

Over 36,000 teachers' posts lying vacant in Odisha schools

BHUBANESWAR: Over 36,000 teachers' posts are lying vacant in government schools across Odisha causing a sorry state of education. The posts are lying vacant for years and cannot be fulfilled as very few candidates are qualifying the Odisha Teachers' Eligibility Test (OTET), said school and mass education minister Debi Prasad Mishra.

"State government is keen to appoint teachers and fill up the vacancies but the problem is number of candidates qualifying OTET is very less compared to the vacancies. Situation has improved over the years as the pass percentage in OTET has improved from 12 % to 34%," Mishra said after handing over appointment letters of 80 headmasters in different high schools here on Wednesday.

He said, recruitment of 8934 teachers has been done under the Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan recently and around 7062 more appointments will be conducted soon. Similarly the government has gave contractual appointment t 3698 teachers in high schools and another 5767 posts will be filled up in near future.

"We are trying to maintain the pupil-teacher ratio of 35:1 as prescribed in the Right to Education Act," said Mishra. Around 90,000 students took the OTET examination in September 2015, in which 7,550 of them cleared Paper I and 5,542 cleared Paper II. This year a total 98,500 candidates from across the state appeared OTET on Thursday.

However, the appointments made are very less compared to the large scale vacancies in almost all levels of teaching and education administration posts. As many as 1917 primary schools in the state are being run by single teachers while around 2558 teacher posts in science and mathematics remained vacant for years. As many as 40 schools in Kolnara block in Rayagada district have single teachers.

"It is very difficult to manage five classes by a single or two teachers. They not only have to take classes but also do other non-academic works like managing mid-day meal, administrative works, training and so on. This has been certainly affecting the quality of education," said Bhikari Toika, headmaster of Wardha Primary School in Kolnara block.

Teachers alleged that while all schools in Bhubaneswar have no vacancies at all and some schools have more teachers than required, in rural areas schools are run by one or two teachers for years. Recently

parents in Bhubaneswar lodged complaint with the Block Education Officer that how teachers' absenteeism has been affecting studies in schools. "After noticing that nothing is being taught in schools for days together and children are going and playing throughout the day in the absence of teachers, we lodged a complaint with the BEO. This is the reason why people are preferring private schools," said Pradipta Behera, a parent.

Students admitted that neither their courses complete in time nor the daily routines followed due to shortage of teachers. "Same teachers teach different subjects and most of the days we do self-studies in school as we have only two teachers for five classes," said Laxmi Nayak, a class V student in Ekamra Vihar project school here.