CHAPTER V

TRAINING OF THE TEACHERS
The management of any educational institution requires the capacity and skill of a particular kind, for which some special preparation or training is necessary. The teacher entrusted with the task of educating the youths of the country should be trained in the art of teaching and be capable of exercising a healthy moral influence over their pupils without which a good standard of teaching and a strict discipline in a school cannot be maintained.

Although the Council of Education realised the importance of training of teachers for promotion of education no attempt whatever was made in that direction until 1844. In that year, on the recommendation of the Council, the Government of Bengal provided necessary funds for starting Normal class in few colleges and schools of Bengal. It was decided that these schools should be made available to the teachers of all kinds of primary schools with a view to acquiring training not only in teaching but also in the general control and management of pupils in the institutions under their respective charge. In the same year, the first normal class was started at Gauhati School by William Robinson, the Inspector of schools; during the first year, six youths were selected for their qualifications and character from this

province and each of them was awarded an allowance of rupees three per month. Within few years, the number of students rose to one hundred. This increase in the number was due primarily to the pecuniary encouragement that was offered to the students of the Normal class. Increase in enrolment encouraged the Government to convert the Normal class, in November 1855, to a full-fledged Normal school with two grades of lower and upper classes. The school was put under the charge of the Head Master of the Gauhati Vernacular School and a sum of rupees one hundred and eighty was sanctioned for the stipends of thirty-six students at the rate of rupees three each per mensem. Later, the value of the stipends raised to rupees four in general and rupees five for the poor students. In 1863, the training institute was put under separate charge. One Harihar Das was appointed as its superintendent on a salary of rupees eighty per month. Unfortunately, from 1864, there was a rapid fall in the number of students which came down to seven when many of the trainees left the school seeking employment in nearby tea gardens and

4. B.E.P., 1865; 23 September, No. 23, Commissioner of Assam to the Government of Bengal.
5. B.E.P., 1863; 9 March, No. 49, Robinson to the Director of Public Instruction, 8 August, 1862.
6. B.E.P., 1865; 23 September, No. 23, Commissioner of Assam to the Government of Bengal.
elsewhere. Consequently, in lower class of the Normal school, the students of the Gauhati Vernacular School were admitted after the completion of their studies. As they were too young to be of any use as teachers even at the end of a three-years training course, the Inspector of schools dispensed with their services. He thought that the majority of the students wanted to make use of the schools merely the means of their subsistence till something better would turn up.

The failure of the Gauhati Normal School was a blessing in disguise. With a view to checking the fall of the number of trainees in Normal school, Robinson suggested to the Government of Bengal that the students should be subjected to execute a bond to serve under the Government for a certain number of years after successful completion of the training. Influenced by this proposal and also by the recommendation made by the Education Despatch of 1854, that Normal schools or classes should be established without delay, the Government decided on 25 January, 1866, that three Normal classes should be established, one in each station of Gauhati, Sibsagar and Tezpur at a total monthly

10. Ibid; P. 279.
cost of Rs. 399/-. The object of these classes was completely different from that of the previous Normal school at Gauhati. Under this scheme, every pupil teacher would receive a stipend of rupees four per mensem during his stay at the Normal school on condition of his entering into an agreement to teach for a term of years at some village schools on a salary fixed by the Government; while the villagers too had to enter into another agreement to receive him as their teacher and to send their children to the school. Accordingly, Normal classes were started with effect from May, 1866. There were thirteen stipends for the Sibsagar Normal class, eight for Tezpur, and sixteen for Gauhati class. The training instructor was given a monthly salary of rupees fifty in each school.

