

Recommendations of Education Reforms Commission, Mizoram and Group of Experts to Rejuvenate Higher Education in Mizoram

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Abstract

This paper presents the observations of the Group of Experts (@ Laltawnga Group (2011) on the recommendation of the Education Reforms Commission, Mizoram (@ Sharma Commission 2010) on a certain issues. It exposes the areas of differences between Sharma Commission(2010) and Laltawnga Group (2011). The paper discusses the road map for implementation of the recommendation of Sharma Commission (2010) as suggested by Laltawnga Group (2011). The paper highlights what will be the shape and scenario of higher education in future if the recommendations are materialised by concerned authorities.

Key words: Sharma Commission (2010), Laltawnga Group (2011), Higher Education, PPP, Short term, Medium term, Long term.

INTRODUCTION:

To cope with the changing national and market demand of human qualities, reforms in education sector have been made by Indian Government from time to time. From the point of view of major educational reforms, the history of education in modern India can be divided into three periods [JP Naik (1978)]

(i) 1813-1900: This was the period in which the first major re-form in modern education was slowly, but steadily and firmly implemented, viz., the traditional educational system was almost wholly replaced by the colonial one.

(ii) 1900-1947: This was a period when the control over the education system gradually passed from the British administration to the Indian people; and Indians did continuous and considerable thinking about the National System of Education they would like to create, and also experimented about their new ideas on a limited scale.

(iii) 1947-1978: This is a period in which we are trying, without much success so far, to create a National System of Education suited to the life, needs and aspiration of the people.

1. EDUCATION COMMISSIONS/ POLICIES IN INDIA

1.1. University Education Commission (1948-49): The University Education Commission (1948-49) was the first Commission on education after Independence. Its major emphasis was on higher education but it also touched upon the issues related to school education. The Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

1.2. Secondary Education Commission (1952-53): A separate education commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliyar in 1952 to address the issues related to school education. The Secondary Education Commission presented its report in 1953.

1.3. The Education Commission (1964-66): The Kothari Commission (1964-66) was set up under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari to formulate a coherent education policy for India. The Commission was most comprehensive in nature; it reviewed almost all aspects of the education system without limiting itself to any one particular aspect, unlike the Commissions that came before and after it.

On the basis of the recommendations of the Kothari Commission, the National Policy of 1968 [NPE(1968)] was framed which marked a significant step in the history of Independent India. The NPE(1968) aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national Integration

1.4. National Policy on Education (1986): The Government of India reviewed the prevailing education system in

1985 and the policy was articulated in the document “*Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective*”. The new education policy was intended to prepare India for the 21st century.

1.5. Revised Programme of Action (1992): The Government appointed another committee under the chairmanship of Janardan Reddy in 1992. The report of the Committee provided a base for the modified National Policy on Education and a concrete programme emerged as Programme of Action, 1992 (POA 1992).

1.6. National Curriculum Framework (2005): The NCERT prepared National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2005 under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal. NCF 2005 seeks to provide a broad framework within which teachers and schools can choose and plan experiences that they think children should have.

1.7. National Knowledge Commission (2009): To encounter the educational challenges in 21st century, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was appointed. National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was constituted in June 2005 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Sam Pitroda, to prepare a blueprint for reform of our knowledge related institutions and infrastructure which would enable India to meet the challenges of the future.

2. INITIATIVES OF MIZORAM GOVERNMENT:

In order to reform the system of education in the State, the Government of Mizoram set up the Education Reforms Com-

mission, Mizoram (ERCM) under the Chairmanship of Prof AK. Sharma, Former Director, NCERT to recommend ways and means to raise standards and improve quality in all sectors of education as per Notification No. B 12012/1/2009 dated 8th May 2009 (Member composition at annexure I). The Commission submitted its report to the Government on 30th July, 2010. To scrutinize the report, determine necessary actions and prepare a road map for implementation for the State Government, the Government set up 'Group of Experts (GoE)' on 24th September 2010 (Member composition at annexure II) with clear Terms of Reference (Annexure III). The Group of Experts submitted its report to the State Government on 14th February 2011. The Group categorized the recommendation on the basis of urgency/ importance into Short term, Medium and Long term.

This paper is focused on some of the recommendations/observations of Laltawnga Group (2011) on the recommendations of the Sharma Commission (2010) for rejuvenating higher Education in the state.

