

CONTRIBUTIONS OF NORTHEASTERN COUNCIL (NEC) TOWARDS HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

North Eastern Council is the nodal agency for economic and social development of North Eastern Region (NER) which consists of eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. NEC serves as an apex level body for securing balanced and coordinated development and facilitating coordination with NER states. It has been mandate to function as the regional planning body for NER. It gives priority to schemes and projects while formulating a regional plan for this area benefiting two or more states. The paper aimed to investigate the role played by North Eastern Council (NEC) towards higher and professional education in the North-Eastern Region of India. The paper also focused to suggest measures for improving the role of North Eastern Council (NEC) towards higher and professional education in the North-Eastern Region of India.

KEYWORDS: *North Eastern Council, Higher Education, Professional Education, Contributions, Role*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a powerful instrument of change. It changes the life of an Individual, transforms the society, and builds a nation. Today, people of all walks of life give premium to education for their better and improved future life. In this context, people of North East India have high expectation from NEC, the nodal agency of development in this part of the country.

Higher and Professional Education

Higher education is the apex stage of any educational system. In the broadest sense, it covers all students and training activities at the tertiary level. It also encompasses the universities offering classical disciplines or general education (e.g. arts and sum faculties) and specialized branches or professional education (agriculture, engineering, science, and technology). Technical, in the context of India, higher education refers to that level of education that follows after the secondary level of education.

National Policy on Education (1986) has visualized higher education as a forum concerned with those critical issues facing humanity such as social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual. It also considered higher education as an agency which contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skill is, therefore, a crucial factor for survival. Thus, higher education, both general and professional education is one important instrument for achieving its objectives social economic development of the North-Eastern Region.

North-Eastern Council (NEC)

The NEC is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region which consists of the eight States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. NEC has its headquarters at Shillong, Meghalaya. The NEC came into being by an Act of Parliament, the North Eastern Council Act, 1971 to act as advisory body 'In respect of socioeconomic development and balanced development of the North Eastern Areas. The NEC started functioning in the year 1972.

Composition of the Council

Under section 3 (1) of the NEC Act, the members of NEC comprises of the Governors and the Chief Ministers of the Eight Member States. The Chairman of the Council is to be nominated by the President of India. The President may if he deems it necessary to do so, nominate two more members for the Council.

Functions of the Council

The NEC has been set up with the principal object of effecting a fast and balanced social-economic development of the entire region through coordinated regional planning with a special set of priorities best suited to the peculiar needs of the region. Nevertheless, the function of NEC towards education is limited to providing financial assistance. Thus, NEC acts as a funding agency to education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The investigation has the following objectives:

- To investigate the role of North Eastern Council (NEC) towards higher and professional education in the North-Eastern Region of India.
- To suggest measures for improving the role of North Eastern Council (NEC) towards higher and professional education in the North-Eastern Region of India.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through interview and by consulting old Journals and Annual Report of North-Eastern Council and also Minutes of the Council. The secondary data were collected by Consulting books and articles related to NEC.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Contributions of NEC towards Higher and Professional Education in the North-Eastern Region of India

The contribution of NEC in the field of higher and professional education is reflected in its endeavor of manpower development for the region.

Manpower Development

For achieving this purpose, various measures and efforts are taken up by the Council, which can be put in four distinct ways.

Setting Up of Technical and Specialized Institutes in the North-Eastern Region. The Council has so Far Extended Financial Assistance for Setting of the Following Institutes in the Region

- Regional Medical College, Imphal.
- North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology, Naharlagun. Arunachal Pradesh.
- Regional Dental College, Guwahati.
- Regional Nursing College, Training Institute, Guwahati.
- North Eastern Judicial Officer
- B. Pharm Course under Dibrugarh University
- Regional Fisher Institute, Amranga, Assam.
- North Eastern Police Academy, Umsaw, Meghalaya.
- Regional Pharmacy Institute, Agartala.
- Regional Pharmacy Institute, Agartala.
- Regional Mining School, Dimapur.
- Regional ITI for women at Tinsukia.
- Regional Centre for Training of Trainers in Farm Management at Rani in Assam.
- Law, Research Institute, Guwahati.
- Lineman Training Centre at Barapani, Jorhat, and Bhilkhwthlir (Mizoram).

Sponsoring Personnel from this Region for Under-Graduate and Postdoctoral Study

Under this scheme, NEC has provided financial support to students of North-Eastern Region for higher and Professional courses. The level of study covered under this scheme is Diploma, Degree, Postgraduate and Ph. D. At present, the Council has fixed a specific number of stipends to be awarded to candidates at different levels which are as below. However, the number may be increased or decreased a teach Level depending on the demand and availability of fund:77 Diploma level, 420 Degree lever, 140 Postgraduate level, and 21 Ph. D. Till 1990, the. Council had extended assistance in the form of Stipends and book grants to 2280 students in Agriculture and 382 P.G. students in Agriculture. About 600 students in Engineering, Technology, and Management have also received Scholarships from NEC'

Sponsoring of Candidates for Short Duration Specialized Courses

Arrangement for Strengthening and Expansion of Some Existing Technical Institutes or Institutes of Science and Technology in the Region

Coaching Programmes

The Council also assists by providing coaching programmes for various recruitment tests and examinations and conducted by various recruiting bodies like Staffs Selection Commission, Public Service Commission. U.P.S.C., Banking Selection Boards etc. N50 has also extended financial assistance for conducting pre-examination coaching programmes.

