

EDUCATION FOR ALL – MID DECADE ASSESSMENT

**MANAGEMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
*STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES***

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Preface

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal approved a comprehensive vision of Education for All (EFA) to be achieved by 2015 based on the six goals. The six goals relate to the areas of early childhood care and education, universalising primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. The main focus is on 'reaching the unreached' for ensuring complete coverage of education. With this background the *Mid- Decade Assessment of Education for All* was initiated to take stock of the progress made with respect to EFA Goals. Corresponding to this exercise, a comprehensive review of the progress made with respect to Education for All in India was conducted jointly by Government of India and the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

The present work which is a sequel to the National Report consists of a series of thematic and state review papers. There are nine thematic review papers covering all the six goals including three additional papers on three other themes, namely, Teacher and Teacher Education, Management Strategies for EFA and Financing of EFA in India. These thematic review papers are further followed by a series of analytical papers covering progress of EFA in twenty seven states of India. State reviews attempt to present a quick picture of the current level of progress in each state of India assessing the magnitude of the task involved in achieving EFA goals and projecting a realistic time frame as well as strategies needed to reach the goals. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review paper has been prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments.

The review papers along with the National Report present a comprehensive and disaggregated picture of the progress made towards EFA goals in the country. The papers are coming out at a very opportune time when the Parliament is engaged in debating the legislation to make education for all children a Fundamental Right. While the thematic papers highlight state of development of education with respect to different goals of EFA, the State papers present the diversity of the situation across the country. The whole series would serve as an invaluable independent documentation on various aspects of EFA ranging from early childhood care and education to universal elementary education and adult literacy programmes using authentic data sources accompanied by a review of relevant empirical research.

The whole Project involving the National Report along with the series of thematic and state analytical review papers were conceived and executed by Prof. R. Govinda, NUEPA who led the entire exercise and would like to thank him profusely for his leadership. Dr. Mona Sedwal who as a part of the Project Team at NUEPA contributed immensely to the whole exercise also deserves appreciation. The Team immensely benefited by the advice given by the Technical Advisory Group set up under the Chairmanship of Professor A.K. Sharma for guiding the entire exercise. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof. A. K. Sharma for his invaluable guidance. Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support provided by UNICEF and UNESCO.

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Editorial Note

Indian Constitution directs the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14. This goal has been pursued by the country for nearly six decades through successive development plans. The last two decades have witnessed significant improvements in children's participation in schooling, accompanied by substantial increase in investments. The recent effort to raise resources for the sector through imposition of an education cess is major effort in that direction. Even though school education has traditionally remained a subject for action by State Governments, Government of India has, during the last two decades following the National Policy on Education – 1986, begun to play a leading role. This culminated in the launching of the national programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001. Despite all these efforts, the final goal of providing quality education for all has eluded the country.

Urgency of reaching the goal has been heightened in recent years due to several national and international developments, including commitments made under the Dakar Framework for Action for providing quality Education for All by 2015, which not only covers primary education but also focus on literacy goals, gender equality and quality concerns. The Dakar Framework of Action listed the following six specific goals to be achieved by all countries.

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The National Plan of Action for Education for All (2002) in India reflects this sense of urgency felt within the country by proposing to reach the targets much ahead of the international dateline. At the national level, the Constitutional Amendment in 2002 declaring education in the age group 6-14 which corresponds to the elementary education stage of schooling a fundamental right has brought the issue of universal elementary education (UEE) to the centre stage of public discourse. The country is in the process of

drawing up the legislation for effective implementation of the right for translating the constitutional provision into reality. With the progress made in recent years the goal seems to be achievable by the international time frame of 2015. But this requires systematic assessment of the various goals the present exercise is one such effort.

UNESCO has been bringing out annual review of the progress made in moving towards the goal of EFA through the Global Monitoring Report. These assessments do not reflect an encouraging picture of the Indian scene. This is an issue of serious concern for the national leadership as one sixth of the world population lives in India. With around 65% adult literacy rate, there are more around 350 million adult illiterates in the country. This should not be taken to imply that no efforts are being made to meet the challenge of EFA. Besides, the national averages do not fully reflect the diverse reality characterizing educational progress in India. In fact, it is paradoxical that while certain pockets of the country are emerging as the international hub for creating a knowledge society, certain other regions and sections of the population continue to be deprived of even basic education. It is clear that in pursuing EFA goals, not all states and regions of the country are in the same league. The variety is too wide to draw any generalization. While some states have made remarkable progress in education, practically eradicating illiteracy and achieving near universal participation of children in elementary education, several other states continue to remain far from the final goal. What is needed to progress faster in moving towards the 2015 EFA deadline in all parts of the country? This obviously demands an analytical exercise - goal wise as well as statewise.

