



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE PRACTICING SCHOOLS OF SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NAGALAND: A CASE STUDY OF STATE COLLEGE OF TEACHER EDUCATION-KOHIMA

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Abstract

Community engagement is at the heart of meaningful teacher education, connecting aspiring educators with the real contexts in which they will work. This case study explores how B.Ed. student teachers at a secondary college in Nagaland - guided by national frameworks and standards - move beyond the classroom to contribute to and learn from their communities. Through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, the research captures not only the activities these future teachers conducted but also the challenges and rewards they experienced throughout their community engagement undertaken in the month of April 2025. By highlighting their stories and practical experiences, the study provides insights for educators and policymakers committed to nurturing reflective, socially conscious teachers who are deeply connected to the communities they serve.

Keywords: Community engagement, teacher education, student teachers

Introduction

Community engagement stands as a cornerstone of contemporary teacher education, emphasizing the importance of contextual and experiential learning that bridges classroom theory with societal realities. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009, formulated by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), underscores the imperative for student teachers to actively participate in community-based activities during their internship. As articulated in the framework, “Teacher education should be rooted in community contexts, fostering a participatory approach that empowers student teachers to understand and address local issues” (NCTE, 2009, p. 24). Building on this foundation, the latest NCTE guidelines for B.Ed. programs (2021) emphasize that “the

internship should facilitate meaningful engagement with the community, enabling student teachers to comprehend diverse social, cultural, and economic realities” (NCTE, 2021, p. 8). It draws attention to the importance of integrating community-based activities into the practicum component of teacher education. These policies advocate for immersive experiences in practicing schools, where student teachers can engage with diverse learners, understand community dynamics, and reflect on their professional growth within real educational settings. The National Education Policy (NEP) also emphasizes the importance of community engagement in transforming the Indian education system.

Despite these well-articulated policies, there remains a crucial need to examine how these principles are translated into practice within practicing schools associated with teacher education institutes. Understanding the nature and impact of community engagement activities can inform policymakers, teacher educators, and stakeholders in strengthening the quality and relevance of teacher preparation. Hallman and Rodriguez (2015) assert that the process of learning to teach is intricate and continuous, providing pre-service teachers with numerous opportunities to acquire knowledge and critically evaluate theory and pedagogy through field experiences in both formal and informal educational contexts, including community-based settings.

This research is based on the tenets of social constructivism, specifically the idea that learning and knowledge generation are socially constructed through interactions with others and the environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In pre-service teacher education, field and community-based experiences enhance the development of pre-service teachers as novice educators by allowing them to socially construct their understandings of teaching and learning through experiential engagements in the field.

In the context of Nagaland, practicing schools serve as vital spaces where the intersection of education, culture, and community dynamics unfolds. It serves not only as sites for pedagogical practice but also as spaces where cultural, social, and community interactions influence educational processes. Given Nagaland’s diverse tribal communities and their distinct socio-cultural identities, community engagement in teacher education programme is indispensable for fostering culturally responsive pedagogy. This case study aims to explore the practices of community engagement within the practicing schools of secondary teacher education programmes in Nagaland, aligning with national guidelines and policies. It seeks to analyse how these practices influence the professional development of student teachers and their capacity to serve diverse communities. By doing so, the study endeavours to contribute valuable insights into strengthening community-based components of teacher education in

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Nagaland, ensuring that future educators are equipped to meet the educational and socio-cultural needs of their communities.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives were framed for the study:

1. To study the types of community engagement activities conducted in practicing schools by the B. Ed. student-teachers of SCTE-K.
2. To analyse the objectives of these community engagement activities.
3. To examine the impact of community engagement activities on the B. Ed. student-teachers.
4. To identify the challenges faced by B.Ed. student-teachers in carrying out the community engagement activities.
5. To propose suggestions for enhancing community engagement in future practices.

Research Methodology

To offer in-depth insights into the community engagement activities of the B.Ed. student-teachers of SCTE-K, the current study used a qualitative approach that combined descriptive and exploratory research. The study made use of both primary and secondary materials. Through document analysis of the student teacher's internship reports and reflective journal, primary data was gathered. At the conclusion of the internship, focus groups and unstructured interviews with the fourth-semester B.Ed. student teachers were also carried out to learn more about their experiences in the operational schools. Secondary sources were gathered from research publications, related literature reviews, the NCTE Curriculum Frameworks 2014, and the NCFTE 2009. The participants of the study consisted of forty-seven (47) B.Ed. 4th Semester student-teachers of SCTE-K who completed the community engagement activities during their practice teaching in the month of April 2025.

