Good Practices in the Teacher Education Programme for Curriculum Design and Learner Support Services of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University

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Abstract
Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, the first and only state Open University in North Eastern part of India has been conducting a two-year Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) programme through distance mode to enhance continuing professional development of the elementary teachers of the state of Assam since 2012. All teachers trainees enrolled in this programme are deputed by the Assam Government under the Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission which is a central government project to train the primary level teachers of India. The course curriculum of this D.ELED. programme has been designed with a definite end in mind guided by the objectives of the programme. Workshops and various school-based activities have been introduced as part of the material design for a better understanding of various pedagogical concepts. Along with the printed study materials, the University has been preparing audio and audio-visual resources related to the course material to make the teacher trainees compatible with learners’ different interests. This paper seeks to address the good practices of curriculum design and planning and learner support services.

Introduction
Elementary education provides the basis for the structures of education and therefore, it’s strengthening and improvement could provide the road to success in the field of education. Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) of India has been conducting a two-year Diploma in Elementary Education Programme (D.El.Ed.) aimed at training the untrained teachers of the elementary levels in the state of Assam since 2012. Diploma in Elementary Education aims at preparing teachers for the elementary stage of education, that is, the stage covers children of 6-14 years. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), New Delhi, granted approval to the State Government of Assam to allow KKHSOU to conduct the D.El.Ed. programme through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. The programme is being conducted using the infrastructural and instructional facilities of various institutions such as District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Colleges of Education and other study centres of the University. The objectives of the programme is to equip the teacher trainees to develop an understanding of the elementary school children, their developmental processes; to acquaint the teacher trainees with the historical, political, economic and cultural trajectories of contemporary Indian and Assamese society; to develop a holistic understanding of the range of issues and dynamics that constitute school education; to develop the communicating skills of the trainees in transacting the prescribed curriculum effectively; to develop the skills of the learners to use various techniques of effective teaching which they have learned theoretically to apply them in actual classroom situations.

The study materials for the programme have been developed in Self Learning Material (SLM) format. The materials are prepared both in English and three local languages (Assamese, Bengali and Bodo) to address regional requirements together with the needs of the targeted teacher trainees having diverse social and linguistic background. Along with the study materials in printed form, the University has been preparing audio and audio-visual resources related to the course contents of the D.El.Ed. programme.

Objectives
The present study aims at to identify information on the good practices of the D.El.Ed. Programme of KKHSOU in particular areas such as Curriculum design and planning and Learner Support Services (LSS).
Methodology
The method of the present paper is purely descriptive in nature. The study is basically a qualitative analysis of the D.El.Ed. programme of teacher trainees of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University. Data has also been collected from secondary sources like books, journals, website, etc.

Curriculum Design and Planning
The University has designed and developed the course curriculum in the light of the NCTE guidelines. The educational background of the teacher trainees of the programme is one of the important considerations in designing the curriculum of the programme. The tasks to be performed by the teacher trainees and the levels of understanding, skills and attitudes required to perform the expected tasks are the major bases in the designing of the curriculum. The courses included in the curriculum of the two-year programme under four broad curricular areas, each area having a special focus –

1. Child Studies
2. Educational and Contemporary Studies
3. Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies
4. Other Value Added Courses for Holistic Development

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad Area</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Studies</td>
<td>Childhood, Child Development and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and Contemporary Studies</td>
<td>Education, Society and Curriculum</td>
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<td>Understanding, Language and Early Literacy</td>
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<td>Understanding the Self-I (Workshop)</td>
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<td>Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Teaching</td>
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<td>Proficiency in English</td>
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<td>Pedagogy of Regional Language and Mother Tongue</td>
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<td>Teaching of Mathematics for Primary School Child</td>
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<td>Teaching of English in Elementary Classes</td>
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<td>Yoga Education - I</td>
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- The course on “Childhood, Child Development and Learning” is under the broad area of Child Studies. It is the first course of the D.El.Ed. programme which consists a total of five units. The course is designed to develop an understanding of children, the various aspects of their development, processes underlying their development and learning of various types of skills. The first unit throws light on the concept of childhood and socialisation, role of family in the socialisation process of children, effect of child rearing practices, etc. The second unit deliberates on the role of school, peer group and friends in the socialisation process of a child. The third unit discusses various perspectives of development and highlights some important issues related to development. The fourth unit deals with some important aspects related to physical-motor development of children. The fifth unit describes the process of socio-emotional development of children and focuses on the roles of teachers and parents in providing opportunities for these developments.

- The course on “Education, Society and Curriculum” falls under the broad area of Educational and Contemporary Studies. It aims to introduce the philosophical, sociological and historical perspectives on education with a view to develop a sound knowledge on the core concepts and principles of education.

- The course “Fundamentals of Teaching” has been developed to introduce the teacher trainees to the basic principles and pedagogical knowledge of teaching.
The course “Understanding Language and Early Literacy” has been developed with a view to make the teacher trainees aware of the dynamics of language operations, as it exists in the classroom, in the home environment of children and the larger society and nation.