It is with this objective in view that the present exercise was taken up to make an independent assessment of the progress achieved in different states and with respect to different EFA goals. The present series of papers constitute the outcome of such a comprehensive exercise carried out by independent experts, in collaboration with Central and State Governments. The main purpose of the exercise is to place before policy makers, planners and the civil society as a whole an analytical picture of the progress made towards EFA goals and the challenges ahead for reaching the goals in a realistic fashion.

The exercise consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of presenting an overview of progress in the country with respect to six goals highlighted in the Dakar Declaration. This was largely based on the technical guidelines for assessment prepared by UNESCO. A national report entitled "Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Reaching the Unreached" has been prepared and published jointly by NUEPA and Government of India.

The Second Part consists of a series of nine thematic review papers dealing with different dimensions of 'Education for All' keeping in view the Indian context and priorities. These include: (i) Early Childhood Care and Education; (ii) Universal Elementary Education; (iii) Adult Education; (iv) Towards Gender Equality in Education; (v) Education of Adolescents

and Young Adults; (vi) Quality of Education; (vii) teacher and teacher education; (viii) Management Strategies for EFA and (ix) Financing of EFA. Each of these papers has been prepared by an expert or experts in the respective area. The papers were reviewed by another independent expert and revised based on the observations.

The third part consists of analytical papers covering all states of India. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review was prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments. The state level reviews are prepared on lines similar to what was followed for preparing the national review. Each of them deals with comprehensively on all six goals of EFA specified in the Dakar Declaration.

The National Policy on Education (1986) advocated for adopting a participatory approach for educational management and considered the goal of EFA unachievable without the active involvement of the civil society. Building partnership between Government and Non-Government agencies has been repeatedly endorsed by policy makers. But what space do they really occupy in the overall EFA effort? Similarly, role of private efforts in provision of education has come for serious consideration in recent years. The new *Panchayati Raj* initiatives take management issues into the larger context of political administration and decentralized governance. These are the themes and issues addressed in the review paper by Rahul Mukhopadhyay, N. Ramkumar and A.R. Vasavi.

This elaborate exercise of assessing the progress in EFA should be viewed in the context of repeated assertions by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on EFA that Indian is at the risk of not making the global targets with respect to several EFA goals. The findings of the review clearly points out that the situation across the country is very diverse. While some States have registered fast progress on all fronts, some others continue to lag behind. Also in general, access to schooling has improved every where even though much remains to be done with respect to other goals of EFA. It is hoped that the various volumes brought out through the exercise would together present a realistic analysis and a disaggregated picture of the Education for All process and achievements in the country.

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Abbreviations

AWP&B	: Annual Work Plan and Budget
BEO	: Block Education Officer
BRC	: Block Resource Centre (or Coordinator)
BRP	: Block Resource Person
CABE	: Central Advisory Board of Education
CRC	: Cluster Resource Centre
CRP	: Cluster Resource Person
DDPI	: Deputy Director of Public Instruction
DEEA	: Decentralization of elementary education administration
DIC	: District Implementation Committee
DIET	: District Institute of Education and Training
DISE	: District Information System for Education
DPEP	: District Primary Education Programme
DPSC	: District Primary School Council
DSERT	: Department of State Educational Research and Training
Dy P C	: Deputy Project Coordinator
ECs	: Education Committees
EDC	: Education Development Centre
EFA	: Education for All
EGS	: Education Guarantee Scheme (and schools belonging to this scheme)
EMIS	: Education Management Information System
GOI	: Government of India
GoK	: Government of Karnataka
HSTP	: Hoshangabad Science Training Programme
IAS	: Indian Administrative Service
ICR	: Intelligent Character Recognition
JRM	: Joint Review Mission
KSQAO	: Karnataka School Quality Assessment Organization

