs were trained- Venue: Modern SS components as above with emphasis on spoken English.
- ❖ The Constitution (Eighty- sixth Amendment) Act, 2001 has divided 0-14 year old children into two clear categories to cover their interests under separate Articles of the Constitution.
- ❖ Article 21 A: Fundamental Right after Article 21 to read: *"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."*
- ❖ Articulating the intent to cater to the needs of 0-6 year children, the Constitution (Eighty- Sixth Amendment) Act alters Article 45 (Directive Principles of State Policy): *"The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years."*
- ❖ ECCE in Sikkim has been introduced in **ICDS** Scheme,( Integrated Child Development Services)It is the largest scheme in India. Department of Child and Family Welfare ( ECCE )
- ❖ Monastic schools, under Ecclesiastical Department( ECE)
- ❖ Pre-Primary classes of Government school. (ECE)

- ❖ The Government Pre-Primary schools are under the direct control of Human Resource Development Department (HRDD).

The Government of Sikkim accorded approval for starting Lower Kinder Garten and Upper Kinder Garten schools in Sikkim on April 01, 2015. Thereafter, 32 schools were identified as pilot project schools to start the KG system in Sikkim. These schools were provided separate uniforms and guide books for the KG classes. However, in the remaining schools, KG system was also introduced in normal way. Some activities undertaken then for the KG system are:

- **Handholding for rest schools already with it to be done by respective district JDs**
- **Planning section to work out all requirements for select 32 and other existing schools**
- **Worksheet and design of classrooms, play materials, select toys, teaching learning materials classroom upgradation**
- **Selection and posting of prospective PPTs and PRTs**
- **ECCE for PPTs (February 2016 simultaneously classroom preparation for LKG and UKG classes to go on while PPTs go on training)**
- **Health Care of kids: Local PHSC and PHC to be in contact, first aid kits in schools, immediate physical and health care related supplies in all the classrooms where LKG and UKG are to be introduced, Child care corner, classroom decoration, desk and benches, mattresses etc.**
- **DIET to incorporate ECCE as a subject in D El Ed, ECCE institute to be established in Sikkim in future**
- **December 2015: all plan for 32 select schools and other existing schools where pre primary classes in operation**
- **February 2016: start of classes in LKG and UKG with children of 4 and 5 years in select and existing schools**
- **June 2016: Review of select schools' performance**
- **August 2016: Revision of mission if required**
- **October 2015: Selection of 200 new schools for this project**
- **December 2015: materials and TLM in these schools**
- **February 2017: starting classes in 200 new schools**
- **June 2017: Review and inclusion of another 400 schools**

Till the end of the academic year 2016, the KG system saw an increase of about 4500 children across the state which rocketed high the enrollment in primary schools from about 40,000 to about 44,500 in Sikkim.

Some notable activities under the Directorate of Primary Education:

- ✓ Training of teachers teaching Mathematics in Primary level: conducted in 31 Block Administrative Centres of Sikkim
- ✓ Training of trainers teaching English in Primary level: 42 Master Trainers developed across the State wherein the trainers from Global English Training, Australia trained our teachers.
- ✓ Development of Key Resource Persons (KRPs) in Early Childhood Care and Education sponsored by the NCERT, New Delhi in which 45 Master Trainers were developed.
- ✓ Deployment of the NCERT trained KRPs for handholding for one week in at least seven schools in their locality for ECCE in pre primary classes.
- ✓ Research work in pre primary education in Sikkim conducted by the NCERT
- ✓ Training of 525 teachers on Yoga at Patanjali Yogpeeth, Haridwar in order to impart yoga training to the children at primary level.
- ✓ Design and development of guide books on English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies for KG students in Sikkim.

As mentioned in earlier, this article intends to focus on all the directorates of the HRDD. So long, the Directorate of Primary Education has been dealt with. In the upcoming issues, the writer would be covering the other directorates in episodes.

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