

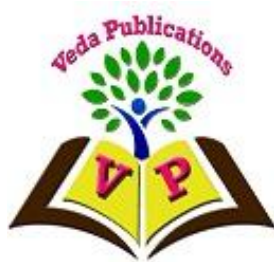


AN INSIDER'S REVIEW OF SCHOOL EDUCATION POLICIES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT



The pursuit of quality education has always taken priority over other things since the inception of human race. Teachers play a crucially important role in determining whether we are successful or not in imparting superior education to learners. But education doesn't end or begin with a school teacher. There are numerous other factors responsible for a learner's success or failure. This paper tries to point out some loopholes in our school education policies where a teacher is more often than not made a scapegoat for all the drawbacks of our schools. The basic argument around which the whole paper revolves is that we can only raise the standard of our education when there is a greater reform in educational policies.

Keywords: *Stardom, Teaching Aptitude, Administrative Capacity Test.*

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INTRODUCTION

The notion that a teacher's profession is noble and exalted seems to be a long past fairy tale in our part of the world. A teacher has lost the love and respect he or she deserves. The shabby treatment that this "one time hero of the society" gets on regular basis is largely responsible for the dwindling status of our academic standards. We are faced with a serious threat of depriving our future generation of quality teachers if we continue to neglect our teacher community.

DISCUSSION

The story of a teacher in our society begins in an interesting way. Does anyone here choose to become a teacher? No, certainly not. Our parents want us to become doctors and engineers. However, most of us go on to become teachers; not by choice, but by chance. We turn to the profession of teaching when all else fails. When we are not able to accomplish the "stardom" of doctors and engineers, we stand in the queue to become teachers.

The tale is sad enough and it stems from our general perception of teachers. A teacher in our society is a "masterji" which has more a derogatory meaning than that of regard and respect. You may or may not earn your name as a good teacher, but you are certain to get labelled as "Kanjoos master" (miserly teacher). Perhaps you are not one, but you can't escape that generalised tag.

The media also has left no stone unturned in sabotaging the image of a teacher. Some time ago, I read in a newspaper that a teacher couldn't write an essay on cow.¹ Now I hear that s/he was not able to name the digestive organs of our body.² The stuff portrayed is endless. Whenever teachers get a mention in our media, they are shown as possessors of different vices. The virtues of a teacher hardly get any appreciation.

One feels disheartened to be a part of the system which has lost its glory. Given the present plight of teachers, it is hard to imagine how we could motivate our future generation to accept the job which is being constantly disdained. How many of us do want to make our children teachers? One in a hundred! Perhaps one in a thousand! It is impossible to imagine of producing high quality future teachers

until we don't alter our perception towards the present lot of teachers.

The inside structure of the Education department is yet another disappointing scene. Ideally, your qualification should have a definite bearing on your position in the department. However, a teacher becomes stagnant after appreciating the fact that you needn't bother yourself about further qualification. You go on to become a master, a lecturer, a principal, and so on, by just spending time in the ill-fated department. The early you enter the department, the more lucky you are, for you will get timely promotions irrespective of whether you could do justice to your new promotions or not.

Can anyone tell me what miracles should we expect from a teacher who has been teaching elementary classes for decades after he is promoted as a lecturer? We are still deeply stuck in a conventional dull system in which the obsolete concept of seniority is preferred to hard work, ability and competitiveness.³

What about the heads of our schools? Most of the principals in our already deteriorating school system lack the basic administrative qualities. There were people who earned our respect as good teachers but they ended up making a mess of this important post. The quality of an administrator determines the success or failure of an academic institution. The plans and strategy of a head may influence the productivity of a teacher. The head is there to see whether the already formulated rules and regulations of the education department are carried out or not. You can't make your own laws that quite often prove detrimental to the goals of education. We are still looking forward to the day when a person is promoted to the post of a principal only after passing an administrative capability test. If you don't own leadership qualities, is it not better to continue as a teacher/lecturer than to assume a post that does not become you and that you were never made for?

There is always scope for improvement and better change. The profession of teaching has to be made the most attractive destination for job seekers as it is the foundation on which rests our future prosperity.⁴ The government policies that recruit



teachers need a thorough revision so that the cow ceases to be a celebrity for wrong reasons in our media. Departmental examinations should be made mandatory to inspire our teachers towards hard work, and unnecessary stagnant promotions should be done away with.

If we want to provide better education to our future generation, the critical job of teaching, on which rest all the dreams of our progeny, has to be infused with a new lease of life so that it ceases to remain as the last resort for our youth. No doubt, steps have been taken from time to time to make teachers accountable to their job. The annual increment of "poor performing teachers" is stopped and many a time they are transferred to inconvenient places. Fearing action, the teachers force the students into cramming their study material even at secondary and higher secondary classes. This will save us from embarrassment today, not tomorrow. Tomorrow the same students will be cursing themselves, cursing their teachers and cursing the competent authorities responsible for ruining their future.

CONCLUSION

Instead of constantly deriding our teachers, the people at the helm of affairs need to come up with a concrete strategy to produce high quality future teachers. If qualifying CET is mandatory for a doctor and NET/SET/PhD for higher education, there has to be a teaching aptitude test at school level also to judge the communicative skills and other qualities of a candidate required for this highly demanding profession. We should not expect wonders from our dilapidated school system unless it is based on a solid foundation.

Again, we must not make the mistake of expecting to reap the benefit overnight. The road is not smooth ahead and we have to climb on a steep mountain. Rome was not built in a day. It might take us many years, but years are just moments in the progress of a people.

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