MHRD	: Ministry of Human Resource Development
MLAs	: Members of the Legislative Assembly
MSK	: Madhyamik Shiksha Kendra
NCERT	: National Council of Educational Research and Training
NUEPA	: National University of Educational Planning and Administration (formerly NIEPA)
NGOs	: Non-government organizations
NIAS-DQEP	: National Institute of Advanced Studies-District Quality Education Project
PIL	: Public Interest Litigation
PRIs	: Panchayati Raj Institutions
PTAs	: Parent Teacher Associations
PwC	: PriceWaterhouseCoopers
RTI	: Right to Information Act
Satcom	: Satellite Communications
SCERT	: State Council of Educational Research and Training
SDMC	: School Development and Monitoring Committee
SIEMAT	: State Institute of Educational Management and Training
SSA	: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSK	: Shishu Shiksha Kendra
SSP	: Shishu Shiksha Prakalpa
VECs	: Village Education Committees

INTRODUCTION

The National Plan of Action, India (Gol, 2003) identified *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) as the single most important initiative at the national level to realize the six goals of Education for All (EFA) as articulated in the Dakar conference. It is in the light of the broad directions and strategies formulated by the National Plan of Action document (Gol, 2003) that we have attempted to engage with the theme “Management Strategies for EFA” and critically examined the implications of these strategies for India’s elementary education system and its ability to deliver the goals of EFA.

This review is based primarily on secondary literature document analysis, and discussions with key personnel from the state education departments. The review covers and makes interlinks between the structures, processes, programmes, institutions and personnel that constitute the elementary education system. By focusing on both policy and practice, the review seeks to discern the gaps between the two and highlights the end results of such a dichotomy. It does

not draw on any perception or approach to reviewing management structures, and also eschews organizational behaviour approaches. Instead, the review draws on sociological understanding of the functioning of governmental organizations and the ground realities in which programmes are sought to be implemented or realized. Details about key structures and their functioning and effectiveness have also been drawn from experiences in a number of research projects¹. While illustrative examples have been taken from across the country to underscore details or emphasize specific arguments, the review has focused mainly on information from three select states reflecting different governance/management structures in education delivery, i.e., Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal.

A perusal of the National Plan of Action document indicates an emphasis on four broad strategies in terms of organizational rearrangements and management processes for the realization of EFA goals within the specified timeframe in the sub-continent. These strategies are:

1. Decentralized decision-making and management through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) as well as through school-level community-based structures, like the Village Education Committees (VECs) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).
2. Bottom-up planning focusing on specificity of needs of particular geographical locales and their inhabitants that will be subsequently consolidated at the district as the basic unit for anchoring different interventions.
3. Non-proliferation of parallel structures and processes through convergence, with respect to planning, coordination, and programme implementation.
4. A three-tiered monitoring and supervision of progress towards achievement of EFA goals that involve: (a) PRIs and community level structures at the local level; (b) Management Information Systems, such as the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and supervision missions; and (c) All India Surveys at the state and national levels.

In the first section of this paper, we focus on the structure, policies, processes, and programmes of the education departments and the SSA. In the broad comparative framework we have adopted, the main objective has been to underline the

concerns that seem to be common across many states and to also bring forward state-level specificities that have positively impacted the progress towards achievement of EFA goals or at least have the potential to do so. The attempt, as already mentioned, is to critically reflect inwards, on the structure and functioning of the education departments, a factor that is often ignored in the overwhelming attention given to teachers and classroom processes in programme/process reviews.

The second section is primarily devoted to reviewing details and functioning of decentralized structures and the part played by them in achieving EFA goals. Here we review decentralization both through community-based structures that are particular to schooling and to those linked to the functioning of PRIs.

Both the sections of the paper can be seen as pointers to more specific questions about the orientation and impact of the strategies for EFA adopted by various states; strategies that have either facilitated or hindered the progress to achieve EFA goals. In the concluding section, we summarize these specific issues and supplement them with broader pointers and suggestions for enhancing the management of SSA and, therefore, achieving the objectives of EFA.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES IN EDUCATION

With the emphasis on 'universalizing elementary education', the education department faces multiple challenges. It has to not only efficiently deliver a service but also negotiate the regional and political contexts that differ from state to state, and function in a society which in its inherent diversity demands heterogeneous educational needs. A review of EFA's management structures will have to necessarily review the education department's structure, processes, and functioning. Much of this is also attendant with the recent growth in size and complexity that has in turn affected the very management of the system. The education departments at the state level have grown in terms of both size and complexity since the mid 1980s. For example, in Karnataka, the education department cadre, as a percentage of the entire state cadre, has grown to become around 40 percent in recent years. Also many of the state governments have now been making higher provision for education as compared to in earlier decades, with Karnataka allocating more than 12 percent of the state budget on general education

for the past few years. As to the rising structural complexity of the education department, different factors have been playing out across time. These include introduction of multiple and parallel structures through both the PRIs and large-scale programmes like the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and SSA, and emergence of new players in education such as private philanthropic organizations, NGOs, and public-private partnerships.

