



## DECENTRALIZATION IN EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### *Abstract*

As India enters the twenty-first century, education as the master determinant of development has assumed unprecedented importance. Universalization of elementary education is the focus of the Right to Education Act and implemented in terms of the constitutional amendment which has also made childhood care and education (pre-primary education) a Directive Principle of the State Policy.

There is also the talk of the demographic dividend which India can meaningfully earn in the next twenty-five years if only the working age population is imparted the requisite skills which pre-supposes near-universalization of secondary and higher secondary education. At the same time, India as a participant in the World Knowledge Economy is required to vamp up its higher education participation rate of the relevant age group population from about 10-12 per cent to 15-20 per cent implying not only mass higher education but also scaling up its research capacity and research output in terms of scientific papers and patents. Thus, all stages of education from the nursery stage to the nuclear research stage, so to say, have to be emphasized simultaneously.

But then educational pre-requisites are to be accomplished within the political framework of the parliamentary federalism entailing the cooperation of India's two dozen states and half a dozen union territories. Education under India's Constitution is a concurrent subject in which both the State and the Centre can legislate. Educational performance in India which would determine India's economic performance is therefore crucially modified by centre-state relations.

Education vis-à-vis Indian federalism is therefore a vitally important but rather neglected arena.

**Key Words:** Decentralisation, Concurrent Subject, Three Tier, Six Tier Panchayat Raj Educational Management

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **DECENTRALISATION**

Decentralisation means transfer of power, responsibility and authority to the people at large. It is diffusion of power into the hands of people. India being a land of villages, our parliamentary democracy must reach the rural masses. Our democratic edifice is to be built on rural foundations only. The whole outlook of rural populace is to be revolutionised by the concept of decentralisation so that leadership grows from below. The underlying philosophy of decentralisation is to make our democracy which grows from roots and which is not imposed from above. The reason for the failure of certain democracies was obvious from the fact that their foundations were not firm but shaky. That means, democracy was not working properly in practice.

Democratic decentralisation of educational administration means that schools must become the concern of the community if they are to be organs of nation's life. Our educational institutions should be of the community, should be governed by the community and should be managed by the community. Decentralisation aims at facilitation. The system of education must provide for the interplay of forces from village school to the university. Ignorance can be eliminated by pooling of our educational resources, over a network of fabric woven upwards from village school as the base.

Our educational superstructure should have as its basis the village school. Democratic decentralisation of education should run on a parallel line along with decentralisation of other aspects of life of the nation. The school is visualised to be the third arm of the triumvirate on which rests our growing democracy and the socialist society. The village school, thus, forms the third arm of the village.

Article 40 of the constitution of India reads: "The states are directed to take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government."

### **Objective Of Decentralisation**

Shri S.K. Dey says, Panchayati Raj as we now visualise will therefore mean progressive increase in competence from ground upwards and corresponding transfer of responsibilities from the centre to the ground.

Devolution of authority, progressive delegation of powers and democratisation of administration all along from the centre to the family are the ultimate objectives. Broadly speaking, the Lok Sabha should be the cumulative reflection of Grama Sabha.

### **System Of Panchayat Raj**

The Balwant Rai Mehta Study Team on Community Development programmes had recommended a three tier system of Panchayat Raj. It is of pyramidal structure, Village Panchayat being at the bottom, Zilla Parishad at the top, while Panchayati Samithi is to serve as the intermediary

agency. The report recommends: "So long as we don't discover or create representative and democratic institution which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure expenditure of money upon local objects, conforms with the needs and wishes of the localities, invest it with adequate power and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local interest in the field of development."

### **The Pyramidal Structure Of The Three-Tier System Of Panchayat Raj**

The pattern of Panchayat Raj administration is a three-tier system consisting of

1. Village Panchayat at the village level
2. Panchayat Samithi at the block level
3. Zilla Parishad at the district level

### **Importance Of Decentralisation**

The implications of democratic decentralisation of educational administration expounded by several educationists reveal the importance of this reform. They are reported below

1. The self governing democratic units stand as a guarantee for democracy by providing popular protection and by developing democratic practices in education and by testing the democratic process.
2. Democratic decentralisation facilitates popular participation in the institutional activities and in gaining the popular confidence and

support for their efficient functioning.

3. Democratic decentralisation of educational organisation is meant to safeguard education function from being misused through popular control.
4. The task of decentralised educational administrative machinery is to bridge the gap between the State and the Community and help in better implementation of plans of educational development and schematic operations and so on

### **pattern of democratic decentralisation of educational administration**

Democratic decentralisation of education is not of recent origin in the sense that local bodies were assigned the task of administration of education even during the British regime from the last century itself. Local bodies were associated with administration of Primary Education. The district boards and Municipal Boards were administering both Secondary and Primary Education in the past.

In the post independent era, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee had envisaged the system of Panchayat Raj as a means of democratic decentralisation. The entire administration for the purpose of development was to be handed over to this three tier system, namely the village panchayat, the block panchayat samithi and zilla parishad.

