BITE,

- Expectation: 1989 & 2012

- Organogram standard Vs. actual : some narratives

- Vacancy

- Infrastructure

- Fund flow

- Function & activities : What is mandate, What are they doing : major work

- Innovations

- Identified Challenge

- Vision & alternatives from Fields

**BITE, Rangia, Assam - Some Reflections**

**Shinjini**

What is Role of BITE

Block Institutes of Teacher Education (BITEs)

There are a large number of districts having high concentration of SC/ST and

Minorities where there is an urgent requirement of setting up elementary pre-service

teacher training institutions to ensure preparation of elementary school teachers from

amongst persons from these communities. While the policy for elementary education

has a foundation for inclusive education and includes strategies for sensitization of

teachers to the specific needs of children belonging to SC/ST and minorities, the

establishment of these institutions would ensure access to good quality teacher

education facilities for rural and remote areas and facilitate the entry of talented

persons, particularly persons from SC/ST and Minority concentration areas, into the

teaching profession. This would help ensure the participation of SC/ST and minority

groups in the teaching profession and also overcome the shortage of locally based

teachers in these areas to be employed in elementary schools.

8.2 The Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India had obtained ‘in principle’

approval of the Cabinet on the proposal to set up Teacher Education Institutes in

minority concentration areas. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has prepared a list of 90

Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) based on the 2001 census data on population,

socio-economic indicators and basic amenities indicators. List of the 90 MCDs, along

with the list of districts with SC population above 25% and ST population above 50%,

based on 2001 Census data, is at Annexure XII.

8.3 It has been decided to establish 196 Block Institute of Teacher Education (BITEs) -

one such Institute in a block of each of the 90 MCDs and the SC/ST dominated districts

(other than the block in which a DIET is sanctioned), for which Central assistance would

be provided. The BITE shall be a pre-service elementary teacher education institution.

The BITE would be established in the block having the highest concentration of

SC/ST/Minority, depending upon the criterion for which the district has been identified

for setting up the BITE. The Scheme envisages the following strategy:

(a) Possibilities should be explored for approaching well performing elementary

teacher education institutions for admitting eligible persons from the

SC/ST/Minority communities to the teacher education course; the

Government would meet the cost of tuition and other fees in respect of

persons so admitted;

(b) Identify an existing elementary teacher education institution in the district,

other than a DIET, which can be up-graded as a BITE. Non-recurring Central

assistance would be available for civil works for up-gradation of an existing

elementary teacher education institution into a BITE based on the

specifications mentioned in the norms and standards of the NCTE for a D.Ed

institution and for a 50-seater hostel, in accordance with State SORs.

Equipment grant of Rs 10 lakh would also be made available. Recurring grant

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will be made available for salaries in respect of posts sanctioned and filled up

after up-gradation of the institution in a BITE and of Rs 5 lakh per year as

contingency grant.

(c) Explore the possibility of using unused capacity or for increasing the

capacity of the DIET in the district for admitting eligible persons from these

communities to the teacher education course;

(d) Establish a new BITE (in a block other than the one where the DIET is

established). Non-recurring Central assistance would be available for civil

works for construction of a BITE based on the specifications mentioned in

the norms and standards of the NCTE for a D.Ed institution and for a 50-

seater hostel, in accordance with State SORs. Non-recurring assistance upto

Rs 20 lakh for equipments would also be available. However, sanction of a

BIT would be given only after the State Government has earmarked and

allocated land for establishment of the BITE. Recurring assistance would be

available for salaries in respect of the posts sanctioned and filled up, and Rs 5

lakh as contingency grant.

The most important thing to know about BITEs in Assam is that even though there are 14 proposed and seven sanctioned BITEs all over Assam, none of them are functional as of yet. Funds had been released for only 1 sanctioned BITE, the one in Rangia, where we visited. A new building has been built along with allied constructions, but in effect, the BITE is still functioning as a Basic Training Center. In fact, on the day of our visit, we were accompanied by the SCERT Nodal Officer, who explained to the Principal how the BTC was to be renamed as a BITE, a block level academic organization. No faculty members, including the principal, were able to share about their envisaged role as a BITE. They were also largely unaware of the CSSTE scheme and its components. ( pg 78 & 79, 2012, MHRD, Restructuring and Reorganization of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education )

Institutional profile :

about structure , facilities ,

About faculty

About student : profile , background of the students , Perception

Course :- D.Ed

About Teaching learning materials / library

Activities

Teaching -learning process

One thing that struck me during our visit was that the faculty was very young. We visited the BITE in our last day in Assam, after already visiting 4 DIETs, 2 CTEs and IASE and SCERT. Many of the teacher educators in the BITE were in their twenties, and fresh in the teaching/teacher educator profession. Two of them even shared that their friends had just enrolled for the D El Ed in the same institution, just as they had enrolled as faculty. On informally interacting with them I felt that they were energetic and motivated, and shared with me about their experiences of teaching in the institution. They talked about how they needed exposure and capacity building, and were eager to take on challenges of increased intake in the D El Ed course. On seeing the classes going on from outside, it seemed as if the trainees were sufficiently interested and engaged. On talking to one of the students, we realized that they were quite satisfied with the faculty and their teaching. They did talk about them receiving more capacity building though, and on the need for the library to be more effective. They shared how their teachers were extremely approachable and helpful, and also regular with their classes.