The National Plan of Action document (GoI, 2003) shows that management structure at the National Level and the State Level, comprising senior officials from the executive domain, are designated as crucial for coordinating and monitoring respective roles at these respective levels. Furthermore, since the DPEP, there has been a proliferation in the number of structures and institutions engaged in different aspects of public education delivery. What has, however, been missing, not only in the different periodic monitoring exercises of the EFA/SSA, but also in independent studies by academics,

is an evaluation of the very structures that are principally involved and responsible for delivery of public education. In this context, the need for in-depth and periodic reviews of the education departments of the states and the new structures that have come to be established with programmes such as the DPEP and SSA must be recognized.

In this section we, therefore, attempt a critical examination of the internal structure of state departments and their various institutions as well as those engendered by programmes such as the DPEP and SSA towards realizing EFA goals. Key concerns are expressed/ (sought to be underlined) through an examination of the structures, personnel policies, key institutions, processes, and management systems that form the framework of the education department as well as state-led programmatic interventions.

Structure

Hierarchy

The basic structure of the education system is hierarchical. This pertains to both the programmatic relation between the states and the centre and to the internal hierarchy of any state education department². Such a structure often prevents the adoption of implementation approaches that are local-specific and/or emerge from the needs elicited from lower-

level institutions and their functionaries. Both innovations and critical voices that can meaningfully feed into existing approaches, programmes, and plans are ignored in blue-print driven top-down implementation³. This logic is sustained and unchallenged in a hierarchy where there is a significant difference between the voices of the key decision-makers [the Secretary, the Director/Commissioner, and the State Project Director-SSA who are senior officers from the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) cadre] and the functionaries (state level cadre). The stated objectives of participatory planning, bottom-up approaches, flexibility accorded to institutions and programmes to adapt to local specificities remain frozen in the form they had been formulated – plan documents, vision statements, and evaluation reports.

Decentralization and Convergence

The decentralization of management of education has been emphasized as a key strategy to achieve EFA goals. However, the emphasis again has been on PRIs and community involvement but with the oversight of decentralizing the executive – the structure of the education department itself. Observations in Karnataka and discussions with senior functionaries reveal that within the SSA programme, centre-

state relations are governed predominantly by the guidelines of the central Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), and state-district relations are governed by dictates of the concerned state office. Such a concentration of power is not only evident within the SSA framework but also within the structures of the education department where junior functionaries often complain of an overload of programmes that are pushed down the lines (central and state) without consultative processes.

Some states, such as Madhya Pradesh, however, have, moved towards decentralizing the department/bureaucracy⁴. This has been in the form of a district-level executive structure to which various departments, including education, have devolved substantial powers for local-specific decision-making. Such processes have implications for greater responsiveness of the education department to district/local specificities and also prompt decision-making. Contrasting the structural changes effected in Madhya Pradesh with those existent in Karnataka, Jha et al (2001) point out that decentralization of administration has led to strong horizontal linkages at lower levels in Madhya Pradesh and has the potential of providing autonomy to the district administration which reduces dependency on the state office for each and every

issue. While quality issues have been a concern with the approach to decentralization undertaken by Madhya Pradesh, few deny that expansion of education delivery and, therefore, access has seen rapid improvement.

