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Challenges of Qualified Rural Teacher Education in Myanmar

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Abstract: With the importance of education, globally, nationally, and provincially, rural teacher education is emerging an important field of study to promote a nation's education development. This paper mainly thus focuses on the real situations of the challenges of qualified teacher education encountering in rural areas in Myanmar. The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges of rural teacher education. The method used in this study is literature survey. Based on the findings of a literature review of rural teacher education in Myanmar, educational policy makers and teacher educators should not only focus on the challenges of rural education but also create a good environment for rural teachers and students. The implication of this study is for stakeholders, policy makers and educational organizations to promote the education in rural areas and help

1. Introduction

The term “education” is broader sense than everyone thinks. Many educationalists define it into different meanings. Education is a process to know everyone what is right and what is wrong throughout the whole life from the cradle to the grave. Every nation endeavors to develop its education standard to keep abreast with other countries. If a nation’s education wants to be upgraded, teacher education is a key factor to cultivate every citizen with proper thoughts.

John Dewey also proposed education is the training for country and the nation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO has defined the four pillars of education for holistic development such as learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together (Delors, 1998). These are the 21st century skills in any education society. Thus Myanmar democracy mother, State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is stressing the importance of teacher education in Myanmar education sector.

National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021) points out improving the quality of classroom teaching is essential to improve student learning achievement in schools and educational institutions in Myanmar. This demands an integrated approach to teacher education and management reform. In high-performing education systems in countries worldwide, teachers have a central role to play in improving educational outcomes. Moreover, there are necessary requirements such as a sufficient number of qualified teachers in every school, the minimum teacher student rations and qualification standards set by Ministry of Education, MOE. Myanmar education is facing a number of challenges in deploying qualified teachers to all schools, especially schools in remote and rural areas.

In rural and remote areas in Myanmar, teachers are facing many struggles in the fulfillment of the requirements of children and the desires of the parents. Thus, the children in these areas are learning with the lack of necessary supplements although MOE is tackling these issues in rural areas to bring into alignment with urban areas. This study points out the challenges and problems facing rural areas in Myanmar and how to illuminate these ones.

2. Literature Review

Myanmar, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, which is situated in Southeast Asia is bordered on the north and northeast by China, on the east and southeast by Laos and Thailand, on the south by the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal and on the west by Bangladesh and India. UNFPA (2018) states Myanmar has an ethnically diverse population of approximately 51.5 million. 70 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. Although Myanmar is moving up to Middle income country status defined by the World Bank clarification, substantial disparities in housing and living conditions exist between rural and urban areas and between different parts of the country.

Myanmar can administratively be divided into seven states, seven regions and one union territory (Nay Pyi Taw). The seven states are mainly inhabited by Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan (East, North and South) and the respective sub-national races. The seven regions, Ayeyarwady, Bago (East and West), Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tannintharyi , and Yangon Region, are largely

Ministry of Education, MOE, 2014).

Poverty is a major challenge for Myanmar. Poverty incidence in the rural areas, where nearly two-third of the population resides, is considerably higher than in the urban areas. The highest values of poverty incidence are in Chin at 73%, followed by Rakhine (44%), Tanintharyi (33%), Shan (33%) and Ayeyarwady (32%). Generally, these regions and states are underdeveloped and deficient in basic infrastructure, transportation, social services and livelihoods (UNDP, 2013, cited in MOE, 2014).

In retrospect of Myanmar education after the background information of Myanmar, Thein Lwin (2000) states four conditions which are basic education before independence (1945-1948), basic education after independence (1948-1962), basic Education under military rule (1962-1988), and basic education on the wave of democratizations (1988-2015).

The education system is different from each period. In 1988, there was a revolutionary case in Myanmar but the school system 5-4-2 is alive till 2015-2016 Academic System although the examination system is different during these years. The previous education system 5-4-2 changed to 5-4-4 to align with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members in terms of the numbers of years of schooling under basic education.

With the adjustment of education system in line with ASEAN countries, teacher training is another important area for faculty development; without an adequate capability to train teachers for K-12 education, the pipeline for feeding qualified, well-prepared students into the country's university system will be relatively sparse (Simon, 2013). Teacher training is a factor that helps teachers to become more prepared and qualified to teach. Providing teachers with teacher training or opportunities for professional development is indeed necessary (Ulla, 2017)

In order to improve the quality of teachers, teacher training colleges and schools were upgraded to Education colleges in 1998 and the pre-served trainings courses have been reintroduced. Education colleges offer Diploma in Teacher Education (DTED) course for the ones who have passed the matriculation examination and Diploma in Teacher Education Competency (DTEC) course and Pre-Service Primary Teacher Training (PPTT) course for university graduates. In near future, education colleges will be upgraded Education Degree Colleges to give BA (Education) and BSc (Education).

The Universities of Education provide the pre-service Bachelor of Education (BEd) course for matriculates and Post Graduate Diploma in Multi-Media Arts (PGDMA) Courses for university graduated. The Universities of Education also offered the Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) for those who have graduated one degree, Certificate in Education Technology (CET) course for Master Degree holders and Special Certificate in Education Technology (SCET) course for those with higher degree from universities. In-service teachers can also attend Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Master Education, (MEd) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) courses. In 2018-2019, the in-service teachers who have five years services at least can attend Master of Education Qualified MEd (Q) instead of MPhil.

