

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE STRUCTURE AND CONDUCT
OF
THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Preparation of teachers for the profession is a matter of profound social concern. The progress, development and quality of a nation greatly depends on the teachers who give shape to the personality of the millions in the country. This calls for systematic and better thought out programmes for the accomplishment of their tasks expected of the teachers by the society. Over the past few years, the efficiency bar imposed on graduate teachers that they should acquire a post graduate qualification bore directly on their economy and created an upsurge in the numbers who sought to get a post graduate qualification. The post graduate Diploma in Education correspondence course was launched to cater to this urgent need. It is evident that the conduct of this course has not been as systematic as planned and that dissatisfaction and frustration prevailed among the graduates who sought redress through this course. Moreover the drop out rate at its commencement too had averaged about 100 per intake of 450. It is clearly known that the success of a course depends largely on its successful implementation. It should be able to meet the diverse needs of its clientele. The fulfilment of diverse needs and expected goals calls for changes in the direction, methods and content of the program as and when needed. In such a context, a comprehensive survey of the conduct of course is vital for its improvement and re-organization qualitatively. Hence a needs assessment of the graduate teachers who formed the clientele of this correspondence course can be considered important and timely.

In this study an attempt is made to gather data from graduate teachers on the conduct of the course regionwise. The areas that were touched upon as regards this were its duration, system of issuing learning material, organization and adequacy of seminars, methods of study, forms of face to face contact, subject allocation and field training. The focus of this study was on the problems they encountered, the usefulness of the course and their suggestions for improvement and re-organization.

Five hundred graduate teachers from two batches-1976/78 & 1978/79 randomly selected from Colombo, Kandy and Galle regions who were the clientele of this course formed the sample of this study. It was inclusive of male and female, married and unmarried, rural and urban candidates who possessed a teaching experience of over 11 years.

Data was obtained by a mailed questionnaire administered to the entire sample, out of which 200 responded and by interviews with a selected sample of 32 for an indepth study from Kandy and Galle regions. Part I of the questionnaire solicited respondents' biographical data. Part II of the questionnaire included 42 items covering the 10 main areas or aspects investigated to cover the six objectives of this study, as detailed in the Chapter on Methodology. The questionnaire was an attitude scale of the Likert type. Examination of each aspect ended with an open-ended question to draw out suggestions from the clientele.

The second technique used in the study, which is the interview method, formed the basis for the in-depth study. The items in the mailed questionnaire guided in drawing up the interview schedule. Interview data is presented in the in-depth study analysis and also where appropriate in the summary and conclusion of this study. Correlational analysis of data between regions (regionwise) too was possible by this method. This helped to cross check data of the two regions, Kandy and Galle in the main sample where the response to the mailed questionnaire was less and also with that of Colombo. The interview with Ministry officials who conducted this course and the University lecturers who were involved in course activities supplied valuable data for the final analysis which is presented in summary form in the "conclusion" of this study.

The findings of this study revealed the absence of a preplanned program of work and the unsystematic nature of course conduct. Though it was designed for two years, in actual practice, it had lasted nearly four years. This dragging on had affected the personal lives and family obligations of the clientele resulting ⁱⁿ discouragement and drop-outs. Stagnation at the efficiency bar due to delay in finishing the course, with no special increments in salary after completion, has led to frustration further.

This study examined the extent to which this course satisfies the professional needs of these teachers. It highlights

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the lack of opportunity for face to face contact, inadequate guidance and corruption in the field training aspect and the necessity of a learning resource centre. The study reveals that private seminars have been organised by the clientele themselves to supplement the inadequacies and drawbacks of seminars organised by the department. This reflects that students have not got the optimum benefits from facilities provided in the course.

The indepth study interview revealed the difficulties the graduate teachers encountered and underwent on a personal level. Findings indicate that facilities available, the co-operation extended by the Principal and the staff to conduct teaching practice differ from school to school. Evaluation of teaching practice was very subjective, unfair and the negative factors had adversely affected their performance. The dissatisfaction and frustration expressed by the clientele highlights the extent to which the expected outcomes of correspondence education are not realised in this course.

Preparation of teachers for the profession is a matter of profound social concern. The progress, development and quality of a nation greatly depends on the teachers who give shape to the personality of the millions of students in the country. This calls for systematic and better thought out programmes for the accomplishment of the tasks expected of teachers by society. The standard of student learning could be

raised by upgrading the standard of our teaching profession. Teachers should be made a contented lot if they are to perform their duties satisfactorily. The course should reach expected targets and ensure teachers job satisfaction with the likelihood of achieving their numerous aspirations.

In this study the analysis indicates that the major problems the clientele encountered were not so much in the printed material but were in the conduct and management of the course. Therefore it is important and timely that a needs assessment of the clientele be made for investigation into the structure and conduct of the Diploma in Education correspondence course with suggestions for remedial measures.

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