Review of related literature

Rani (2019) explored the evolution of B.Ed internships post-NCTE 2009 regulations and highlights the broadened mandate for field engagement and experiential learning. Her study, based in Dehradun, found that teacher educators and student teachers value the potential of extended internships to bridge theory and practice but face significant practical challenges, including limited quality placements, difficulties with permissions, and unequal access for Hindi-medium student teachers in English-medium private schools. Obispo (2023) corroborated the importance of immersion in real school environments for professional development. However, challenges primarily stemmed from the classroom environment, including difficulties with student behaviour, particularly among younger learners who were

often distracted. His findings emphasized that, while student teachers gain classroom management skills, their participation beyond formal teaching is often minimal, further echoing the limitations noted by Rani (2019) and Pattanaik (2023). Pattanaik (2023) developed on these perspectives, showing that both teacher educators and student teachers recognize the formative impact of internships on teaching competence, confidence, and school engagement but question the adequacy of program timing, the disproportionate weight assigned to final demonstration lessons, and the persistent administrative hurdles. Challenges such as shortage of funds to organize the different activities in the community, lack of motivation and interest among student teachers and adjustment problems were found which hindered the effective implementation of community engagement programs.

These studies underscore the significance of community engagement experiences for preparing effective teachers. It also points to the need for systemic changes, particularly in the areas of internship design, assessment fairness, and institutional cooperation, as well as reforms to address issues that have been identified and improve the transformative potential of B.Ed. community engagement programs.

I. Types of community engagement activities conducted in practicing schools by the B. Ed. student-teachers of SCTE-K.

Engagement with the community is an important component of B.Ed internship where student teachers are encouraged to engage in various outreach activities in the practicing schools and the nearby community. Some of the activities the student teachers undertook ranged from providing awareness on social issues, environmental protection, health and hygienic practices, remedial classes for the community children, cocurricular activities, skill development, career guidance and counselling, visit to orphanages and helping the needy. They have been listed below:

1. Awareness Programme on General Issues

- a. Importance of culture
- b. Menstrual Hygiene with adolescent girls
- c. Talk on “Gender Equality”
- d. Seminar on HIV/AIDS
- e. “Substance Abuse” for Boys and “Menstrual Hygiene” for Girls
- f. Importance of Fitness
- g. Talk on responsibility and discipline

2. Visit to Orphanage

- a. Assisting the orphanage children in getting monthly health check-up

- b. Cleaning the kitchen garden of the orphanage
- c. Visit to Mount Carmel Children's home

3. Career Counselling

- a. Talk on Career paths and how to achieve career goals
- b. Career guidance session on the theme; "Dream Big" for classes 9 and 10 for varied streams: science, math, SS, English literature and linguistic and the career scope of each subject.
- c. Personalized career guidance sessions for students of Classes 6 to 8
- d. Career counselling
- e. Personal counselling and mentoring sessions for students
- f. Counselling session on vocational education.
- g. Talk on "Time Management"

4. Educational & Remedial Class

- a. Tutoring village children
- b. Tutoring weak students
- c. Conducting acid and base experiment, with equipment available in the school
- d. Tutoring Senior students of Mt. Carmel Children's home
- e. Community Library visitation and Donation of books

5. Cleanliness Drive

- a. Cleaning the jungle, cleaning the drainage, picking up dry waste
- b. Social work with the community
- c. Cleaning community Gas Agency
- d. Cleaning highway drainage
- e. Cleaning community marketing shed
- f. Cleaning the Peduzha colony council hall compound and it's surroundings
- g. Cleaning the drainage and colony road
- h. Disposing and burning the waste

6. Environment Related Activities

- a. Drawing competition on the theme "Save Water"
- b. Observing Global Earth Day: One Person, One Tree, One Planet. From posters to planting- Energizing Earth Day 2025
- c. Community Plantation drive along with the School Management and Development Committee, leaders from various organizations in the village and students.