Information Technology Education Programme

The contribution of NEC towards Information Technology Education Programme covers extending infrastructure support to IT “College/University/institute” in the form of:

- Computer and other peripherals (depending upon the number of intake capacity)
- Computer furniture and library books. (as per requirement)
- Computer room renovation and proper electrification (site preparation).
- Minimum LAN network support including internet connectivity.
- NEC has provided support for computer education to institutions of higher learning in the region. The scheme has been benefited by 19 institutes (colleges/ universities/polytechnics). In order to train teachers in computer science, 3 training centers; at St. Anthony’s College, Shillong; DOE, CEDT (DOECC), Imphal; and HE, Guwahati; have been established to provide six months computer training to the existing teachers. A total of approximately 570 teachers have been trained up to 2003-04. The scheme on computer/IT education at university and college levels was introduced during 2003-2004 for introducing professional course like BCA, PGDCA, 880 Computers, MCA, MSc Computers etc. eight Nos. of colleges and four Universities were covered till 2003-2004. Seven more colleges and one polytechnic were covered in 2004-05.

The brief scheme outline is as follows:

- Investment by the beneficiary Universities/Colleges: Provision of two pucca rooms. One for computer room and classrooms approx. Rs. 1.5 lakh 2.5 lakh.
- Investment by NEC: Provision of 30 Nos. PC’s Client cum server LAN network, 3 Nos. Printers, 3 Nos. UPS,S/W, by NEC approx. Rs. 18 lakh.
- Renovation/modification works computer room, electrical works emi-glazed partitioning, minor civil works, computer furniture storage shelf, library etc. approx. on average of Rs. 23 lakh.

Character Recognition System (ICR)

Support of States for the introduction of intelligent Character Recognition System (ICR) for development of an automated process for computerized examination handling proce88 (input as well as output like results etc.) and student data thereby minimizing "is the scope of manual intervention errors etc. as well as operational time as compared to conventional process. ICR system has been installed at the Manipur University

Infrastructural Projects

Contributions of NEC in constructions of Auditorium/Hostels/Hall/Schools/Sports Complex/etc. in different parts of NE India may be briefly presented below;

Sl. No.	Projects	NEC Shares in Lakhs	Sanctioned on
1	Construction of Govt. High School Auditorium/Multi-Utility Hall at Longsa, Nagaland	293.55	13/06/2014
2	Construction of RCC G+2 Building for seminar Hall, Computer Centre and car facilities at Darrang College Assam	206.60	12/11/2012
3	Construction of School Infrastructure for JN Aier Residential School at YajangMokokchung Nagaland	557.00	21/01/2013
4	Construction of Sports Complex at Indira Gandhi National Tribal	956.61	05/03/2014
5	Strengthening and Restructuring of College of Teacher Education, Meghalaya	259.97	05/03/2014
6	Institute of Hotel Management and Catering at Dimapur, Nagaland	448.40	26/03/2013
7	Construction cum Remodelling of Rcc Building and Development of Library, Vocational Centre etc of Madhaddev H.S School in Tulsimukh, Nagaon	286.99	27/06/2016
8	Construction of Hostel Block of Institute of Co-Operative Management, Guwahati Assam	1300.00	08/02/2018
9	Construction of sports complex indiragandhi tribal university Manipur	956.61	05/03/2014
10	Construction of girls hostel at raja dumbra high school, Imphal	595.70	27/04/2016
11	Construction of boys and girls hostel at poiroukhonjil high School at Manipur	468.52	09/07/2016
12	Construction of auditorium compound wall Sainik School imphal	619.56	04/05/2016
13	Establishment of State of the Art of Sericulture Training Institute of Tripura	390.65	23/11/2012

SUGGESTIONS

Monitoring and Evaluating: The study has revealed that NEC has not evolved any mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the utilization of funds given to various institutions and the respective states of the region. This is quite surprising, as it is felt that keeping a track on how the funds have been utilized is equally important as providing. It is a humble suggestion that the matter should be immediately looked into and a full proof monitoring and evaluation system be introduced.

Annual Report: The investigator was quite shocked to know that an esteemed institution like NEC does not publish Annual Report. This is a serious setback of NEC. Therefore, it is the high time NEC considers this matter with utmost seriousness and start publishing the Annual Report. Through these people like teachers, students, scholars and especially people who are in authority will know how much NEC is toiling day and night for the development of the NER of India.

Assistance to Establish more Professional Institute: NEC is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region. But, in the field of education, NEC has made a humble beginning with an emphasis on professional education. Needless to say, the time has come for NEC to make a larger contribution towards the development of education. Focus should be given towards the establishment of more and more institutes like medical

engineering, law, fine arts, teacher training etc. NEC should also give due importance to the development of general education as well by providing more funds and technical assistance.

Accelerate Educational Development: The boundary of NEC has to be expanded. NEC must give equal importance to the development of education in the North-Eastern Region of India. To actualize the NEC has to perform the following functions:

- To act as a policy framer for educational develop merit in the region. NEC has to coordinate the educational activities for all the eight states in the region. However, NEC should give more emphasis on higher education level as it is directly related to the socio-economic development of the society.
- To take up the leading role in collaborating all the NE states and the union government.
- To create more opportunities for students of the NE states by providing a full scholarship to all who undergo professional courses.
- To pace up the development works in the NE India.

CONCLUSIONS

Though the contribution of NEC to higher and professional education is in a small way, it is highly appreciable. They deserve a big applause for whatever they have done so far for the development of education in the region. In fact, for a successful ending there is a small and humble beginning. May this be true for NEC toward its endeavor for development of education, particularly for higher education of theregion. The education of the North-Eastern Region of India is backward in terms of infrastructure and manpower, despite being naturally endowed with tremendous potentialities. Therefore, NEC has to magazine its policies and programmes to harvest fully the huge natural potential resources inthe region. For achieving this, NEC has to give more emphasis on the progress and development of higher education of all types.

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