

Emerging Trends in Educational Administration The Issue of Sustainability

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In a frequently changing environment new dimensions are continuously being added to the learning strategies and the educational management practices. Fast changes in communication and information technology and consequent global changes in the nature and type of the present employment opportunities-- have a direct impact upon the nature of demand for school education. Lawler (1986) describes that change is a continuous process. It is a complex, dynamic and challenging process rather than a set of recipes. Fullan (1992) considers change as a process of learning new ideas and things. Management should have the ability to realize when the present strategy is no longer adequate and because of which change is necessary. Tsiakkiros and Pashiardis (2002) argue that the existence of both organizations and individuals depends on their ability to adjust quickly and keep up with the rapid rhythm of change.

The trend of managing elementary education in India suggests that new educational management strategies are continuously being added and the focus of educational management is changing simultaneously. As a consequent upon the recommendations of various committees and commissions, the national policies on education, several educational innovations and experiments have taken place over the years which have not only led to the diversification of the unified command of educational administration at all levels but made the educational planning and decision-making structures more decentralized and responsive to the needs of the people. A major shift in managing development strategies has been emerged from central and state level to district level, from district level to local level and from project mode to programme mode.

A field study entitled 'Recent Trends in Educational Administration' (2002) was conducted by NIEPA in the four districts (Datia and Ratlam of Madhya Pradesh and Bhilwara and Alwar of Rajasthan). The main objectives of the study were: to study the recent trends in educational administration in terms of decentralized educational planning and management; to critically examine the linkages and coordination among different actors of educational management at various levels and to identify gaps in planning and management of elementary education and suggest measures for their improvement. The study tries to explore how the planning and decision-making structures and functions have been shifted from state level to district level and further to block, cluster and village levels.

The management of elementary education in both the states has been transferred to the Panchayati Raj institutions. Besides, management of all the development programmes of elementary education have also been shifted to the mission mode of management in coordination with the Panchayati Raj Departments. In Madhya Pradesh, several efforts have been made towards decentralization of educational management. As a first step

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management of school education from classes I-XII was handed over to the panchayati raj institutions at district, block and gram panchayat level. In the second step shiksha kendras were established at state, district, block and cluster levels. Formation of shiksha kendras was a major step. A shiksha kendra is a managing body for the elementary education and has the representation of the Education Department, DPEP, Panchayati Raj Institutions, SCERT and Adult Education and Literacy. However, what is significant in these developments that the management of elementary education has been completely taken away from the Education Department and it is being managed by an umbrella of Zilla Shiksha Kendra at district level, Janpad Shiksha Kendra at Block level, and Jan Shiksha Kendra at Cluster level. Education Department does not have any responsibility to manage elementary education at the directorate, district and block levels except some service matters of regular teachers.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Panchayati Raj Department is now performing the functions of DEO in the shiksha kendra. There is also a Zilla Sarkar at the district level whose chairman is a state cabinet minister. He is also the chairman of District Planning Committee, which takes decision in respect of all the matters at the district level including education. Since CEO of Panchayati Raj Department has so many tasks to do the question arises how long the present arrangement will sustain. Some of the Officers of Education Department are working in the shiksha kendras as officiating officers. The problem of coordination has been emerged in the present arrangement among the panchayati raj bodies, project management apparatus like DPEP, which is the main actor of shiksha kendra and the district administration under Zilla Sarkar. While powers of the recruitment of teachers are vested with the Zilla Panchayat and the Janpad Panchayat, the powers of transfer of teachers entrusted with the chairman of Zilla Sarkar, that is, the cabinet minister.

It looks that management of elementary education at district level in Madhya Pradesh is everyone's responsibility but no body is responsible and accountable to anybody. No other state in the country has gone to this extent though there are states like Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat where elementary education is being managed by the Panchayati Raj bodies in coordination with the Education Department. District education officer has only representation in the shiksha kendra and does not have any kind of responsibility.

The study also found that block level supervisory structure under the block education officer has been abolished. Earlier, there used to be three to four assistant inspectors of schools under a block education officer. Block Education Officer has been presently transferred to the panchayat raj department is responsible for coordination between Janpad Panchayat and the educational activities at the block level. He or she is moreover involved in management of data and information and not in the supervision of primary and upper primary schools.

Since the responsibility of managing primary and upper primary schools has been given to the PRIs the state has stopped the recruitment of regular cadres – educational administrators and teachers. It has been found that since PRIs do not have adequate financial resources, recruitment on vacant posts in

regular scale has become the last priority. The study reveals that out of the 45 District Education Officers in Madhya Pradesh 35 posts were vacant in January 2002. The officiating officers were manning these posts. On the other hand, the quality of recruitment of teachers in primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools has been declined to a large extent. The first instance was that in place of recruitment of teachers in regular scales the state started recruiting Shiksha Karmis for a period of three years.