Both the DPEP and the SSA have led to the establishment of parallel structures in the form of the State Project Office, District Project Office, and the Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) at the level of states. While these offices and their functionaries were set up for realizing specific programme objectives, non-convergence with existing education department structures at the different levels where these new institutions emerged have resulted in: (a) lack of role clarity on primary responsibilities (e.g. the BRC-CRC structure has been appropriated for administrative work rather than academic mentoring); and (b) multiple reporting structures (e.g. the Block Resource Coordinator is required to report to the Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI)-Administration, the DIET Principal, the Deputy Project Coordinator (Dy P C)-SSA, and the Block Education Officer (BEO) for different aspects of his work). As a consequence, fulfillment of academic responsibilities is compromised in favour of administrative responsibilities, such as programme monitoring, which has led to

the diffusion of accountability. This privileging of administrative over academic responsibilities is primarily responsible for the continued problem of low learning levels across the nation. As the recent Pratham (2006 not in ref.) and other reports indicate, large proportions of children remain unable to read or write at levels appropriate to their age and class. Apart from the lack of clarity and attendant support structures to realize intended goals or objectives, such distortion of institutional functions and their associated functionaries mean that there is a further complication of the structures, addition of power lines, and a further bureaucratization of the system.

A study of the structures present at different levels under the state education department and under programmatic interventions, such as the DPEP and SSA, indicate the need for convergence. Though having received much importance in the National Plan of Action (GoI, 2003), the concept of convergence appears to exist only in government documents. Any move towards convergence of parallel structures should also encompass coherent criteria for primary responsibilities of personnel manning these structures and ensure singular lines of control and reporting. Such a move is also expected to bring convergence on policy perspectives at the state-level, better deployment of personnel, and savings in administration costs⁵.

Personnel Policies

When it comes to human resources or personnel policies, one notes the absence of clear, coherent or updated policies on such issues in most states⁶. This has in turn impacted on personnel management issues for both teachers and functionaries whereby their recruitment, transfers, capacity building, and career paths have become encumbered with problems. Even in West Bengal where the District Primary School Council (DPSC) is reported to have addressed some of these concerns, other problems pertaining to monitoring still remain (see, Sinha et al, nd: 36-37).

Norms and Politics

The absence of proper personnel policies and the politicization of existing norms (e.g. 'Special Request Transfers', and deputation of teachers by the Block Education Officer or DDPI in Karnataka) often run counter to goals of universal access. Both location of schools and deployment of teachers are subject to pressure from political powers and may lead to distortion of 'planned objectives'.⁷ The absence or inadequacy of teachers in remote areas largely stems from this. While 'objective criteria' for transfers stated in existing personnel related policies are often violated, the World Bank Report (2006) on 'Reforming Public Services in

India' offers some constructive suggestions to deal with this issue. Some of these are: creation of statutory committees to authorize and administer transfer process; computerized counseling; and creation of public database to monitor transfers⁸. However, many of these are yet to be fully implemented and where they are, in the contexts of mere additions instead of substantial reforms and restructuring they have become subject to backroom negotiations that make such objective and transparent measures effete.

Teacher-Recruitment

It is important to draw attention to the recruitment rationale governing teacher appointments across various states. Jha et al (2001) caution against the use of average enrolment figures of the block or district level, or sometimes even the size of the population at these levels, for establishing requirements of teachers as these can lead to faulty estimates. In a similar vein, the Third Joint Review Mission (JRM) Report for West Bengal (2006) highlights the need for rationalized norms for teacher recruitment and deployment that takes into account diversity of pedagogical requirements, such as subject-wise teaching or multi-grade teaching, to prevent the intra- and inter-district variation that is currently observable. A related issue has been the

use of para-teachers in both mainstream schools and alternative schooling initiatives across the country. While 'access' has been the primary rationale for employment of para-teachers, critics have noted with concern such a move and its implications for 'quality' and also for 'equity' as foisting sub-standard learning options to the socially and economically marginalized sections⁹. In the face of different bases for estimation being used and the non-regular employment options being practiced by different states, there is a strong case for regularized recruitment policies for teachers based on disaggregated data of actual requirements.

Strengthening Academic Cadre

Very few states in the country have a distinct recruitment and career policy for personnel staffing the key academic institutions at the state-level: the SCERT/DSERT (State Council of Educational Research and Training/Department of State Educational Research and Training), and the DIETs (District Institute of Education and Training). There is mobility between the administrative and academic positions and as a result there is a continuous tendency to move into administrative positions from academic positions based on the greater power/authority associated with administrative posts. This in turn implies

that academic institutions, such as the DIETs, often function as 'transit lounge' for functionaries and devalue any effort to build institutional capabilities. Efforts to introduce new recruitment and personnel policies also appear to be mired in internal politics where direct recruitment is vehemently opposed¹⁰. Though DIETs in West Bengal have been constituted only recently, there appear to be provisions of recruitment to these institutions from mainstream academia and such moves should be welcomed in other states also.