The Normal class at Gauhati worked well; but Sibsagar Normal class suffered from the apathy and negligence of the frequent changing Deputy Inspector of schools, Upper Assam. The Government closed the Tezpur Normal class in 1867, when there was a sudden fall in the number of the trainees and the stipulated amount was diverted to starting a Normal class since started at Nowgong. In these circumstances, the Normal classes could not cope with the

12. B.E.P., 1865; 23 September, No. 23, Commissioner of Assam to the Government of Bengal.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., P. 367.
increasing demand of supplying duly qualified teachers. At the end of two years, only twenty-six from Kamrup, nine from Sibsagar and ten from Nowgong were found qualified with Normal certificates. As a remedy, the Inspector of schools, opened several new schools in different localities and put them under the charge of the local youths. As they were not sufficiently qualified for teachership they were sent to Normal classes for training. But such a course was not sufficient to qualify them as teachers even for the elementary course required for the indigenous schools. The trainees were so ignorant that the entire training year had to be spent to give them a general smattering of knowledge. Moreover, the Assamese trainees took longer time to learn the Bengali language which was the medium of instruction in those institutions. If a teacher was able to speak, he found difficulty in explaining the meaning to the beginners. As a result the teaching standard in the primary stage continued to be unsatisfactory.

CAMPBELL'S SCHEME:

In 1872, George Campbell, Lieutenant Governor of

18. Ibid.
Bengal, allotted four lakhs of rupees from the province in savings for the development of primary education in Assam. As a result the number of primary schools rose to 960 in 1874-75, as against 203 schools in 1871-72. This enormous increase in the number of primary schools necessitated a corresponding increase in the output of qualified and trained teachers. With this object in view, Campbell ordered that all the newly appointed teachers of village schools should be attached for some months to training classes at the district headquarters. During the period of training, the village school masters would be allowed to draw the Government's grant as if they were present in their schools. To make it effective, he further made it a condition for the new and existing village school masters that they should, if called upon, have to attend the Normal training class for a particular period. With a view to enforcing the training scheme, in the beginning of 1874, Campbell sanctioned an additional grant of Rs. 20,233/-. Before the

23. Ibid.; P. 530.
24. R.P.I.A., 1874-75; Appendix - B., Education For-
end of the year, a Normal school was established in each station of Silchar, Sylhet, Goalpara, Lakhimpur and Khulna (Cherrapunji) Jayantia Hills/in addition to the existing ones in Kamrup, Nowgong and Sibsagar. In the following year another Normal class was started at Mangaldai.

Although there had been a rapid rise in the number of schools and trainees, the results were far from being satisfactory. The Normal school at Silchar which turned out only thirty-four certificated teachers since its establishment was closed in 1876-77. The Normal school of Goalpara which entailed a yearly expense of about Rs. 1,451/- to Government and produced only seven certificated Gurus during the last three consecutive years, was also abolished. Even in 1881-82, out of 1,389 teachers only 673 were trained. The outturn of teachers holding certificates was too poor in comparison with the expenditure incurred by Government on this category of schools.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING:

In the meantime, the Deputy Commissioner of Goalpara drew up a new plan for the training of the teachers. He felt that the existing schools for primary

25. R.P.I.A., 1874-75; Appendix -B., Education Form -C. '35.
26. Ibid.; P.55.
teachers or the Gurus had little of practical value. It should be more effective and less expensive if this kind of training be given in a special class which might be subsidized in a vernacular middle school or even at the standard primary schools themselves. He suggested that an allowance of annas eight might be given to each student on the condition that the recipient would be found to attend the class on passing a qualifying examination. Further, he desired that in the standard middle vernacular school, a special Guru class need be introduced to train up teachers who would, of course, be given the stipend during the period of training. It was hoped that this plan would vitalize the primary schools by raising the standard of teaching by a plentiful supply of trained teachers at a minimum of cost. The plan was placed before the Government, but did not receive latter's approval. Inspite of this, the first step in this direction was taken by the Deputy Commissioners of Nowgong and Goalpara who introduced the system of allowing the Gurus to undergo training on stipends in the middle vernacular school near their homes. The success of the scheme, commonly known as apprenticeship training, convinced C.B. Clarke, the officiating Inspector of schools, to adopt it in place of Guru-

30. R.P.I.A., 1878-79; P.28
classes which had been working unsatisfactorily. He also recommended abolition of these schools in favour of opening training classes attached to the middle schools only. In spite of this, the scheme did not receive the approval of the Government of Assam.