The pay scales fixed for teachers were very low and even about half of the regular teachers. It was decided by the state that the vacant posts of teachers will not be filled-up and the same posts will be kept in the Dying Cadre declared by the state government. It was decided that the teachers appointed in the shiksha karmi category would be regularized after 3 years. But after a two-year period the appointment of shiksha karmis was also stopped and in place the teachers in primary and upper primary schools were recruited on contract basis. The PRIs maintain that this practice has been introduced in the state to make them more accountable and the further promotion of these teachers will be made on their performance. The pay scales of contract teachers have been fixed on consolidated basis. As such, for example, in primary school there are three types of teachers for the same post. (i) Lower division teachers in the pay scale of Rs. 4000-6000/- (ii) Shiksha Karmi in the pay scale of Rs. 800-1200/- and (iii) contract teachers in the consolidated salary of Rs. 2500/- per month.

Rajasthan has gone one step forward as compared to Madhya Pradesh . It has dissolved the individual identity of the Education Department as it has transferred and amalgamated whole of the Education Department from institutional level to secretariat level in the Panchayati Raj Department. Now there is no Education Department in Rajasthan as such. Even the designations of the education officers have been changed except the designation of Director of Elementary Education.

The designation of the Secretary Education has been made as Secretary Panchayati Raj, the District Elementary Education Officer as Additional Chief Executive Officer (Elementary Education), the Block Elementary Education Officer, as the Additional Block Development Officer (Elementary Education). The DEO at the district level is now accountable to the Chief Executive Officer, Panchayati Raj and not to the Director of Elementary Education. Similarly, the Block Elementary Education Officer in the new set-up has to report to the Block Development Education Officer and not to the District Elementary Education Officer.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment envisages the transfer of education as a subject to the Panchayati Raj Department so that the planning and decision-making can be done with the help of the local people. NIEPA study on Recent Trends in Educational Administration indicates that this situation has created a problem of coordination even within the education officers at different levels. In Rajasthan as a result of the ban on the recruitment on vacant posts of teachers in schools several problem have come up. The Panchayati Raj Department rationalizes the posts of teachers in schools. They are appointed on the attachment basis from the school, which has more teachers than the norm of 1:49. Since no recruitment of new teachers is being done there was a large backlog of vacant posts and as a result the teacher pupil ratio has increased which is about 60-70 children per teacher. This has been an adverse impact upon the quality of primary schools. However this situation is emerging particularly in

the schools managed by the Panchayati Raj Department. The schools opened by the Lok Jumbish Parishad and the Shiksha Karmi Board are not facing this problem.

At the panchayat samiti level the Pardhan of the panchayat has the transfer powers, the Block Development Officer being the executive officer. While interacting with the Pardhan of Nokha Panchayat in the Bikaner district it was observed that by having the transfer powers they feel that the accountability of teachers to people has increased. However, it was reported by the educational functionaries at the block level that since most of the panchayat members are illiterate they do not care the academic matters and are generally interested in passing orders and seeking compliance on them from the teachers and, if, they do not comply they are severally punished and transferred to the remote and rural areas.

The subordination of the panchayat members by teachers in Rajasthan has become the unwritten government orders since only those can enjoyed their posting in the nearby village or the place of their choice who have the tacit blessings of the panchayat samiti members. There were instances in this block when either teacher had to be suspended from their posts or they have to go on long leave for the non-compliance of the unjustified demand of the panchayat samiti members. As such teachers have become the tool in the hands of panchayat samiti functionaries. The other political representatives such as MLAs also give the similar treatment to teachers. The situation is not different with the District Education Officers. Their most of the time is spent in the meetings convened by the Chief Executive Officer at the district level. On the other hand, they are not free to work any more, as each and every time the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad takes decision at district level.

Conclusions

Managing change is very much related to the sustainability of new experiments and innovations. Madhya Pradesh has taken the management of elementary education from the purview of the education department. On the other hand DPEP, which is the backbone of the shiksha kendra, is also in the completion stage and the whole responsibility of managing education in that case will fall upon the panchayati raj institutions. Capacity building of panchayati raj institutions for managing education is the talk of the future not present. The shortcomings for managing education in the past do not lay in the administrative structures of the education department itself but it matters that how best the organizational structures are utilized. Like education department, the panchayati raj institutions also work under the boundaries of rules and regulations, acts and codes etc. How these institutions will give priority to educational activities that will affect the sustainability of present mechanism in Madhya Pradesh.

Rajasthan has a Rajiv Gandhi Prarambhik Shiksha and Shaksharta Mission, which includes all the development, programmes like DPEP, Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the education department but the effective coordination among all the actors is yet to be achieved. On the other hand, for more than forty years rural primary education in Rajasthan was being managed by the Panchayat Samitis that could not yield the desired results. Then what prompted the state government to hand over the total management of elementary education to the Panchayati Raj bodies which

yet to develop their capacities in the planning and management of education except the transfer of teachers which itself has become the major problem in the state. Effecting changes in the designations of education officers and making them accountable to the panchayati raj functionaries is not the remedy itself unless there is shift from control oriented system under the boundaries of rules and regulations to task based result oriented strategies as already being practiced under Lok Jumbish, DPEP and the Sarva Shikha Abhiyan.