The course “Proficiency in English” focuses on the basic issues of teaching English and combines the approach to provide guidance to the classroom teacher on how the teaching of English can be made more meaningful and interesting.

The course on “Pedagogy of Regional Language and Mother Tongue” aims to provide the teacher trainees with a basic understanding of various relevant aspects relating to the teaching of mother tongue and the regional languages in the schools. The course has been designed to provide an understanding of the basic premises of mother tongue and regional languages, as well as, the practical strategies of handling the multilingual classrooms in the schools.

The course on “Teaching of Mathematics for Primary School Child” aims at developing insights into the domain of early mathematics education and pedagogy so that teacher trainees will be able to make the classrooms free from fear and thereby make the learning process fun and enjoyable.

The course “Teaching of English in Elementary Classes” has been designed to acquaint the teacher trainees with various aspects of English teaching.

### Curriculum Structure : Second Year

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Broad Area</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Educational and Contemporary Studies</td>
<td>Education in Contemporary Indian Society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School Culture, Leadership and Change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Education</td>
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<td>Emerging Gender and Inclusive Perspectives in Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding the Self –II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies</td>
<td>Teaching of Environmental Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching of Mother Tongue (Optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching of Social Sciences (Optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching of General Sciences (Optional)</td>
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<td>Teaching of Mathematics (Optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching of English (Optional)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yoga Education – II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value Added Courses for Holistic Development</td>
<td>IT Skill Development (Practicum)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Art and Drama in Education (Practicum)</td>
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<td>Teaching Practice (Practicum)</td>
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- The course on “Education in Contemporary Indian Society” has been designed to focus on the various issues of socio-political and economic dimensions of Indian society in appreciation of its diversity. The teacher trainees will develop an understanding of the trends, issues and challenges facing contemporary Indian society.

- The course “School Culture, Leadership and Change” intends to describe the structures and processes of school education system. The teacher trainees will familiarise with school leadership and school management so as to know and learn the ideas that facilitate change in school education.

- The course “Early Childhood Care and Education” has been designed to provide an understanding of the importance of stage-wise developmental needs of children in elementary
stage of education and also the importance of Home, School and Community in early childhood care and education.

- The course on “Emerging Gender and Inclusive perspectives in Education” has been designed to develop a comprehensive and critical understanding on disability, marginalisation and inclusive education. The teacher trainees will recognise the need of integrating and inculcating life skills and values in school curriculum and generate sensitivity towards local and global environment to emphasise living in harmony with oneself and both the natural and social environment.

- The course “Teaching of Environmental Studies” has been developed to equip the teacher trainees with the knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching environmental studies at the elementary level. The course provides teacher trainees the appropriate methods emphasising child friendly activities of teaching environmental studies.

- The Optional Courses includes five optional course of which the teacher trainees has to choose any two. These five optional courses are: (a) Teaching of Mother Tongue; (b) Teaching of Social Sciences; (c) Teaching of General Science; (d) Teaching of Mathematics; and (e) Teaching of English. These optional papers will help the teacher trainees to acquaint with the knowledge, skills and methods of teaching these subjects.

**Yoga Education**: Yoga has been introduced in the D.El.Ed. programme so as to equip the teacher trainees with proper training on yoga. The course comprises both the theoretical and practical components of yoga. Yoga is an exact science. It promotes harmonious development of the body, mind and the soul. The practice of yoga takes care of the all round development of the personality of a person – moral, physical, mental and spiritual. In this way, the teacher trainees will be able to bring about an all round development in their students along with their own development. The course is introduced in both the years.

**Workshop**: The workshop for the first year has been entitled as “Understanding the Self-I”. The workshop has been designed to equip the teacher trainees with various skills which will enable them to understand their strength and weaknesses, attain a good communication skill, relate more with real life experiences, to enhance the classroom environment and above all these will help them in formation of positive attitude.

The workshop for the second year has been entitled as “Understanding the Self-II” is aimed at initiating a process of original thinking in learners about their vision of education and also to provide them the space to experiment with ways to translate the vision of education into a workable curriculum rooted in the contemporary Indian reality, and thereby develop in them the professional capacities and attitudes that will facilitate this process.

These workshops are conducted at study centres during the summer vacation.

**Practicum**: It has been designed to orient the teacher trainees towards practical component of D.El.Ed. programme. In the first year, the practicum part contains three types of activities which are broadly included under ‘School Based Activities’. The activities are –

(a) **Work and Education**: Here the activities have been designed with an intention to develop the skills in conducting socio-metric test and organisation of excursion, field trip, picnic, exhibition, activities, etc. These activities will help them to know how to take the teaching-learning process outside the classroom and beyond the text-books.

(b) **School and Health**: The activities included in this heading are intended to increase the observation skills of the teacher trainees, their understanding of the school environment and their knowledge of how environment affect the health of the student.

(c) **Maintenance of Workbook**: This workbook has been designed in the form of a diary where the teacher trainees have to write the activities that are to be undertaken in their schools. These activities are intended to develop the skills of the learners to proceed in a systematic way, organise various activities for the children, note the problems in their development and find out a workable solution to make teaching learning milieu more prolific and effective.