In the meantime, the Indian Education Commission of 1882, after a thorough review of the existing arrangement for training of teachers in different parts of the country, recommended a more efficient and practical training course for the future trainees. The specific proposals made by the Commission relating to primary schools was that the adequate supply of Normal Schools, whether Government or aided, should be so localised as to provide for the local requirements of all primary schools and the expenditure under this head should be met from the provincial funds assigned for primary education. To give effect to this recommendation, the Government of Assam adopted a new plan for training on the line of the apprenticeship course. The Government found that the idea behind Normal training in Assam as also in rest of India was that a teacher was required to learn only what he

had to teach his pupils. For example, in arithmetic he was required to teach the first four rules, simple and compound in the lower primary schools and, therefore, in the teachers' training schools the course comprised only that much. But with the establishment of upper primary schools in 1882, a Guru was required to have a sound knowledge of arithmetic as a whole. To meet this requirement, each Local Board was authorised in 1887-88, to make arrangements to send boys to be trained as Gurus in middle schools only. Accordingly, provisions were made for training of fifty-seven Gurus at a cost of Rs. 2,346/- per annum in fourteen middle schools. As regards curriculum and stipends, it was decided that the candidates trained at selected vernacular middle schools would have to pursue their ordinary studies and also to obtain a certain amount of instruction in method of practical experience. Stipends were given at the rate of rupees three per mensem for the said period in case of candidate possessing the Lower Primary Examination certificate and rupees four per mensem for one year in case

38. R.P.I.A., 1899-1900; P.44.
of those who passed the Upper Primary Examination. Following the principle in vogue in Bengal, an allowance of rupee one per head for each pupil of training class was also paid to the Head Master of the middle vernacular school in consideration of his special duty in training centres. In addition, teachers were allowed a bonus for every pupils who passed the final examination. The system received support from all quarters and a definite number of apprenticeships was allotted to each Local Board. During the year 1901-02, the total number of apprenticeships were two hundred and fifty and at the end of the year 1906-07, six hundred and two pupils came out as trained Gurus at a cost of Rs. 16,686/-. Thus the primary school teachers were trained partly in the training classes and partly in the Normal schools.

Unfortunately, after working for a few years this experiment also proved a failure. This system threw upon the teachers of the middle schools a heavy burden which they were by no means fitted to bear; for most of them were not properly qualified for the task, and precision of method and clarity of thought were not among their virtues. Again


41. R.P.I.A., 1887-88; P.43.

the course of the vernacular middle schools differed radically from those of lower grade Normal schools. The curriculum appeared to be very stiff to the Gurus attending the training class in the middle schools where the course of studies aimed at imparting the actual knowledge which would place the teachers on a somewhat higher level than the pupils of the highest class of a primary school. Consequently, in 1906-07, the number of attached training classes were reduced to seven as against twenty four in 1901-02.

To remedy this defect, in 1906, the Government of Assam decided to extend the time of training of the Guru class from one to two years and to grant scholarships to the students of those classes for two years instead of one year. The extension was considered essential because the trainees could not make up the full middle vernacular course within a year, and hence at least two years' course of study became necessary. Accordingly, a decision was taken in favour of a two years course; of course, this was to be reduced to one year in the case of candidates who had completed the middle vernacular course.

TRAINING OF VERNACULAR TEACHERS:

The problem of securing trained teachers for the middle vernacular schools became all the more acute with the

44. Ibid.; 1907-08-1911-12; Vol. No. 1, P.77.
increase in the number of these institutions. To impart instruction in these schools the local teachers were not qualified. Hence the educational authorities had either to offer high salaries to those coming from Bengal or to reduce the number of available appointments. This was due to the aversion on the part of the Assamese to join the first grade Normal training schools in Bengal and similarly of the Bengalee teachers to come from Bengal to Assam where the remuneration of a trained teacher did not exceed rupees twenty-five. In 1871, Mr. Bellett, the Inspector of schools, recommended the opening of a Normal school in Assam similar to that at Dacca or Hoogly for obtaining properly trained teachers without difficulty. In 1874, the Gauhati Normal School was raised to the rank of a first grade Normal school consisting of two departments: (i) the higher grade or Normal class proper for the training of the teachers of middle schools; and (ii) the Guru training class for primary and indigenous school teachers. During the first year the higher grade classes consisted of forty-four pupils of which seven in third year class, twenty in second year and seventeen in first year. In lower grade classes, there were forty-nine pupils; seventeen in training class, thirteen in Guru class and nineteen in free class. Of these two grades,

