

Elementary Teacher Education in Maharashtra, India: Field-work at the district level

Hisako AKAI

Tokai University Fukuoka Junior College

This paper explores the perception of students at an elementary teacher education institution in a rural, southeast district in Maharashtra, India, through survey (participant observation, questionnaires, group interviews and personal interviews) analyses carried out from 2009-2011.

These students are heterogeneous actors, including Other Backward Classes (OBC) and weaker sections of society. A majority are first generation learners of tertiary education. Their motivation to join varies, but many have met role models at primary school and are enthused.

These students appreciate their school experience program. It gave them opportunities to actually teach and apply teaching skills to pupils at primary schools. The employment test conducted by the state government for positions at government primary schools poses some questions about its reliability. For example, can a potential good teacher be judged only through a paper test? Students suggest that practical skills for teaching should be checked, while marks obtained in theoretical subjects should also be considered as reliable indicators for employment.

The teacher education course is two years in duration. A successful student receives a primary teacher certificate and Diploma. Many students plan to continue studying through correspondence courses, earn college degrees and secondary teacher certificates. Some plan to work at rural primary schools and contribute to improve the quality of primary education, while others hope to be teacher educators.

Students realistically adjust themselves to the harsh reality of the institution, that is, its poor facilities and irregular teaching timetable because teacher educators are overworked. They try to qualify as primary teachers through embracing “a self-study culture.”