

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 –An Awareness Call to Prospective Teachers

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Abstract: Education has become the right of every child so as to live with dignity and harmony. Family and Classroom are the two major zones determine mental health status of the children. Facilitating a holistic and healthy environment prevents them from delinquency. Besides academics, teachers must be equipped with 360-degree potentialities to face classroom challenges regarding health, social, and legal aspects while handling disruptive students. Understanding juvenile justice law ensures better student handling and guarantees care and protection. This study is a call for prospective teachers to understand the basic crux of the JJ Act, 2015, with relevance to Care and Protection of Children in Tamil Nadu. By executing the convergent mixed method design, desk research (Qualitative phase) was employed to examine the coverage of JJ Act 2015 in the coursework of the prospective Teachers. Simultaneously, simple random sampling technique was adopted to collect data from 340 prospective teachers (Quantitative phase). The level of awareness was assessed through a standardized checklist. Besides, hypotheses were framed to test the significant role of certain demographic variables. The contradictory findings extend its recommendations to the academic boards to include JJ act, 2015 in the coursework of the prospective teachers. Furthermore, suggestions were framed with an intention to create more awareness and necessary actions to prevent classroom delinquency.

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Introduction

CHILDREN are the fundamental unit of a society. The future of a nation relies on children. As mentioned by the “article 39(f) of Indian Constitution, the state must ensure that its policies give children the chances and resources they need to develop in a healthy way, with freedom and dignity. Further, an individual's childhood should be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

The school education of India is one of the world's largest education systems, with more than 14 lakh schools, 95 lakh teachers, and over 26 crore students from pre-primary to higher secondary levels from various socioeconomic backgrounds”. Among these, the school student population contributes nearly 19 % of the total population in the country. These students actively spend more time in school compared to the time spent with their families.

Fostering a deep understanding of the student's mental health, social participation, and legal protection enables teacher to handle classroom challenges effectively. In this connection, the curriculum of the teacher education program should be designed to disseminate knowledge and awareness about well-being of the students. However, it is also essential for an objective-based curriculum to educate prospective teachers with pedagogical, professional, and social skills to meet the requirements of students in 360-degree perspectives for the benefit of society and its prosperity.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 – India

The Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) in India was originally put into effect in 2000 and has since undergone many modifications. The “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989”, which addressed rehabilitation of children and went into force on September 02, 1990, served as its main source of influence. A retributive strategy has been implemented after the regrettable Nirbhaya (Delhi Gang Rape Case) occurrence. The “Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015” eventually replaced the JJ Act 2000. Juvenile justice laws have undergone many adjustments as a result of the recent increase in the number of students committing heinous crimes. As previously mentioned, it has become imperative to implement a system that is both reformative and deterrent. If a minor of sufficient mental capacity and capable of comprehending the ethical implications of their actions is not penalized for their transgressions, it may serve as an incentive for other adolescents to emulate their behavior. The current situation necessitates a more comprehensive approach to the care and protection of children, which includes expediting adoption procedures and implementing various

Table 1. Outline of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Chapters	Contents
Chapter-I	Preliminary (Meaning of terms)
Chapter-II	General principles of care and protection of children
Chapter-III	Juvenile justice board
Chapter-IV	Procedure in relation to children in conflict with law
Chapter-V	Child welfare committee
Chapter-VI	Procedure in relation to children in need of care and protection
Chapter-VII	Rehabilitation and social re-integration
Chapter-VIII	Adoption
Chapter-IX	Other offences against children
Chapter-X	Miscellaneous

Note: Constructed by the authors using secondary data

rehabilitation measures, like disease treatment, institutional care, nutrition, de-addiction, health, vocational training, and counselling. To provide a concise overview of the JJ Act, 2015, please refer to **Table 1**.

Section 2 of JJ Act 2015 specifies the meaning of the terminologies used to segregate ‘Children in need of care and protection’ with ‘Children in conflict’ with law. The former denoted the children who are in adverse condition, requiring state support to become responsible citizens and the later are confirmed with committed crimes (Agarwal & Kumar, 2016). Additionally, it also includes children alleged to be involved in crimes. The Act includes several beneficial provisions including a change in terminology to eliminate connotations of negativity, the addition of several new definitions, including abandoned, orphaned, and surrendered children, the establishment of deadlines for inquiries by Juvenile justice board, the addition of new offenses committed against children, and a mandate the registration of child care institutions (Bajpai, 2018).