The qualification norms for BITE faculty seemed to be different from the DIETs, because the Principal in charge was a graduate. The faculty too gets the designation of Teacher Educator rather than Lecturer.

Infrastructure – I personally did not do the institutional observation as per the tool, but what I noticed was that the open area outside the classrooms, which was supposedly the playground, was flooded with ankle deep water. I saw pictures in the Principal’s room of a time few years back when the same area was flooded with waist deep water. The lack of a proper drainage to flush out the stagnant water could be a pressing issue.

**BITEs and their proposed role (draft write up for report)**
The Ministry of Minority Affairs has identified several districts and towns across India with a high minority population based on the census 2001 data for the implementation of the Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) in 2015 as part of the 12th Five Year Plan. Major initiatives are being taken to ensure educational advancement of minorities as part of the MsDP. One such proposed initiative is to set up Block Institutes of Teacher Education (BITEs) under the CSSTE Scheme in high minority concentration districts or in districts or towns with high SC/ST population to ensure good quality and inclusive education by ensuring the availability of trained teachers from the local community who are professional, talented and motivated and have a sound understanding of the local context and realities. This will improve access to good quality education facilities for rural and remote areas, and also facilitate the participation of SC/ST and minority groups from the local community in the teaching profession. It will also meet the immediate need for locally based teachers in these areas (Annual Report 2015-16, SCERT Assam, pp. 43-44). The 2009 NCERT Evaluation Report of the CSSTE scheme had suggested that such block level teacher education institutes be created to meet the academic and curricular needs of teachers at the block level. Accordingly, the CSSTE has proposed that BITEs be established in 196 blocks across India having high concentration of SC/ST and minorities.

State Proposed BITEs Functional BITEs\*
Assam 14 1
Bihar 8 4
Chhatisgarh 6 0
Delhi 1 0
Himachal Pradesh 8 0
Karnataka 3 0
Madhya Pradesh 6 0
Maharashtra 4 0
Mizoram 10 0
Puducherry - -
Rajasthan 4 0
Telengana -

Uttar Pradesh 38 0
\*As reported by State Nodal Officers

Bihar status

14 BITEs have been proposed in Assam, out of which 7 have been sanctioned. Funds however, have been released for only 1 BITE so far and Basic Training Center Rangia has been designated and functioning as a BITE. Rangia is a small block in Kamrup District of Assam with a minority population of 26.79% which is higher than the national average of 18.42% (Census Report, 2001).

The study was able to cover only one BITE, the one in Rangia, Assam. The BITEs in Bihar could not be observed due to circumstantial constraints.

For Rangia, the transition from BTC to BITE is still in progress. The Annual Report 2015-16 of SCERT, Assam acknowledges that the Govt. of India guidelines have stated that non-recurring central assistance will be made available for civil works for construction of BITE based on NCTE norms and standards for a D Ed. Institution, based on the state govt.’s sanction of land earmarked for BITE. Accordingly, BTC Rangia was identified, and civil works were undertaken to ensure the repair and renovation of the building. As per tender no. 30 CE (BD) of 2013-14, the construction of a 2 storied building, repair and renovation of office and hostel, boundary wall, gate and deep tube well installation has been completed under the CSSTE scheme. It is interesting to note that the signboard of the institution still says BTC Rangia, and the principal and faculty members are not too aware of its restructuring to a BITE and what it entails.

Observations on infrastructure:

Table 1: Status of Infrastructure

Infrastructure Status for BITE, Rangia
Room for head/principal Yes
Staff room Yes
Classrooms 2 sufficiently large and airy classrooms
Multipurpose hall No. The classroom also serves the purpose of a hall
Library Room of 797.32 sq. ft. consisting of a few almirahs holding around 400 books. The same space also serves the purpose of ICT resource room and resource centre. There is no seating arrangement for a reading room.
Resource room No. Staff room is also the art and craft resource centre according to the institution website
Labs Not functional. Tables with Math and Science equipment on it serves the purpose of the lab.
Storerooms No
Seminar Rooms No
Auditorium (if separate from multipurpose hall) No
ICT lab Not functional as the entire institution has only 1 working computer. Not for student access.
Separate toilets for men and women (staff) Yes
Separate toilets for me and women (students) Yes
Auditorium No
Hostels for men Yes, but existing hostel facilities are poor (not maintained, no drinking water, etc.). New construction is in progress
Hostel for women No
Drinking water facility 2 deep tube wells have been constructed recently under the central assistance for BITE
Staff Quarters Yes.
Office administration room Yes
Electricity (on day of Visit) Yes
Generator Backup No
Internet Connection No
Website Yes, but as BTC Rangia
Boundary Wall Yes
Playground Yes, but covered with stagnant water due to heavy rains. Can be used only during dry season.