The above mentioned are information background of Myanmar, the basic education system in each period and teacher trainings. On the basic background of this literature review, this study will state the challenges facing rural teachers to be effective education. It is hoped that this study will be

2. How can be solved these challenges in implementing a qualified rural teacher education in Myanmar?

3. Method

The literature survey is applied in this study. Thus, relevant data were collected through education books, articles, journals and websites.

4. Results and Discussion

If the report of Toe Win (2008) on education development conference (basic education sector) is comprehensively presented, Myanmar can administratively be divided into seven states, seven regions and one union territory (Nay Pyi Taw) as mentioned earlier. Depending on these regions and states and distance situation, the schools in basic education are divided into A, B, C, D, and E. In each school, the total average number of students is 194. The basic schools in rural areas 89 percent and the students' percentage in these areas are 70. With the increasing number of student year by year, the MOE upgraded the level of the schools.

In this report, the appointment of primary teacher is different according to rural, urban and distance situation. The main difference regions and states are Bago East Region, Chin State, Kachin State, Kayah State, Magway Region, Mandalay Region, Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, Shan North State and Yangon Region. A teacher-student ratio of "A" level primary schools of Bago East Region and Yangon Region is 1:35 and a teacher-student ratio of "E" level primary schools in rural areas of Shan East Region is 1:30. This result clearly shows that primary teachers are required to appoint in some urban areas but the appointment of teachers in some rural areas is gradually greater than before although the teachers are needed to appoint both in urban and rural areas. This is the figuration of rural teacher education development although there are other challenges.

In 2018-2019 Academic Year, there are 5965 primary schools requiring primary teachers in the total of 26918 primary schools. Among them, "D" level schools need 2716 primary teachers (29 percent of total) and E level schools 1434 primary teachers (27 percent of total). The highest demand areas of primary teachers are Ayeyarwady Region, Shan North State, Shan South State and Rakhine State for "D" level schools, Chin State, Kayin State, Sagaing Region, Rakhine State and Shan (East, North and South) for "E" level schools and Yangon Region for "A" level schools. In generalization, rural areas are the highest requirement of primary teachers. This is one challenge facing in rural areas.

Ministry of Education has also launched thirty-year long-term education development pan (2001-2001 Fiscal Year – 2030-2031 Fiscal Year) being implemented in six phases of five-year duration. This plan consists of 10 programs for basic education sub-sector and 36 programs for higher education sub-sector. Among the programs of basic education sub-sector, improving non-formal education activities is one of factors to develop the literacy rates of rural areas in Myanmar. This contribution is one of the possible ways to conduct in rural areas.

MOE (2004) stated that the activities of non-formal education have been carried out by local voluntary teachers using basic learning materials produced by Myanmar Education Research

Centers have also been established in 2003-2004 FY and these centers offered early childhood care and education, basic literacy programs, income generating programs and non-formal primary education. This contribution of teacher education in rural areas is the positive effect on Myanmar education.

In the result of upper secondary level examination (matriculation examination) of MOE (2018), the passing percentages of the undeveloped areas are lower than the developed regions and states. For example, Chin State is 16.64 %, Shan East State is 19.33 % and Rakhine State is 21.45 % but Mandalay Region 38.17 %, Yangon Region 37.55 % and Mon State 37.42% (MOE, 2018). This result shows that the student achievements of the states which have many rural and undeveloped areas are lower than urban areas. Rural schools may face the inadequate of unqualified teachers and classroom resources for supplying student achievement. This is also one kind of challenge to be a qualified rural teacher education.

A shortage of well- qualified teachers in rural areas is one of the challenges facing in rural areas. As a significant fact, Ministry of education appointed local persons who do not complete the upper secondary level as primary teachers. Moreover, certified teachers don't want to go in rural areas because the transportation and communication system is not good and not safety for teachers to serve in rural areas. School-based In-service Teacher Education, SITE project, is one of the solving ways for unqualified teachers. This project consists of teacher educators and educational administrators. These persons trained uncertified teachers in rural areas to know how to teach the students and how to manage a classroom.

As the student issues, Oxford Business Group (2018) points out school attendance has traditionally been a problem for students in Myanmar. While basic education at public sector is free, tens of thousands of children are sent to work on farms and tea shops to support family income. According to statistics in 2000, 85% of children in urban areas attended primary school, but 76 % in rural areas. At the same time, 69% of children in urban areas attended secondary school. It was more than double the proportion in rural areas. This data clearly shows that student attendance rate in rural areas is lower than in urban. In addition, classroom resources and teaching materials are needed, much of the school infrastructure is inadequate and most of the classrooms are overcrowded.

These challenges are faced by rural teachers. The teachers in these areas do not thus get job satisfaction in the education journey. The consequence of this condition is that teachers get out from the employment. In order to ensure development and retention of quality teachers, NESP (2016-2021) claims that teacher management areas including teacher recruitment, teacher deployment, teacher evaluation (evaluation of teacher performance), teacher promotion (based on teacher performance and career experience) and a career pathway system and incentives for the retention of quality teachers need to be strengthened. These are the good factors for teacher education both in urban and rural areas.

5. Conclusion

In brief, the above descriptions are the challenges of rural teacher education in Myanmar.

urban and rural areas and train pre-service and in-service teachers to be well-qualified teachers. Universities of Education and Education Colleges are the major sources to produce qualified teachers. Teachers play a vital role in education and thus need to be full of knowledge and good attitude. A good teacher produces all round development students in the future. It is thus important to promote rural teacher education.

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Author

Kyaw Min Latt
Headmaster
Basic Education Branch High School, Yega Lewe Township, Nay Pyi Taw
Myanmar

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