Teacher Education in Indian Perspective

The foundation of the modern Indian “system of teacher education has listed its recommendations in several reports of committees/commissions on education. In India, the two primary categories of teacher education programs are pre-service and in-service. Pre-service training prepares educators for the classroom, whereas in-service training aims to enhance the skills of already-employed educators (Misra, 2015). The ‘National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)’ oversees the planned and coordinated development of teacher education in India. The NCTE establishes guidelines and criteria for numerous courses in teacher education programs as well as minimum requirements for teacher educators, course objectives, length, and entry requirements for student teachers. It also acknowledges the organizations (govern-

ment-aided, government, and self-funded) interested in providing these programs and has built-in controls and oversight mechanisms for their standards and quality. In India, teacher education” is offered in “Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs)” and Universities, with an institution-based approach that includes internship programs in actual classroom settings. Also, some prerequisite guidelines are being framed to teach at various levels of school education.

According to the NCTE guidelines on teacher eligibility, Pre-School (Age 4-6 years) teachers must have completed “senior secondary (Class 12 or its equivalent) from a recognized board with a minimum of 50% marks. Teachers at the primary level (Class 1-5) must possess a senior secondary school certificate (or its equivalent) with a minimum of 50% marks, a two-year Diploma in Elementary Education, and a passing score on Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). Upper primary (Class 6-8) teachers must possess graduation degree, 2-year Diploma in Elementary Education (D. El. Ed.) or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree and have completed” the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). Secondary or high school teachers (Class 9-10) must have graduation or post-graduation degree and B.Ed. with minimum of 50% academic achievement. Teachers of senior secondary/intermediate level (Class 11-12) must possess a B.Ed. and a post-graduate degree with a minimum of 50% marks. Furthermore, to qualify as a teacher educator at TEIs, one must have completed a post graduate degree in their respective stream (Science or Arts), Master of Education (M.Ed.), Ph.D. in Education, or have passed the “State Eligibility Test (SET)” or “National Eligibility Test (NET)”.

Review of Literatures

Theoretical Framework

In terms of punishment, a child between the ages of 12 and 18 will be treated similarly to an adult. However, they will go to a juvenile home rather than a jail, which is more rehabilitative and reformatory in nature. The maximum punishment period does not exceed three years for petty, serious, and heinous offences (Chatterjee, 2017).

The study conducted by Marcu and Hulea (2013) led to an understanding that Juvenile delinquency is a severe behavioral issue characterized by behaviors that violate society's moral and legal standards. It is also observed in some investigations that boys are doing more criminal deeds compared to girls, and another surprising information confirms that the parents and teachers strongly impact delinquent children. When teachers prioritize curriculum, rather than focusing on the continuity process of socialization of

children or discriminating against the student on the basis of social status, it leads to behavioral disorders among the students.

The investigation of Loeber et al. (2003) points out that the chances of becoming chronic offenders are higher for the students who have recorded their first crime at thirteen. Considering the students' future, corrective actions must be planned in a viable way. However, punishment is not a solution.

A critical observation on the JJ Act made by Jain (2022) claims that the Justice Verma committee was instituted to address certain uncertain and unclear parts of the JJ Act. The study's outcome clearly states that the JJ Act 2015 is intended to promote beneficial behavioral changes in children through rehabilitation rather than alienation from their families.

Another study investigated by Tinney (2023) discusses on the guilt of association reflects inside the classroom. Stigma of parent's incarceration subsequently moved to student and teacher enforce additional surveillance more than other students. Houchins et al. (2017) emphasize that giving access to quality teachers serves as a critical and vital aspect of juvenile justice system's educational process.

To enhance quality, Suyanto and Harefa (2019) advises that teacher should first avoid allowing the child to grow more and more disobedient. Second, be familiar with the laws governing child protection. Third, be creative and innovative. Fourth, comprehend the character traits of children.