2.1. ON THE INSTITUTIONAL VIABILITY

Sharma (2010) Commission: The Commission is of the view that each institution of higher education should have a critical mass of students as well as faculty and, therefore, it recommends that the State Government should appoint a Task Force to examine the viability as well as

desirability of a college with students' enrolment of less than 200. Besides exploring ways and means to increase the students' enrolment by improving infrastructure and offering additional courses, the colleges found to be unviable should be merged with better functioning nearby colleges

Laltawnga Group (2011): The Group endorsed the recommendation in Principle. However, introduced the concept of Restructuring which includes amalgamation of Colleges, rationalization of subjects, teaching and non-teaching staff, conversion of certain Colleges into a subject Specialized college, preparation of certain Colleges for PG College, and or Autonomous college. It also suggested parameters for restructuring of the Colleges as under-

(i) Before restructuring of Colleges, basic Infrastructure like buildings, sport facilities, adequate space, hostel, sanitary facilities, etc must first be in place.

(ii) The students' enrolment of 200 alone cannot be the sole criterion for the closure or merger of a College. The merger of Colleges should be taken up with great care and caution. The Task Force has to examine the viability of colleges on case to case basis and to recommend their merger, amalgamation or continuation on the basis of college-based or location-specific criteria.

(iii) Colleges located outside Aizawl may be merged with the nearby colleges. However, there should be at least one college

each in all the districts, including the designated District Headquarters

(iv) For colleges in rural area, the Task Force should explore the idea of developing 'the unviable colleges' as Colleges offering selected / specific disciplines wherein their strength lies and to develop their area of expertise. Duplication of such disciplines in other Colleges should be avoided as far as possible, so that enrolment is spread across Colleges and the State also.

(v) While restructuring Colleges, rationalization of teaching and non-teaching staff shall be done with a view to relieve some Colleges where there is inadequacy in the staff.

(vi) Colleges inside Aizawl may be restructured, so that there will be only around 3 or 4 Colleges within Aizawl offering specialize subjects like (a) Science, IT and Arts stream, (b) Arts, Physical Education, Fine Arts and Performing Arts and (c) Commerce, Management, Arts, etc.

(vii) The Restructured College will be impressed upon to prepare for up gradation into PG College and or Autonomous College in the future.

2.2. PPP MODEL IN FINE ARTS, PREFORMING ARTS AND PHYSICAL ARTS

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that institution on Fine Arts, Performing arts and Physical arts may be set up under Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. The infrastruc-

ture of the Colleges merged with other institutions could be utilized by the State Government to set up such institutions under its own control or could be handed over to the private education providers.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The group does not favour the recommendation of the commission due to the fact that commission report (page No. 122) states that the curricular track at the undergraduate level needs to be broadened by way of introducing new subjects in the existing streams and also by introducing new streams, and further suggested to introduce vocal music, instrumental music, fine arts and physical education as elective courses in the Arts stream at the initial stage. Considering the space and other facility requirements for opening such institutions at the infrastructure of Colleges (purportedly to be) merged with other institutions is not feasible as the existing College infrastructure are minimal and not suitable for having academic environment

The idea of running Colleges of this kind under PPP model is endorsed by the Group in principle. However, for running such institutions, the group suggested that -

1) A separate suitable land (on lease system) be made available by the State Government

2) For the partners, the Group favours (i) Church organizations (ii) Local Community (iii) Others, for opening such institutions which could offer either subjects of their choice or the streams stated above

3) The vacated buildings/ infrastructure can be utilized for the benefit of youth/ the community under a joint management mechanism with the State Government.

2.3. ON THE INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the State Government should earmark at least 20% of its budget of higher education for the up-gradation of infrastructural and instructional facilities in the colleges.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The group concurred the recommendation. The group envisaged this task to be achieved by the state government in a phased manner. Clear guidelines for the premise of up-gradation of infrastructural and instructional facilities must be given to the College authorities

2.4. INTRODUCTION OF SPORTS DEPARTMENT IN A COLLEGE

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that a sports department be established in each college with provision of sufficient funds for the purchase of sports equipment and materials. A post of Assistant Professor in Physical Education will be created in each college for this purpose.

Laltawnga Group (2011): Considering the small number of qualified M.P. Ed and the course duration, and also the requirements of infrastructure, the group recommended this matter to be implemented in

a phased manner in a few selected Colleges on experimental. Opening of the Physical Education discipline in each College may be in the future vision of the State Government.

2.5. ON THE LIBRARY SERVICES

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that Master's degree in Library and Information Science (M.Lib.Sc.) should be prescribed as the professional qualification for the appointment of a Librarian in a College. In addition, the posts of Library Assistants and Library Attendants, depending on the number of students and books in the College, should be created.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The group opined that since the UGC rules have demanded M. Lib. Sc + NET Qualified for appointment for the post of College Librarian and the state government had adapted UGC regulations, better enforcement is enough. The group further recommended that Mizoram Government must adopt UGC Rules as a composite scheme without any modification for Colleges. The post of Library Assistant and Library Attendant may be created as recommended by commission.