- d. Commemorating Earth Day with talk on the significance and importance of Earth day followed by poster-making activity.
- e. Celebrating World Earth Day by blending creativity with sustainability - handmade plantable seed bookmarks from recycled paper and natural glue
- f. Organising “Nature walk to the community water source” under the Jal Pakhwada (Water Conservation)
- g. Speech on the importance of water conservation and community participation.
- h. Talk on Causes of water scarcity both natural and man-made.
- i. Demonstration on testing the pH level of the water
- j. Talk on the importance of using recyclable materials and practice of the 3Rs- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

7. Vocational Skill

- a. Keychain Making Workshop
- b. Craft making, doormat making,
- c. Vocational training on vertical garden and small mushroom grower with the theme, “Empowering hands, building future,” how to grow mushroom and Demonstration on how to make a mushroom cylinder
- d. Paper bags and envelopes making activities
- e. Making litmus paper with readily available material (low cost) I.e. with haldi and paper (class 7 and class 4 students)

8. Other Community Welfare Activities

- a. Repairing the school Flag pole
- b. Repairing the School windows
- c. Repairing and decorating the School banner
- d. Assisting in Distribution of ID card to the children
- e. Arranging books in the library
- f. Attending SMDC -Teachers meeting at GHSS, Kigwema
- g. Assisting the village PHC for distribution of medicine to the villagers
- h. Serving midday meals in the school
- i. Visiting the oldest man (100) and woman (98) of Mishilimi village.
- j. Visiting the community library and donating books.
- k. Visiting the elderly members of Kigwema village.
- l. Conducting breathing exercises for the physical well-being of the student.

m. Participated in the repair and maintenance of the Kohima Municipal Council Godown, which was used as a temporary classroom. The student-teachers also visited and observed the progress of the newly under - construction school building with the School Management Committee.

II. Objectives of these community engagement activities.

The objectives of community engagement activities are to enable the student teachers to:

1. Bridge the gap between theory and practice
2. Gain field experiences by engaging with students, teachers, parents, schools and community at large in preparing them as future educators.
3. Transform them into compassionate and socially responsible citizens.
4. Build relationships with the community and stakeholders
5. Deepen their understanding of the complex and diverse challenges of the socio-cultural milieu of their work environments
6. Develop interpersonal skills such as leadership, teamwork, collaboration and communication.
7. Develop reflective practices in both personal and professional aspects
8. Assume the role and responsibilities of teachers in the communities.
9. Develop their pedagogical skills, professional skills and personal skills

III. a. Impact of community engagement activities on the B. Ed. student-teachers: Insights from student-teachers.

1. Conducting Awareness programmes on various issues prevalent in the society inculcated in them sensitivity towards issues ailing the people and to tackle them as per the needs of the society.
2. Environmental related activities instilled in student-teachers the collective efforts to adopt environmentally conscious practices in shaping a sustainable future as well as the pride of environmental stewardship. It also fostered social responsibility.
3. Career Counselling activities offered them insights into the practical realities of the job market; it also sensitized them on how to navigate career paths for the student communities and to facilitate informed decisions in their choice of streams of study and career choices.
4. Cleanliness drives inculcated in them the importance of developing civic sense and hygienic practices for better health and better living.
5. Through educational and remedial classes, they learned to go beyond the classroom walls in making a difference in the lives of the poor, the needy and the weak where

learners feel valued, supported, emphasized and empowered among the learning communities.

6. They also imbibed the value of dignity of labour and the importance of vocational activities and skills in nurturing and nourishing the potentialities of the students.
7. Community library visitation and donation enriched their understanding of grassroots initiatives and reignited their passion for teaching and services and that education extends far beyond the classroom walls.
8. Visiting the elderly villagers reminded them that every generation has something valuable to offer and deepened their understanding of the community's cultural roots, values, and wisdom that only time and experience can bestow.
9. It strengthened their pedagogical innovation as they experienced diverse learners based on the context.
10. Reflecting while preparing their internship reports and reflective journals on the community engagement activities pushed them to analyse the success and failures as well as the reasons behind the activities conducted; thereby developing their reflective practices.
11. It also helped some to understand their teacher identity and developed understanding of the learners' contextual realities.
12. Managing mixed age students & classrooms, arranging logistics with zero budget while organizing community activities helped some to build their managerial skills and resource-mobilization skills.
13. Community engagement activities ingrained in them the knowledge, skills and values of conscientious citizens in making the nation- patience, discipline, punctuality, humility, empathy, compassion, resilience, respecting diversities, celebrating differences, shared responsibilities, adaptability, leadership, creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking.

III. b. Excerpts from student teachers' reflections & discussions:

Student 1: "Collaborating with fellow interns and faculty members provide invaluable professional growth. Working together, sharing experiences and supporting one another strengthened my team work and communication skills preparing me for future teaching responsibilities."