The study conducted by Larkin and Hannon (2020) revealed that the discipline could advantage from a consistent program of study on teacher preparation for students in juvenile justice settings, since there is not enough of studies on teacher preparation for population.

Making the trained teaching professionals into informative frontliners is also a part of novel approach in education. The researchers underwent an intensive search of literatures and then found out a lacuna that no research has been conducted in India particularly in the area of educational research pertaining to JJ Act, 2015. Apparently, the researchers decided to fill the gap by conducting a small-scale study with prospective teachers about JJ Act, 2015 which might be an essential eye opener for future classrooms.

Significance of the Study

Many research studies have identified that the COVID-19 pandemic affects the mental health of people. Specifically, the pandemic-driven school closure significantly affected the emotional well-being of the children. Increased rate of Student–Teacher controversies, classroom violence, drug abuse, dropouts, absenteeism, examinophobia, suicides, early pregnancy, etc., have been reported in Indian media. It also directly impacted the economic condition of

the families. Further, over 19 lakh children in India are without their primary caregivers as a result of COVID (Unwin et al., 2022).

The *Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* journal argues that India has become the sixth country worldwide to experience a high incidence of orphanhood as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. The country with the greatest percentage, 55.4% of children in 10 to 17 y/o range becoming paternal orphans, is Italy. In India, 15.2% of children in this age have become orphans of their mothers, and 49.8% have become orphans of their fathers. 17% of children aged 5-7 lost their father, and 4.2% also lost their mother. 8.4% of children aged 0 to 4 lost their father, and 3.2% of children lost their mother (Belagere, 2022).

The post-covid world has changed its views about the school-going children. Being one of the major stakeholders, prospective teachers have greater responsibility in holistic development of children particularly absence of late parents. Therefore, it is highly recommended to incorporate content about JJ act (2015) in the course work of prospective teachers, which might enhance knowledge about the legal provisions of well-being, care and protection, social reintegration. Hence, researchers decided to conduct a study, targeting the prospective teachers with reference to JJ act (2015).

Objectives

The objectives of the present study are,

1. To “find out the coverage of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015 in the course work of B.Ed. and M.Ed. degree program.
2. To assess the level of awareness among prospective teachers about the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, with respect to certain demographic variables.

Research Questions (RQ) and Null Hypotheses (Ho)

For the Research Objective No.1 the following research question is posed,

RQ1. Does the coursework for B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees include information about the JJ Act, 2015?

For the Research objective No. 2, the following research question and hypotheses are made and tested,

Ho1. There is no difference in the awareness of JJ Act, 2015 based on the gender of prospective teachers.

Ho2. There is no difference in the awareness of JJ Act, 2015 based on the type of college management of prospective teachers.

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Participants.

Participant's Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	44.1
	Female	55.9
Type of College Management	Government	40.9
	Govt-Aided	50.3
	Private	8.8
Type of the College	Men's College	40.6
	Women's College	53.2
	Co-Education College	6.2

Note: Constructed by authors using secondary data.

Ho3. There is no difference in the awareness of JJ Act, 2015 based on the type of college of prospective teachers.

RQ2. What level of awareness of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 are there among prospective teachers in India?

Methods

Research Design

For the present study, the researcher” adopted convergent mixed-method design. Convergent design aims to merge the findings of the qualitative and quantitative databases in order to compare them (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). To collect qualitative data, a desk research approach has been employed to address the research objective No.1 and an online survey method has been adopted to collect quantitative data which is related to the research objective No. 2 and the research question No. 2.

Participants

In the present study, prospective teachers pursuing B.Ed. and M.Ed. degree programs in academic year 2023-24 from the Government, Government-Aided, and Private colleges of education in Tamil Nadu were the participants. A total number of 340 subjects were participated in the study through a simple random sampling technique in drawing the samples from the research population (**Table 2**).