In the second year, the practicum includes three types of courses –

(a) **I.T. Skill Development**: In the present day context, teaching-learning process is incomplete unless the information technology is used. Keeping in view of this, the course has been
designated to give the preliminary knowledge of computers to the teacher trainees and thereby enable them to disseminate knowledge and education.

(b) **Art and Drama in Education**: This course has been designed to give an outlet to the creative talents, imagination and aesthetic sense of teacher trainees and their students. This also provides an outlet for self-expression and helps the development of imagination, creativity and artistic awareness along with increasing social and moral awareness in the children. There are two options in this course – Option A (Art in Education) and Option B (Drama in Education).

(c) **Teaching Practice**: The practice teaching will develop the skills of the learners to use various techniques of effective teaching which they have learned theoretically to apply in the actual classroom situations. This will also improve their efficiency to plan and act in an effective way and reduce the waste in terms of time, energy and money.

**Learner Support Services**

The main aim of distance education is to promote self study or independent study among distance learners in the absence of regular face-to-face teaching. Student Support Services or Learner Support Services (LSS) in distance education serve as the interface between the institution and the learner. It comprises of a cluster of facilities and activities that are intended to make the teaching-learning process easier for the learner. The support system may range from study centre counselling to administrative problem solving (Rumble, 1992).

Learner Support Services of KKHSOU is a two tier system – the headquarters and the study centres. Most important services at headquarter is mainly administrative. The headquarters disseminate information through newspapers, Information Brochures and individual guidance to the learners by in-house faculty of the University.

In Information Brochures or Prospectus, the learners get all the relevant information about the course, its fee structure, important instructions and schedule of face to face counselling in personal contact programmes, submission of assignments, workshops, examinations, etc. Distribution of study materials is done through study centres by the University headquarters to the learners by hand at the time of admission. Study centres provide information, organising counselling sessions, evaluation of assignments, conduct of term-end examinations.

KKHSOU primarily depends on the effective use of media and technologies for delivery of Self Learning Materials (SLM). To make the materials accessible and adaptable on the part of the learners concerned, both online and offline versions of the materials are made available. The printed SLMs are supplemented by audio and audio-video programmes related to the course contents. The study centres make this facility available to the trainees in some counselling sessions. The electronic versions of the SLMs are freely available in E-vidya, the e-portal of KKHSOU.

The study centres provide the counselling schedule to the trainees. The teacher trainees have to attend counselling sessions in their respective study centres on all Sundays and during holidays. The attendance in these counselling sessions is compulsory, minimum attendance being 80%, failing which the trainees will be not allowed to sit for the term-end examination. It is monitored from the headquarters on a regular basis. The counselling sessions include clarifications required in the print materials (SLM and Assignments), audio/video programmes through active interaction with trainees.

The audio and audio-video programmes related to the course contents are also uploaded on You Tube for general viewing. The ICT support services of the University include – Community Radio Service; a special educational programme ‘Ekalavya’ aired every Saturday and Sunday from 8 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. through All India Radio, Guwahati and Dibrugarh centres; Akashvani Phone-in programme; the Open Access Journals Search Engine (OAJSE) to browse and search nearly 5000 Open Access Journals from across the World; e-mail alert service to the teacher trainees linked to major social networking sites like facebook and Twitter.

**Conclusion**

In general, Diploma in Elementary Education of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University plays an increasingly significant role in North Eastern part of India. It is a matter of great pride that the state Government of Assam entrusted the university with the responsibility to conduct and prepare the study materials for the D.El.Ed. programme. The programme has been very successful in helping the teacher trainees to develop a holistic understanding of the range of issues and dynamics that constitute school education in general. Besides acquainting the trainees with the historical, political, economic and cultural trajectories of the India and Assamese society, this programme has immensely contributed to the development of skills and attitude among the teacher trainees to use various techniques of effective teaching learning in real classroom situations.
The study materials for the programme have been developed in Self Learning Material format in English, as well as, in other local languages like Assamese, Bengali and Bodo to address regional requirements and the needs of the targeted teacher trainees having diverse social backgrounds. Besides, simple and easy languages are used in dialogic mode. The curriculum of the programme designed and developed on the basis of developmental stages of children that enables teacher to focus on child-centred learning that leads to meaningful quality education.

The curriculum also highlights the importance of empowering student-teachers through the integration of technology and education. ICT today has provided easy access to learning. However, machines cannot replace teachers, particularly during the tender age of development. But teachers have to be empowered to perform this task with the addition of new technologies every day. KKHSOU has been able to offer individualised and interactive student services with the introduction of ICT services.

Thus, D.El.Ed. programme of KKHSOU prepare teachers who are able to continuously assess and improve their professional practice as teachers, so that they can develop methods and ways of enabling children to learn effectively. In other words, a well-trained teacher becomes a mentor to their young students thereby assisting in the development of effective classroom management and teaching techniques.

References


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