The BITE functions in an old Assam style building, which houses around three rooms for the official staff (principal’s room, administrative office, and a fairly large staffroom for faculty). There are two large and airy classrooms, which also serves the purpose of a multipurpose hall. There is no meeting or seminar room, or an auditorium either. There is hostel facility for men, but it is not functional. There is a deep tube well from which drinking water is sourced. There are separate toilets for men and women, and for use by the staff. We were able to get a glimpse of the students’ toilets, but they were not well maintained or clean. There is a small courtyard which functions as the playground, but this was full of stagnant water due to the heavy rains. Water-logging is a standard problem in the institution every year, and the principal should us a picture in her room from a few years back when the BITE was waist deep in water due to heavy flooding. The lack of a proper drainage mechanism to flush out the stagnant water could be a pressing issue.
Table 2: Status of Equipment and Resources

Equipments and Resources Status for BITE, Rangia
AV Equipment No
Computer Equipment in lab for students No
ICT in principal room One computer
ICT in staff room No
ICT for administration room No. Computer in principal’s room used for administrative purposes
Resources and TLMs
Lab equipment Two tables with math and science equipment
Library books 400, mainly dictionaries and old reference books. Not many textbooks or reference materials of contemporary relevance.

A small library and a science lab are also present in the premises. The latter is, in effect, a large table with both math and science equipments. Later discussions seemed to indicate that the lab is not frequently used by the students. There is no such resource room for materials. Due to unavailability of working computers, there is no functional ICT lab. The faculty responsible for teaching this course shared that ICT is taught theoretically, and sometimes he brings his personal laptop to demonstrate. The students are not allowed to access the only computer on the premises. They usually use a cyber café or their smart phones to access the internet for resources.
The library houses around 400 books, with dictionaries and reference books, but it is clearly not enough to meet the needs of the students. A student shared that the library has very few resources that they can use for their course, and they rely more on the teachers’ notes and on guidebooks and study materials available in the market. The study material from the KKHSOU (in service course, which is according to the students and teachers very similar to their own course) appeared to be very popular among the students.

Faculty: There are no vacant faculty or non faculty positions in the institute as per the BTC pattern. However, on its restructuring into a BITE, new regulations will come into effect and more faculty members are to be recruited. At present, the existing six faculty members struggle to address the needs of over 200 students. There is no faculty for English, or for regional languages like Bodo, though there are a substantial number of students who opt for the Bodo Method. Later discussion revealed that each faculty member would often have to take more than three courses to adjust for the lack of adequate teachers. From the current year, there are two more attached members to the institution, so this partly eases the burden for the faculty, and classes for each course are also held regularly. The faculty norms are different from the NCTE and faculty members have a designation of ‘teacher educator’. Most of them possess a B Ed degree.

One thing that struck me during our visit was that the faculty was very young. Many of the teacher educators in the BITE were in their twenties, and fresh in the teaching/teacher educator profession. Two of them even shared that their friends had just enrolled for the D El Ed in the same institution, just as they had enrolled as faculty. On informally interacting with them I felt that they were energetic and motivated, and shared with me about their experiences of teaching in the institution. They talked about how they needed exposure and capacity building, and were eager to take on challenges of increased intake in the D El Ed course.

Student Profiles:

The students are mostly freshers who have come to the institute to fulfill the NCTE norm of trained teachers. There are some graduate students that have also come for this course because they did not fulfill the eligibility criteria for B Ed. The course is offered in two languages – Assamese and English. Most of the students have opted for Assamese as their medium of instruction. Only two students in the first year, and none in the second year have English as their medium of instruction. The teachers make time for these students separately to help them with the resources.

Teaching Learning Process: The classes seemed fairly traditional. On talking to one of the students, we realized that they were quite satisfied with the faculty and their teaching. They did talk about them receiving more capacity building though, and on the need for the library to be more effective. They shared how their teachers were extremely approachable and helpful, and also regular with their classes.
The students are mostly very comfortable with the internet, and they often use it for developing their lesson plans, and are encouraged to do so by their teachers. The only handicap is that since the medium of instruction is Assamese for most of these students, language becomes a hindrance to navigate through these online resources. There are hardly any students who have opted for the course in English.

Pressing Issues: Bodo method – no teachers, minority
Add Connections with DIET and CTE other orgs – peda, monitoring, etc.

Conclusion
Though the BITEs have been proposed and sanctioned in many MCDs across India in the 12th Five Year Plan, only five are functional so far. The TEAB minutes of the states over the past five years (2012-17) reveal administrative logjams and financial roadblocks that have led to several revisions and re-examining of the sanctioning of the proposed BITEs. The one BITE that this study was able to visit is still in effect a BTC, with its faculty members largely unaware of the welfare agenda with which it was envisaged.
The BITEs have been envisaged as a powerful medium to reach the goal of quality and contextually relevant elementary education by ensuring the participation of local youth in the teaching profession. It has the potential to bring about a positive change in the classrooms through the creation of a dynamic group of trained professionals who are aware of the local realities and are well equipped to meet its challenges. There seems to be a major gap of communication of the vision, mission and aims of this institution among all the stakeholders involved, which perhaps hinders the implementation of the scheme in its original spirit.