Almost all the states of India are adopting more or less the same pattern, with perhaps minor changes in the nomenclature used. In all states the

panchayat samithis are statutory executive corporate bodies except in the state of ammu and Kashmir where they are purely advisory.

#### Panchayat Samithis and Education

Consequent on adoption of democratic decentralisation in the form of Panchayat Raj, the responsibility of Primary education has been shifted to Panchayat samithis. By making Panchayat samithis block as a unit of administration of primary education, the state government intends to bring the administration and primary education which almost constitutes mass education, closer to the people and ensures their direct interest and participation in it.

Education function of the Panchayat Samithis is carried out with the help of the standing committees for education. The act mentions the standing committees for education in the following way. For every Panchayat Samithi there shall be a standing committee respectively for Education including social education, Medical relief, and health, sanitation including rural water supply and drainage and relief of distress on grave emergencies.

It is stated that for standing committees under clause (iii) at least one woman and one scheduled caste representative should be the members. The standing committee for education assists the Panchayat Samithis relating to education.

Maintenance and expansion of elementary and basic schools and in particular:

1. Management of government and taken over Aided elementary and higher elementary schools.
2. Establishment of Adult education centres and Adult Literacy centres.
3. Provision and improvement of accommodation for schools with people's participation.
4. Taking of such action as may be necessary for the promotion of education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Among the administrative personnel of Panchayat Samithis, the Extension Officer, Education is concerned with the Education Wing of the Panchayat Samithi. He carries out specific functions like inspection of Primary Educational Institutions and looks to the improvement of their educational standards.

#### Zilla Parishad and Education

With respect to education, the Zilla Parishads are concerned with the establishment, maintenance and expansion of secondary schools mainly.

Educational function of the Zilla Parishad is carried out through the assistance of the standing committee for education. Standing Committee in the Zilla Parishad Administration is related to education, medical and public health.

The standing committee is responsible for the improvement of education.

## **Advantages And Shortcomings Of Decentralisation Of Education**

### **Advantages**

In the field of education, a further safeguard is provided by the degree of decentralisation introduced.

1. It enables adjusting the institutions to the local needs and environment. Thus the schools have become the reservoirs irrigating the fertile soil. They become the true replicas of community life.
2. It facilitated community leaders to accept the responsibility and share to one desirable extent in the educational programmes and implementation of educational plan.
3. Establishment of Panchayat Raj, in general, had helped to provide ample opportunity for politisation of the rural people.
4. It is effecting necessary sociological, political and economic changes in the rural sector and a new vitality is pulsating in the rural areas. It has brought about the awareness of the great weapon in their hands .i.e. vote.

Enforcing decentralisation and democratisation before sufficiently educating people as to the democratic value and practices is feared to result in disastrous consequence.

1. The danger of favourism, partisan spirit and nepotism creeping into village life has been recognised by some leaders.

2. Age old rivalries, the rigid hierarchial behaviour of village community and caste localities may tend to render decentralisation as sense formalism.
3. Over emphasis on devolution of power to the matter units is considered to be not so desirable for the development of Indian nationhood by same.

However, democratic decentralisation has come to stay as an accepted national policy. Constant evolution is essential to appraise popular enthusiasm and participation.

Absence of political rivalries in the Panchayat elections is a chief characteristic which is worth noting.

In addition, unanimity of elections was found to be another good feature in majority of villages. These features will serve us as indications which may lead to partyless government as visualised by some of our Sarvodaya leaders.

There may be some shortcomings in the early stages of its implementation which should not lead us to the short sightedness of rejecting the scheme as a whole. Defects are to be rectified and limitations are to be overcome by making the system more meaningful, practical and adaptable from time to time.

### **Educational implications**

Decentralization in education leads to improvement in the system by involving members at ground level. There is need to define clearly the powers and responsibilities of the educational administrators and the non-official functionaries. Teachers should be kept

away from politics and occupational security should be provided to them. The Deputy Secretaries should be re-designated as the Educational Secretaries of the Zilla Parishads and should be endowed with adequate powers. The extension officers (education) should be placed under the control of the Education Secretaries. Educational Standing Committees should be formed as the advisory bodies of education at the district level to help development of education in the district. The powers of appointment, transfers, control and discipline should be vested in the District Education Officers only. Non-Official functionaries should be given administrative training for a short time. District Selection Committees should be formed including the District Education Officer, Zilla Parishad Chairman and the Z.P. Education Secretary to look to recruitment and training of the teachers.

### **summary**

Education under India's Constitution is a concurrent subject in which both the State and the Centre can legislate. Democratic decentralisation of educational administrative organisation has been one of the major reforms that have affected the country after the advent of democracy. Centralisation is not considered to be compatible with the democratic ideal. Decentralisation facilitates more of popular participation in the national developmental activities. Decentralisation means transfer of

power, responsibility and authority to the people at large. It is diffusion of power into the hands of people. However, as is the case with any new adventure, some defects have been found in the actual implementation. Many research studies have shown this. A picture of the Decentralisation of Educational Administration in its varied aspects has been discussed. Latest trend is to apply six tier panchayat raj educational administration to improve the system by removing the defects intelligently to reap more benefits from the system.

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