2.6. FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

Sharma Commission (2010): The State Government should evolve an effective and functional mechanism for timely recruitment and deployment of teachers and

Principals on a regular basis. In this connection, the Commission has recommended that the State Government should set up an Education Cell in the Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC) to organize the process of selecting educational personnel on a continuing basis. Besides conducting the Mizoram Education Service (MES) competitive examination, the Education Cell should be entrusted the responsibility to organize selection process for the recruitment of teachers and Heads of Institutions.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The recommendation of the Commission is endorsed by the Group. In order to improve quality of education, the group step further in recommending to provide all benefits and allowances to the College Teachers and Principals as spelt out in the UGC Rules and Regulations. Apart from this, as mentioned in the commission's report, most of the Colleges are manned by 'Not-regular' and or 'unqualified' Principals. The group recommended the Mizoram Government to recruit qualified principals immediately.

2.7. AUTONOMY FOR PRINCIPAL

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that College Principals should be granted sufficient autonomy in academic matters and be delegated enough powers in administrative and financial matters.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The commission and the Group have an identical view

on this issue. The matter may be addressed immediately by the state government.

2.8. UPGRADATION INTO AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the State Government should identify a couple of better functioning colleges and encourage them to submit proposals to the UGC under the scheme of Autonomous Colleges.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The commission and the Group have an identical view on this issue.

2.9. MONITORING AND NAAC ACCREDITATION

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the College Development Council (CDC) in the Mizoram University should ensure that every college establishes an internal quality assurance mechanism in accordance with the guidelines provided by it. The CDC should also conduct inspection of colleges on a regular basis and the State Government should take effective measures to make up the deficiencies, if any, pointed out in the inspection reports. Further, it should be made mandatory for the colleges to seek National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation as per the directives of the UGC.

Laltawnga Group (2011): As pointed out in the ERCM report on page 124, all Government-run colleges are UGC recognized under section 2 (f) and 12 B. In the mean-

time, most of the Colleges fall short of meeting the requirements of affiliation spelt out in the MZU Ordinance 0B-6. The Group found that the recommendation is justified.

IQAC: The system is already in place as per mandate of UGC, so both CDC (MZU) and State Government must see to the setting up of IQAC in all Colleges. It can be implemented within a very short time as H&TE already has its rules and guidelines in place.

Inspection: Inspection of colleges by MZU takes place only for affiliation purposes. The recommendation of ERCM to do so on a regular basis should be taken up seriously, but both the MZU and the State Government must work closely together on this to avoid clash of interests and to achieve quality in higher education in letter and spirit.

NAAC accreditation: The State Government shall encourage all the Non Accredited Colleges to seek the accreditation at the earliest. The State Government should also think of giving financial incentives to the accredited Colleges on the basis of their Grade. All the credited colleges should strive to meet the recommendation/suggestions of the Peer Team and go for re-accreditation as per NAAC guidelines.

In this connection, it is relevant to mention that no College in Mizoram has got grade 'A' as per the NAAC assessment. Having the second highest literacy percentage in the country, the ground reality at the College level is not satisfacto-

ry. The College fraternity and the State Government share equal responsibility in this regard. This is a matter of grave concern for the State and must be addressed seriously by the concerned authorities.

UGC CELL IN H&TE

In order to assist the CDC of Mizoram University in the monitoring of and, taking effective measures to make up for deficiencies, if any, as pointed out in the inspection reports of CDC, and for the better coordination of the State Government and MZU, there should be a UGC Cell in the Directorate of H & TE which will be headed by College Development Officer (CDO). This CDO will be the liaison officer for the State Government to network with MZU, UGC and other funding agencies for the State Government. The other functions of CDO are enumerated in their report.

2.10. FACILITATING MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

Sharma Commission (2010): Mizoram University, being a Central University, is fully funded by the Government of India but the State Government can facilitate the work of the university in several ways. It must make out all efforts to strictly adhere to the affiliation norms in colleges under its control. It should also contribute in the preparation of future plans of the university by making known its needs to the university. It should also ensure all-weather roads connectivity, public transport facilities for students and teachers, and adequate water and power supply.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The Group endorsed the recommendation and said that the issue may be taken up seriously by the Mizoram Government.

