

Role of Gram Panchayat in Imparting Quality Education at Elementary Stage

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Abstract: *The present study was conducted with the objectives to examine the perceptions of Gram Panchayat members on the functioning of Govt. Elementary Schools in Odisha and to draw inferences on the basis of RTE Act 2009 and the role in improving quality education at elementary level. The study revealed that panchayat members and sarpanches were unaware of school management committees and their functioning. The performance of rural schools varies with the nature of participation by village panchayats.*

Key Words: *Gram Panchayat, Quality education, Elementary stage.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the panacea of all social evils. Those, who have proper education can judge which is right or wrong, social or anti-social, proper or improper, honest or dishonest, just or unjust etc. The country needs the educated citizens. If the citizens are more and highly educated, the country will be more progressive. So, education is no doubt the stepping stone or gateway to all social, economic and political achievements. All the developed and developing countries assimilate the subject, education to the constitution and other essentials related to it. Education foundational, preparatory, middle, secondary and higher, whatever its category may be, must be given top most priority for the wellbeing of not only the citizens, but also the growth of the state as a whole. Where there is education, there is civilisation. It enriches culture and cultural heritage of the society where we live. It polishes human nature and changes the attitudes. Whatever reformations we see, that is due to our educational background.

India, our beloved motherland is such a country where there are so many diversities. Due to our educational background and national policy, we always maintain unity and integrity. Our educational system is made in such a manner which binds country very tight. Our education and policy cannot harass any community and cannot create any illegal

problems. The constitution provides special protection to the minorities. Articles 29 and 30 of Part-III of the constitution guarantee to the minorities cultural and educational rights. Such as, right to maintain language, script and culture (article 29), right to establish and administer educational institutions (article 30). There is also the provision of right to education under article 21A. The 86th constitutional amendment Act, 2002 makes elementary education a fundamental right. It has been done by including Article 21(A). It provides right to education and declares that the government will provide free and compulsory education to all children between the age of 6 to 14 in such a manner as the state may by law determine.

India is a federal state and also a democratic state. There is an introduction of grass root level democracy. Panchayat Raj is the rural based unit for grass root level democracy. Panchayat Raj consists of three tiers namely, Grama Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. Gram panchayat is the first tier and base of the grass root level democracy. There is a good number of villages under a gram panchayat. It is said that India is a country of villages. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation says, the soul of the country resides in villages. When the village education specifically primary education stands developed, then everything is on flourishing way. The Gram panchayat has a positive role in improving the quality of school education.

Sarva Shikshya Aviyan has been implemented since 2000-2002. It has been carried out jointly both by the centre and states. The first and foremost aim and objective of this programme or expedition is to universalise the Elementary Education. There was the existence of DPEP scheme and under this scheme the classes from 1st to 5th were merged but Sarva Shikshya Aviyan has been extended to upper primary school. It aims at to bring the children of 6 to 14 years old to the schools, to make the enrolled students stay

in school till they pass out class 8th, to develop the intellect of the children through the implementation of quality education, & to remove linguistic differences in the field of education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the perceptions of Gram Panchayat members on the functioning of Govt. Elementary Schools in Odisha.
- To draw inferences on the basis of RTE Act 2009 and the role in improving quality education at elementary level.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in Ranpur Block of Nayagarh district, Odisha. The block was selected on the basis of Census of India, 2011. Two villages were selected. For meeting the objectives of research, information was obtained from the members of the Grama Panchayat and villagers of the selected rural schools.

Tools Used:

The following tools were used to collect the relevant data.

- Observation Schedule
- Group Discussion

Role of Gram Panchayat:

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, “under Article 243 G (11th Schedule) of the Constitution provides powers and functions to Panchayati Raj Institutions to plan and implement schemes for socio-economic development including primary and secondary school education. Therefore, Panchayats have been given the responsibility to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of primary schools” (Kumar, 2006).