Student 2: "Teaching is not just about imparting knowledge but about nurturing individuals, fostering creativity and instilling lifelong values."

Student 3: “Community engagement initiatives reinforced the idea that students learn best through action and that teachers play a key role in modelling good habits. Conducting personal career counselling made me realize the critical role of early career guidance in shaping students’ future- we empower them to explore their interests, identify their strengths and make informed decisions as they grow.”

Student 4: “Initiatives such as ‘Nature walk to the water source,’ aimed at connecting classroom learning with real life experiences as students along with the teachers and community members explored natural surroundings, observed environmental features, and engaged in discussions related to topics such as water cycle, plant life and the importance of water conservation. It promoted curiosity, observation skills and environmental awareness among the students and the communities.”

Student 5: “Organising co-curricular activities in the schools provided a valuable learning experience for the student teachers, as it taught us how to integrate environmental education with art, develop responsibilities in planning the event, preparing materials, assisting with event set-up, ensuring smooth co-ordination, creativity and social responsibility.”

Student 6: “Vocational activities enhanced the creativity of the students and they also gained insight into how small-scale skills can transform into income-generating opportunities. This can help them to be self-reliant and prepare them to real world challenges and economic sustainability.”

Student 7: “Community works instilled a sense of responsibility to educate the communities on the significance of maintaining a clean and healthy environment, developing lifelong habits of hygienic practices and civic sense for better living.

Student 8: “Group discussion on our field experiences reminded me that teaching is a continuous journey of learning; every teacher goes through a learning curve and that growth comes from experience. Listening to others’ experiences made me reflect on my own journey, how I navigated my challenges, adapted to different situations and connected with the students, teachers and the communities I hadn’t anticipated.”

Student 9: “As part of our community service, we organised cleanliness drives in the local area. We worked with the community people together in cleaning the community gas agency, cleaning debris and waste around the surroundings, the highway drainage and the marketing shed. It was inspiring to see the enthusiasm and team work of everyone involved. It was fulfilling experience to directly contribute to the betterment of the

community. I learned that as teachers and community members, we play a vital role in instilling in others a sense of responsibility and love for the environment.”

Student 10: “Through activities like awareness sessions, cleanliness initiatives, career counselling, I gained first hand insight into the holistic role of a teacher. I also understood the importance of punctuality, planning, empathy, and creating a positive and inclusive environment. I became more aware of the resourcefulness, resilience and potentials that exists within the communities and we built strong connections rooted in trust, respect and mutual learning.”

IV. Challenges faced by B.Ed. student-teachers in carrying out the community engagement activities.

Some of the challenges that student teachers described they faced during community engagement were:

1. **Communication barriers:** Student teachers were from different Naga communities speaking different languages and the community engagements they carried out were also in different communities where people speak languages different from theirs. This sometimes led to communication gaps among the communities. Moreover, the communities were also not proficient in speaking English and some could not speak or understand Nagamese, the lingua franca of Nagaland.
2. **Limited Resources:** Student teachers recounted facing insufficient resources in the schools as well as in the communities posing problem in carrying out the activities effectively.
3. **Workload:** Student teachers faced problem in handling both their internship and community engagement activities as they had to carry out both in a span of few weeks’ time. This caused them anxiety, physical and emotional exhaustion.
4. **Climatic conditions:** Difference in the climate and weather of the different communities where they were deputed posed problems in coping and adjusting with the new situation.
5. **Lack of motivation and cooperation:** Some of the student teachers were not enthusiastic about the community engagement and were unwilling to contribute willingly citing their lack of experience. Some faced lack of cooperation from the communities.
6. **Lack of mentoring:** Student teachers faced problem in carrying out the activities due to lack of clear guidance on the process of conducting the activities.

7. **Irregular attendance:** Some student-teachers cited irregular attendance of the students in the practicing schools which affected the continuity of lessons and participation in school-community activities.
8. **Lack of parental involvement:** Furthermore, some student-teachers reported that due to the socio-economic background of the students in the practicing schools, there was minimal parental involvement and support in their child's school activities which hindered the motivation and participation of the children.
9. **Technological constraints:** The poor availability of digital resources and connectivity was also cited as a challenge limiting access to online materials, educational videos, etc. which could have been leveraged for varied school-community activities.