2.11. INTRODUCTION OF NEW COURSES IN COLLEGES THROUGH DIRECT FUNDING OR UNDER THE PPP MODEL

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the Government of Mizoram should make provision for starting undergraduate programmes in areas like Physical Education, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Library Science in its colleges through direct funding or under the PPP model. In addition, it should approach the Mizoram University to take up the remaining courses during the 12th Five Year Plan with due approval from the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)/University Grants Commission (UGC).

Laltawnga Group (2011): The Group found the recommendation as relevant and good. For the introduction of new courses of study in Colleges under the Mizoram Government, the availability of qualified faculty and desirability of subjects must be considered. As far as PPP Model is concerned, the Mizoram Government shall formulate a Policy on PPP for the entire State and act upon it accordingly. The State Government may approach Mizoram University to take up the courses during 12th Plan or 13th plan.

2.12. COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR MONITORING

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that a coordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister be set up to guide and monitor expansion of professional education in the state. MZU, NIT, CAU, NEC and ICFAI should be represented on the Committee. The Department of Higher and Technical Education of the State Government may function as the secretariat of the Committee.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The Group concurred the recommendation

2.13. HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH ODL

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the State Government should evolve an effective mechanism to monitor the functioning of the IGNOU Regional Centre and especially of the Study Centers under its jurisdiction and should continuously provide feedback to the IGNOU Headquarters and impress upon them to take corrective measures, in order to provide quality education to the ODL students.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The recommendation is acceptable and this work shall be made the responsibility of the proposed College Development Officer.

2.14. CREATION OF ORGANISE SERVICE FOR EDUCATION

Sharma Commission (2010): The Commission recommends that the State Government should initiate appropriate action for the Constitution of a specialized Edu-

cation Service which may be common for higher education, technical education, School education and the SCERT.

Laltawnga Group (2011): The Group feels that the College teachers cannot be grouped with School teachers since the service conditions of College teachers are governed by UGC rules and regulations. Instead, it recommended a separate organized Service 'Mizoram Higher and Technical Education Service (MIHTES)' for College teachers. The Group goes further in recommending certain points for the Service Rules (SR). The MIHTES should include officers like Additional Secretary, Director, Joint Secretary, Joint Director, Dy Secretary, Under Secretary, Deputy Director, Assistant Director, Co-coordinator (IQAC), Examiner and all other officers under Directorate of Higher & Technical Education and Mizoram Scholarship Board. The following parameters should be incorporated in SR for MIHTES.

- (i) Preference must be given to Ph. D/ M Phil degree holders
- (ii) The grades of HTES should be as under
 - i. Junior Grade = Assistant Director/ its equivalent rank
 - ii. Sr. Grade = Deputy Director/ Under Secretary/ its equivalent rank
 - iii. Selection = Joint Director/ Dy Secretary/ its equivalent rank
 - iv. JAG = Director/ Joint Secretary/ its equivalent rank

v. SAG =

Additional Secretary

(iii) The post of Principal Director be created which shall be occupied by IAS cadre, preferably with a Post Graduate degree.

(iv) College principals will be recruited as per UGC rules and regulations. It shall not come under the MIHTES cadre

(v) There will be two entry points, Viz, at the level of Junior Grade and Selection grade

(vi) The post for Selection grade will be filled-up by limited departmental examination and direct entry from amongst qualified persons in the ratio of 50:50.

(vii) MIHTES must include not only the administrative cadre but also Under Secretary, Dy Secretary, Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary.

2.15. PRIORITY SETTING: As the task of the Group is to prioritize the recommendations and to prepare road map for implementation, the Group prepared the time schedule/ road map as under.

2.15.1. SHORT TERM (URGENT): Short term (Urgent) means those subjects which may be implemented or action may be taken as the case may be within a period of 2/3 years.

- Semester system for graduate course is already introduced and necessary orientation be conducted by MZU
- The State Government should evolve an effective mechanism for timely recruitment and deployment of teachers and Principals on a regular basis

Recommendations of Education Reforms Commission, Mizoram and Group of Experts to Rejuvenate Higher Education in Mizoram