The power, functions, and duties of Gram Panchayat for elementary education are:

- Promotion of public awareness and participation in primary and secondary education.
- Ensuring full enrolment and attendance in primary schools and its management.
- Providing such educational facilities as may be deemed necessary and desirable.
- Promotion of school health and nutrition programmes.

- Removal of encroachments on public / school properties.
- Organizing voluntary labour & contribution for community works.”

For proper functioning of elementary schools at grass roots level, the Central Advisory Board of Education had proposed a broad framework for managing education. A crucial feature of the framework was the provision of Village Education Committee (VEC). The Committee had the power to check attendance registers of students; attendance of teachers and overall functions of the school. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 replaced VEC with SMC and Section 9 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 mentions the duties of a local authority and Section 21 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 gives direction regarding composition and functions of SMC. The school development plan also mentions in the Section 22 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

In this expedition, the Gram panchayat has a positive role to bear. Its role may be described in the manner as follows.

1. To make plans in accordance with the requirements of each and every family of the Gram Panchayat and approve in the Gram Sabha.
2. The Sarpanch is to visit the schools in the jurisdiction of his own panchayat. He must see if the children are properly taught by the teachers or not and check the presence of teachers in the school campus.
3. The sarpanch may enquire the physical presence of the Head Master. If the case so requires, he may report it to the authority proper. On basis of his report, the higher authority may take action deem fit.
4. The sarpanch just after the visit of schools may advise the concerned school authority regarding the smooth management of school.
5. He may inspire both children as well as their guardians for regular arrival of the children to the schools and lessen the drop outs.
6. The chairman of the panchayat samiti is to co-ordinate the Gram panchayat for the wellbeing of primary education at the village level.
7. The chairman of the panchayat samiti must act as a link between gram panchayat and panchayat samiti.
8. The sarpanch and the chairman should solve the complex problems of the schools.

9. The Block Education Officer will be responsible to the respective Panchayat samiti for the wellbeing of elementary and secondary education.

10. The District Education Officer is a key person who will be held responsible for education of the district.

11. The chairman of the Zilla Parishad has the authority to sanction the casual leaves of the DEO.

DISCUSSION

The members of the panchayats and Sarpanches, claimed that they always attended school functions whenever the teachers invited them. They also distributed the books, uniforms, shoes and other items whenever requested by school teachers through School Management Committees. When Sarpanches were asked as to who cleaned the toilets in the schools, why there was no drinking water in the school, about the enrolment rate in school, etc., then the sarpanches stated that only school teachers handled these issues and that the school was responsible for their needs and requirements as they did not get any money or fund for these tasks. According to the Section 9 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the village panchayat “shall maintain records of children up to the age of fourteen years residing within its jurisdiction, in such a elementary education by every child residing within its jurisdiction and provide infrastructure including school building, teaching staff and learning materials”. The members of the panchayat claimed that they organized many functions, like, construction of Kitchen Shed, flag stand etc. The village panchayat of all the sampled villages failed to organize any awareness camps or advocacy for enrolment in the government schools and mapping out of school children. While as per sub-rule 6 of Rule 6, “the local authority shall identify the neighbourhood school(s) where children can be admitted and make such information public for each habitation.” In sample government schools there were some serious problems like the location of school, schools without a boundary wall, lack of infrastructure, lack of potable water, Mid- Day Meals, lack of parental support due to the mushrooming of low-cost private schools in the same village.

CONCLUSION

The study found that panchayat members and sarpanches were utterly unaware of school

management committees and their functioning. The performance of rural schools varies with the nature of participation by village panchayats. The community participation lacunae at every level of school education, i.e. within the school and beyond, significantly contribute to the poor implementation of State policies.

One of the major obstructions was a lack of awareness among members of gram panchayat about their duties and functions for school. The Panchayat members did not get any training or knowledge from any source about what they can do for schools. In addition to this, panchayat members were also not aware of policies and programmes which could benefit children in education and sports. Hence, role of Panchayat and Block level officers to organise training programmes for sarpanches and members of village panchayat.

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