Data Collection Tool

The B.Ed. and M.Ed. program’s coursework (**Appendix: II**) retrieved from the official websites of prospective Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs)

has been used as a secondary data in the qualitative phase, i.e., Desk research. For the quantitative Phase, a self-structured checklist with 10 items was used to collect the primary data through an online survey using Google Forms. Both the phases were aiming to check the basic knowledge about JJ Act, 2015 among the prospective teachers and also to examine the coverage of JJ act, 2015 in the teacher preparation program coursework. Considering the participation of the prospective teachers representing language (Tamil), the tool was administered in Vernacular and English versions.

Data Analysis

After collecting both the data, primary data were classified and tabulated in order to arrive at meaningful and logical inferences. Further, analysis of primary data involved the computation of frequency and percentages, t-Test, and ANOVA. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22^{''} has been administered to analyze data. Cronbach's alpha reliability test was used to measure the internal consistency and it is found that the reliability value r is .840 which establishes the tool is good in its internal consistency. The content validity of the tool was ensured through the expert review. In the 10 items questionnaire (**Appendix: I**), Item 1 and 7 intend to measure whether the coursework of prospective teachers includes JJ Act, 2015 and whether they are aware of the functions of Directorate of Social Defense, which primarily focuses on the welfare, support and rehabilitation of all kinds of children. These two items are not directly representing the contents mentioned in the JJ act, 2015. However, they will support in assessing the level of awareness on JJ act which is the primary focus of this research. Hence, those two items were not included in statistically measuring the awareness level. The remaining 8 items were considered further to choose the range of magnitude which falls under the score of 0-8. Further it was classified into three equal intervals. Such as 0-2, 3-5 and 6-8. The magnitude of awareness was considered to be 'Low' if the score was between 0-2, whereas 3-5 of appropriate scores was considered to be 'Moderate', and 6-8 considered to be 'High'. In addition, content analysis was used to examine the secondary data to find out the coverage of JJ act, 2015 in the coursework.

Findings

Desk Research Outcomes

RQ1. Does the coursework for B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees include information about the JJ Act, 2015?

Table 3. Findings of the Desk Research to Answer RQ1.

Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs)	Degree Programme	
	B. Ed.	M. Ed.
Government Institution	Nil	Nil
Govt. Aided Institution	Nil	Nil
Private Institution	Nil	Nil

Note: Detailed information is given as web links of the respective TEIs in appendix – II.

Table 4. Findings of the Tested Hypotheses.

Participant's Profile		Mean	SD	t-Value/F-Ratio	p-Value
Gender	Male	4.57	2.526	-3.48	0.001*
	Female	5.51	2.354		
Type of College Management	Government	4.53	4.53	6.407	0.002*
	Govt-Aided	5.44	5.44		
	Private	5.7	5.7		
Type of the College	Men's College	4.51	2.471	6.622	0.002*
	Women's College	5.5	2.358		
	Co-Education College	5.38	2.783		

*Note: *Significant at 5% Level of Significance*

To find answer to this research question, it was decided to examine the coursework of the different types of Teacher Educations Institutions (TEIs) in terms of its management. In the conventional government institution, it is fully funded by government and coursework is generally designed by the authorized board of studies consist of teacher educators working in the government universities and colleges. After a vigorous scrutiny, the course work will be placed in the academic council for approval, before coming into practice. In the context of the aided institutions, funding will be provided by the government but the management of the institutions will be given autonomy to design their coursework under the government guidelines. The third type of institution is exempted from government funding but entitled to follow the coursework of the affiliated university. The investigators retrieved the coursework of B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs from the official websites (Open access) of the respective TEIs and employed content analysis on the listed course work. After a thorough examination, it has confirmed the absence of content contributing information about JJ act, 2015. The outcome of the desk research is given in **Table 3**.

The findings of the desk research reveal that there is no coverage of “JJ (Care and protection of children) Act, 2015” in the course work of B. Ed. and M. Ed. degree programs in Tamil Nadu.