- Regular principals be recruited
 - UGC rules and regulations be strictly followed.
 - Setting up of IQAC in all Colleges
 - Regular inspection by MZU and seeking of NAAC accreditation & Re- accreditation
 - Setting up of UGC cell in the Directorate of H & TE department
 - MZU may be approached for opening of the courses like Physical Education, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Library Science, etc during 12th or 13th plan period
 - Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister be set up to guide and monitor expansion of professional education in the State
 - Evolve an effective mechanism to monitor the functioning of the IG-NOU
 - Sufficient funds be placed at the disposal of the Non 2(f) and Non12B Colleges enabling them to make timely payment of their share of 25% for the ICT facility under the National Mission on Education through ICT
 - Separate budget be made separately for every College to grant sufficient autonomy to College Principals
- ⇒ Facilitating the progress of MZU and coordinating with it for the future directions
 - ⇒ Depending on the number of students and books in the College, the posts of Library Assistants and Library Attendants be created
 - ⇒ A Task Force be formed to consider restructuring of Colleges and provision of infrastructures
 - ⇒ Earmark at least 20% of the budget of higher education for the up-gradation of infrastructural and instructional facilities in the Colleges

2.15.3. MEDIUM TERM: Medium term means those subjects which may be achieved or action may be taken as the case may be within a period of 10 years.

- ❖ PPP policies be framed for the State and institutions of higher studies be established as per the PPP model
- ❖ Introduction of new programmes in undergraduate courses under PPP model
- ❖ Identification of better functioning Colleges and submit proposals to attain autonomous College status
- ❖ Opening of sport department in selected Colleges.

LONG TERM: Long term means those subjects which may be achieved or action may be taken as the case may be within a period of 15 years.

- Encourage the proposed Restructured colleges to submit proposals to attain the Autonomous college status

2.15.2. SHORT TERM: Short term means those subjects which may be implemented or action may be taken as the case may be within a period of 5 years.

- Introduction of a sports department in each college with creation of posts of Assistant Professor in Physical Education

16. FINDING AND CONCLUSION:

- 1) The Terms of Reference of GoE are totally different from ERCM. While ERCM is to make recommendations on the ways and means to raise standards and improve quality in all sectors of education, the GoE is to scrutinize their recommendations and prepare road map for its implementation. As such, GoE consist of fewer members than that of the ERCM.
 - 2) There is no one in the ERCM from College fraternity while GoE consist one College teacher as its Secretary. Incidentally, the GoE has an in-depth touch in regards to College level education and their recommendation is also detail as compared to ERCM. Representatives of Church Organization were included in the ERCM while it is not in the case of GoE.
 - 3) Most of the recommendations of Sharma Commission (2010) were concurred by Laltawnga Group (2011) with few exceptions. The notable differences in opinion were found in the case of College closure/amalgamation and Service Rules for School Education/ College teachers.
 - 4) The Group also revealed that certain recommendations of ERCM need not be prescribed/recommended a fresh, but stick/ better implementation is required.
 - 5) Real political willingness backed by financial availability is required to materialize the recommendations. The future higher education will take this shape provided that the Government of the day implemented the recommendations.
- (i) There will be not more than around 5 Government colleges in Aizawl offering specialized stream viz (a) Science, IT and Arts stream, (b) Arts, Physical Education, Fine Arts and Performing Arts and (c) Commerce, Management, Arts, etc with adequate infrastructure like building, sport facilities, Library with high and reliable digital connectivity. Most of them will be a Post Graduate or Autonomous Colleges in nature
 - (ii) Even if amalgamation/merger of Colleges were taken place, there will be at least one College in all districts including the designated District headquarters like Hnahthial, Saitual and Khawzawl. Subjects will be systematically introduced in these Colleges so that students are evenly spread across the Colleges/state.
 - (iii) All Colleges will be a NAAC accredited Colleges and regular inspection will be done from MZU to improve quality of education.
 - (iv) Under PPP mode, Churches or other agencies will setup an institutes of Fine Arts, Performing arts and Physical arts with proper land leased system and adequate infrastructure.

Recommendations of Education Reforms Commission, Mizoram and Group of Experts to Rejuvenate Higher Education in Mizoram

- (v) On the administrative side, the Principals will be delegate enough powers in administrative and financial matters and the deployment of staff will be speedily carried out through MPSC (Education cell). UGC Rules and Regulations will be adopted without any modification and the College teachers will be an Organize Service by regulating Service Rules for them. One key post, that is, College Development Officer (CDO) will be created at the Department.
- In addition to the post of Director, the post of Principal Director will be created in the Department of Higher & Technical Education which may be hold by an IAS preferably having a master degree.
- (vi) The state government shall take all afford to ensure all-weather roads connectivity, public transport facilities for students and teachers, and adequate water and power supply to Mizoram university.
- (vii) An active and very powerful Coordination committee headed by Chief Minister will be in place for various institutions of education like MZU, NIT, CAU, NEC and ICFAI.
- 6) In order to speed up creation of infrastructure, the state government should earmark at least 20% of its budget of higher education for the up-gradation of infrastructural and instructional facilities in the colleges.

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