46. R.P.I.A., 1874-75; P. 59.
the students in the lower grade department were bound to go out as primary school teachers, if so required, after one year's training. The students of the higher grade classes might continue their studies for the three consecutive years in order to qualify themselves as teachers of the middle schools. The courses of studies too differed much in those two grades. The first grade Normal school course comprised those subjects of a middle vernacular school in addition to elementary science and the outline of teaching. But the lower grade course comprised the study of the vernacular course of the upper primary school in addition to hygiene, theory and practice of teaching. On the basis of training course, the examinations were arranged with various classes of certificates. Within a period of three years, twenty-four turned out as trained teachers for middle schools, one hundred and seven for primary schools.

47. R.P.I.A., 1876-77; P.41
49. R.P.I.A., 1874-75; P. 55; also R.P.I.A., 1876-77, P.42.

*Guru Certificates, - High class - Middle class -Low class.

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REORGANISATION OF EXISTING SYSTEM:

Notwithstanding this development, the first grade training school at Gauhati could not cope with the growing demand of the province. Moreover, the introduction of Assamese as medium of instruction in middle vernacular schools created considerable difficulties since most of the teachers were untrained. In 1906, there was a reorganisation of Gauhati school and two more schools were set up at Jorhat and Silchar on the model of Gauhati school. Both aimed at supplying teachers for middle vernacular schools where the language was either Assamese or Bengali. During 1906-07, there were thirty-two and one hundred and fifteen trainees on the rolls at Jorhat and Silchar training schools respectively. All the trainees for vernacular middle school underwent training for two years instead of three years at Gauhati school as was done previously. The reduction of training from three to two years was followed by the adoption of a revised course of studies which comprised general knowledge, class subject, method, practical training. The course of studies in the lower grade training or Guru training class attached to these two schools was higher than what


51. Ibid.
52. The revised course of studies aimed at the improvement of the Gurus' knowledge in literature, grammar, arithmetic, and geography and instruction in subjects like drawing and manual work, music, physical training, general knowledge of plant and animal life, agriculture and sanitation along with a subject on method and practical teaching.

No remarkable progress was made in the following years in training facilities for the vernacular teachers. In the meantime, the need for training of English teachers was on the increase and the facilities in this regard were practically non-existent. Hitherto, Assam was allowed to send a few teachers for training annually to the training college at Dacca. But this was extremely inadequate to meet the growing demand of the province. In 1913, out of 679 English and classical teachers of Assam, only thirty-four were trained and in most part they were under-qualified. A training college in Assam was, therefore, an immediate necessity for providing training facilities to the English teachers. A scheme was drawn up and sent to the Government for approval; but for lack of funds, the proposal of starting a provincial training college did not materialize.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE:

Of the private enterprise, the different Missionary Societies in Assam had realised the importance of training of teachers who could be profitably utilized for preaching the Gospel amongst the backward people in Assam. With this object in view, in between 1863 and 1967, training classes for the lower grades of elementary school teachers were started by the Missionaries at Tezpur for the Kacharis, Nowgong for the Mikirs, Darma for the Garos and Nongsowlia (Cherrapoonjee) for the Khasis. The latter two were attached to the central schools of Darma and Nongsowlia. Except the Tezpur Normal class, others received a monthly grant of rupees fifty for support of the pupil teachers, each of them received a stipend. The course of studies was limited to those of reading, writing and arithmetic with the single exception of Tezpur where geography and natural history were added to this elementary lessons. The medium of instruction was Assamese in Tezpur and Bengali in the other places.