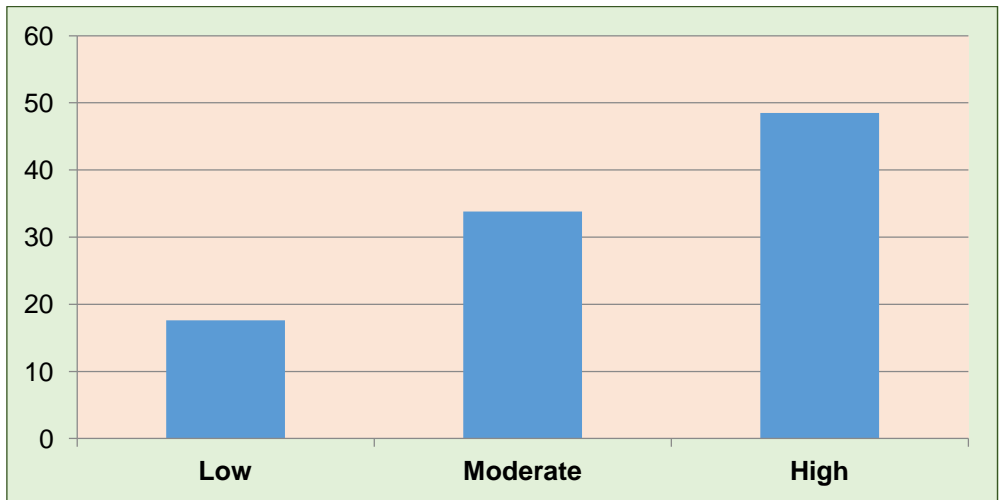


Figure 1. Level of Awareness among the Prospective Teachers.

Online Survey Outcomes

A total of 340 prospective teachers participated in the online survey. The findings of the tested hypotheses are given below.

The **Table 4** depicts the significant difference among prospective teachers in their awareness of the JJ act (2015) with regard to certain demographic variables like gender, type of college management, and type of college.

The **Figure 1** shows that 48.5% (N = 165) of the prospective teachers have high level of awareness about JJ Act, 2015. Only 33.8% (N = 115) claims moderate level of awareness, and 17.6% (N = 60) falls under low level of awareness.

Discussion

Based on the statistical evidences, it is possible to assert from the present study that the prospective teachers are aware of Juvenile justice (Care and protection) act, 2015. The overwhelming evidence claims that 48.5% of the prospective teachers are earmarked with high level of awareness as revealed from the quantitative phase. The qualitative findings confirm that the coursework of B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs does not cover any information pertaining to JJ Act, 2015. This qualitative outcome contradicts with the quantitative result, as the majority of the respondents (83%) of item 1 have

confirmed that the course work of B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs do have inputs of JJ act, 2015. At the outset, there are two probabilities: either the respondents might have gained knowledge from external sources, or they would not have realized the sensitivity of the issue. In such circumstances, taking the benefit of doubt, the researcher then tested the results of a particular item 5 & 7 to ensure the awareness of JJ act among prospective teachers. The result revealed that 72.3% of participants claims, they are aware of the functions of Directorate of Social Defense (Item 7), which facilitates training and administration for the members of Juvenile justice board (JJB). In contrast, 58.5% of the respondents are unaware of the number of members (social workers) in Juvenile justice board (Item 5) mentioned in JJ act, 2015. Inconsistency in the flow of the responses clearly draws the attention of academia to inculcate knowledge and awareness among prospective teachers about the JJ Act, 2015. The overall results claim that the respondents are rather focusing on securing personal scores than understanding the technicality of dealing the problems in the future classrooms.

Strengthening the Awareness of Prospective Teachers

In order to strengthen the awareness among prospective teachers about the significance of JJ Act, 2015, National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), the statutory body of teacher education may implement a multilevel approach. This includes establishing connections with school, communities, families and non-government officials to facilitates capacity building programs to pre-service and in-service teachers. Encouraging TEIs to build networking with Directorate of Social Defense may induce the future teachers to associate with diverse disciplinarians for their future collaborations. In addition, practical oriented assignments and reflective writing on the field visit to District Child protection office are the viable way to strengthen the individual awareness. Directions may be given to the TEIs to constitute a mock Child Welfare Committee as part of their integral training. These exercises not only deepen the awareness; it also encourages to explore the feasible solutions to detach the classrooms from delinquency.