V. **Suggestions:**

The study arrived at the following suggestions for community engagement of student teachers:

1. Conduct orientation sessions for the intern student teachers to better understand local needs and contexts.
2. Strengthen collaboration with local teachers and community members to ensure continuity and relevance of interventions.
3. Involve at least one or two parents in the community engagement activities by building trust and creating respectful accessibility so that they view themselves as partners in their child's education.
4. Student teachers should be oriented on how to carefully plan, organize and execute events involving the different stakeholders of the communities.
5. Prior information should be given about the climatic conditions, accommodation and resources available in the community for preparedness.
6. Teacher-in-charge should be assigned to facilitate and guide the student teachers throughout their community engagement period.
7. Clear goals and expectations from the activities should be given to the student teachers before they embark on their field engagement during which community activities take place.

VI. **Conclusion**

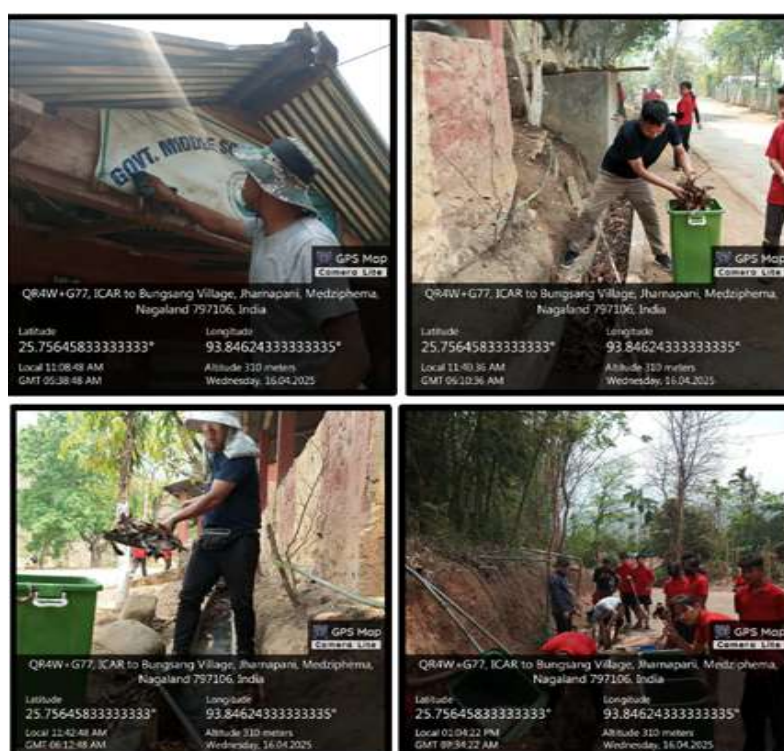
The case study on Community Engagement in the Practicing Schools of Secondary Teacher Education Programs in Nagaland, with a focus on the State College of Teacher Education in

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Kohima, revealed the importance for teachers to be connected to their communities in order to be socially aware and responsive. The research demonstrated that successful community engagement fosters experiential learning, democratic participation, and a collective sense of accountability among student teachers, educational institutions, and local communities. These experiences have made them more aware of other cultures, more flexible in their teaching methods, and further committed to making education accessible to everyone in Nagaland's diverse sociolinguistic environment. The research additionally revealed problems that make it hard for engagement practices to develop over time, such as inconsistent collaboration frameworks, limited institutional support and guidance, and different levels of community involvement. To make the social foundation of pre-service teacher preparation more robust, it is necessary to fill these gaps with teacher education policies, professional mentoring, and structured partnerships between schools and communities.

Overall, the study indicated that getting involved in community engagement activities is not just an ancillary assignment, but the central component of teacher education in Nagaland where theories become comprehensible and socially relevant in the real environment. Well – planned community engagement and reflective practice can greatly improve the relevance, fairness, and transformative power of teacher education programs in line with the goals of NEP 2020.

Photo evidences (with due permission from the student-teachers and the College)



CLEANLINESS DRIVE

1. Cleanliness Drive

- a. Cleaning the jungle, cleaning the drainage, picking up dry waste
- b. Cleaning highway drainage
- c. Cleaning the drainage and colony road



Cleanliness Drive: Cleaning the jungle, cleaning the drainage, picking up dry waste



2. Vocational Skill: Craft making, card making



2. Educational & Remedial Class

- a. Tutoring village children
- b. Tutoring weak students



Visiting the oldest man (100) in the village. Visiting the elderly of Kigwema village.

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