Missionary training centres were in no way superior to any of the village school which had been in existence for a few years. In 1865-66, the condition of Nowgong

55. B.E.P., 1863; 27 August, No. 18, Haughton to the Director of Public Instruction; also B.E.P., 1867: 27 July, No. 20, Harrison, Junior Secretary to the Director of Public Instruction.

school so much deteriorated that the Deputy Inspector was
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constrained the remark:
"The hill tribes of Mikirs' Normal school at Nowgong under
the Reverend E.P. Scott. of the American Mission is still
in its infancy.............The school has not been able
to train up any teacher as yet, and consequently there has
not been any school in the Mikir Hills."

The Missionaries, therefore, represented to the
Government of Assam for taking appropriate measures by re-
modelling the schools and starting training classes as soon
as possible. In response, the Government of Assam allowed
them to establish a Normal school in 1867 in each of the
above mentioned stations, and at the same time, a change
was effected in the curriculum and medium of instruction.
The course of studies prescribed for the Normal schools of
Tezpur and Nowgong were Assamese Primer, first and second
Catechisms, a translation of the Pilgrim's Progress, History
of Christian Church, Barth's Bible Stories, Treatise on
Natural Philosophy; for advanced pupils, the Elements of
Land Surveying was also prescribed. In the hill districts,
in addition to prescribed text books in Bengali and English,
58
a few books in tribal languages were also recommended.

In 1882, the Education Commission recommended that
an examination in the principle and practice of teaching


58. B.E.P., 1869; 16 July, No. 23, Reports of the District
Officers during the year 1867-68.
should be introduced. The success in it should be a condition of permanent employment as a teacher in any kind of secondary schools. Accordingly, a second grade training class was attached to the Shillong Government High School for preparation of trained English teachers. The course of studies was spread over a period of four years; two years for lower grade primary school teachers, three years for upper primary and four years for middle school teachers. The curriculum was the same as that in the primary and middle class department of the high school. A few training centres were, later, opened at Tura, Jaiaw, Kohima and Impur. In these, the pupils underwent a training for one year in the method of teaching and school management in addition to the ordinary lower primary courses.

TRAINING OF FEMALE TEACHERS:

In 1913, two female teachers' training classes were started one for the Bengalees, attached to the Welsh Mission Girls' High School at Silchar and another for the Assamese under the supervision of the American Middle English Mission School for girls at Nowgong. The object was to

60. R.P.I.A., 1900-1901; P. 12.
remove to some extent the obstacles in the progress of female education in the province where teaching of majority of girls was in the hand of male teachers. No real progress could be expected until an adequate supply of trained mistresses was available. With this object in view, in 1914, a certificate course was introduced in both the schools. There were two standards; the junior for those who had passed only the primary examination; the senior for those who qualified by passing the middle school examination. Even during the period of next four years total number of certified female teachers did not exceed twenty, of these, ten secured junior mistress certificates and ten senior certificates. Evidently, the outturn was inadequate since the demand for such teachers was on the increase. In 1917, J.P. Cunningham, the Director of Public Instruction, Assam, suggested to the Government of Assam to establish Government high school for girls' with training classes attached to it in each division; further he recommended to extend liberal stipend to girls who were willing to undergo training without insisting upon an agreement for service. Unfortunately, the recommendations were turned down by the Government on the ground that time was not yet ripe for opening of women's training centres when the existing ones


for boys were in an experimental stage with no certainty about their future.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the provision for training of teachers in Assam was far from being satisfactory till the end of our period. The reasons were not far to seek. The teachers under training had no hostels to live in; it was very difficult for them to attend the classes regularly from distant places. Secondly, the prospects of teaching job was not encouraging as the scale of pay varied from rupees eight to rupees thirty-five. Thirdly most of the instructors were not properly qualified and, consequently, the trainees remained ignorant about the nature of their studies. Hence in the forefront of all educational needs of the province stood the necessity for the improvement of the condition of teachers by increase in their pay scales and guaranteeing them the security of service. Above all, priority must be given to proper qualification in case of teachers who were going to be instructors of the training schools. Since most of these conditions remained unfulfilled, it became increasingly difficult to attract able and duly qualified persons to this profession and to place training on an efficient footing.