Educational Implications

Adhering to the objectives of the study, the researchers have also shared the correct answers with the respondents, with brief information about each question. The advantage of the online survey is that it enables the respondents to receive the answers immediately upon submission of their entries. This was implemented by the researchers in order to create considerable awareness among prospective teachers about JJ Act, 2015. In addition, this piece of research also invites the inter-disciplinary researchers to take up the study to further explore. In summary, establishing a network of the best prac-

tice among the stakeholders of health, law, and policies might take forward this notion into a strong setup.

Recommendations

Overall, this study contributes the following recommendations in a nutshell to create a delinquent free learning environment.

- The course work of B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs might be revised, incorporating content related to JJ Act, 2015 and other necessary legal provisions ensuring the care and protection of children.
- It is recommended to provide opportunities to the prospective teachers to take field visits to the both Children home and Observation home. This field exposure might shed light to plan and control the delinquent behavior of the students in their classroom settings.
- Teachers' resilience plays a pivotal role in the classroom. Therefore, prospective teachers must be educated / trained to maintain the emotional well-being of their own, while handling children with deviant behavior.
- Inter-disciplinary approach is much appreciated to deal the children with deviant behavior causing classroom violence.
- Research intelligence is also recommended for prospective teachers as a core professional skill for scientific handling.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and insights gained from this study, the future classrooms might receive the promising paybacks by bridging the identified gaps. This study sheds light to the prospective teaching community to affirm their contribution for social well-being of the students. Moreover, the study investigates the critical need and importance of incorporating JJ Act 2015 in the teacher education curriculum. Furthermore, this study invites the future researcher with collaborative mindset to explore on the undiscussed classroom problems in terms of legal and scientific domains.

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Appendix: I

JJ Act, 2015 Awareness Questionnaire

1. Does your curriculum provide input about the juvenile justice (Care and protection of children) act, 2015 in your Syllabus?
2. Do you know the major reason behind the formulation of the new JJ act (2015)?
3. Are you aware of the age limit of the children according to JJ act 2015?
4. Are you aware of the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU)?
5. Do you know how many social workers will be the members in the Juvenile Justice Board?
6. Do you know the age limit under which nothing is considered as an offence when committed by the child?
7. Do you know the functions of the Directorate of Social Defence?
8. Are you aware of the District Child Protection Unit?
9. Are you aware of the procedures in producing the children who need care and protection before the Child Welfare Committee?
10. Do you know that the term "Arrest" will not be used by the Police while apprehending children in conflict with law?

Appendix: II

B.Ed. and M.Ed. coursework web link of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), State (Tamil Nadu) and Central Universities in India.

#	Type of College Management	Course	Coursework Web link
1	Government College	B.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.iasetamilnadu.ac.in/bed-course.php
		M.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.iasetamilnadu.ac.in/med-course.php
2	Government Aided College	B.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://smcedn.edu.in/college_docs/DVV/5%20Years%20Syllabus/2023-2024/BED%20SYLLABUS%202023-2024.pdf
		M.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://smcedn.edu.in/college_docs/DVV/5%20Years%20Syllabus/2023-2024/MED%20SYLLABUS%202023%20-%202024.pdf
3	Private College	B.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.lcechennai.edu.in/downloads/202021.pdf
		M.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.tnteu.ac.in/pdf/Criteria1/Criteria1.1/1.1.1/M.Ed_syllabus_CBCS_2021-2022.pdf
4	State Universities (Tamil Nadu)	M.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.unom.ac.in/index.php?route=department/department/deptpage&deptid=26
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://mkuniversity.ac.in/new/syllabus/35.M.Ed.%20Syllabus.php
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.msuniv.ac.in/uploads/departments/submenu/curriculum/pdfs/M.Ed.%20-%20AY%202021-22%20-%20N.pdf
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://schools.cukerala.ac.in/pdfs/EDU/1.1.1.EDU.001.pdf
5	Central Universities (India)	M.Ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://www.pondiuni.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Syllabus-M.Ed_.2024-25.pdf
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://cukapi.disgenweb.in/p/upload/1733899215635-Syllabus%20of%20M.Ed._Programme%20(Batch%202024).pdf
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://schools.cukerala.ac.in/pdfs/EDU/1.1.1.EDU.001.pdf