New positions that have emerged from the DPEP and SSA are also faced with problems similar to that of the DIETs. Such positions such as of the BRC, Block Resource Persons (BRPs), and Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs), are not strengthened through appropriate policies related to their recruitment, tenure, authority vested, or interlinkages with other academic structures. As a result, many of these functionaries are unable to deploy their responsibilities and are often appropriated for general administrative work by higher authorities. The deployment of CRPs as 'data collectors' and 'postmen' for the BEO, rather than as academic mentors and supervisors of schools, is one such example from Karnataka.

Appraisal and Career Progress

Since seniority is the mainstay of career progress in the department, there is little opportunity for recognition of performance or individual contributions. From the level of the teacher to that of the state-level administrative cadre, this remains a reason for lack of initiative and innovations. The existing system of Confidential Reports where only the immediate superior submits a performance report is inadequate as it is conducted without a consultative process. Reviews/appraisals could be conducted through a statutory committee, similar to the one proposed earlier for transfers, which would include the immediate superior/reporting authority. Such a statutory committee could then use the Confidential Reports as a basis for decisions on promotions/career advancements, grounded more on performance, contributions and objective appraisal criteria.

Within the department, there are scant instances of programmes that encourage continuous learning by officials at different levels. In this regard, the recent effort in Karnataka to facilitate Management Development Programmes for education functionaries appears to be a move in the right direction. However, one needs to

ensure that such programmes are accessible to all levels of the hierarchy and also cater to career needs of functionaries rather than thrust a 'general management' course which may not complement the real requirements of education officials or their everyday work. Overall, the absence of or limited opportunities for recognition among teachers and education administrators accounts for the deep sense of discontent and disengagement that characterize their work.

Legal Affairs

Interactions with senior state officials reveal that they are generally preoccupied with grievance redressal and court cases, pertaining primarily to personnel issues. This is also validated by observations made by previous studies¹¹. The Karnataka State Education Perspective Plan Committee (2007) of the Government of Karnataka has even suggested creation of either a special legal cell within the department or outsourcing of this function. It is also learnt that West Bengal is in the process of constituting a tribunal similar in form to that of Maharashtra to expedite decisions on the large number of cases that plague the government school system¹². With some states already having a State Institute of Educational

Management and Training (SIEMAT) or in the process of establishing one, training programmes specifically designed on aspects of 'legal administration' could also be explored for relevant functionaries.

Key Institutions

As already mentioned, there has been a proliferation of institutions in education at the district and sub-district levels since the DPEP, which continues under the SSA. Posts for these new institutions have seen a corresponding increase in personnel (either as contractual recruits or re-deployment from within department). Workload has also multiplied at the lower levels with a multitude of programmes and the related need to monitor, coordinate, conduct training, and consolidate data for these programmes. What is however of concern is that most programmatic interventions seem to be driven by logic of 'data' and 'finances' without a concurrent assessment of their functioning and contributions that should form the framework of public education delivery. In this section we therefore specifically focus on some of the key institutions created at the state and sub-state level for academic support and mentoring.

STATE COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

As nodal state-level institutions mandated to cater to the academic needs of schools, the SCERTs/DSERTs have grown in size and functions. Since these institutions require personnel with specialized and professional skills in areas such as development of textbooks, learning assessment, teacher training modules etc, there is need to recruit persons with abilities/skills appropriate for the task. However, in most states personnel recruited or deputed to these institutions are not primarily from academic cadre, even if drawn from the education department. A key result of this mismatch between responsibilities and skills is that much of the output (training modules, textbooks, resource books, reviews, reports, assessment studies etc) of the SCERTs remains of poor quality and standards.

In addition to this discrepancy is the fact that the SCERTs/DSERTs have different reporting structures. While in some states, such as Bihar and Karnataka, the SCERT/DSERT Director reports to the Commissioner, in other states, such as Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Kerala, the Director reports to the Education Secretary. Such differences in reporting structure have implications for the

extent of autonomy the academic structure enjoys vis-à-vis the education administration. Studies and reports seem to indicate that in states where the SCERT/DSERT does not have a relatively autonomous status, the institution is overburdened with administrative functions that conflicts with the academic focus the SCERT/DSERT is primarily meant to have and nurture. This is clearly evident in the case of Karnataka, where both the Perspective Plan of the Karnataka State Education Perspective Plan Committee (2007) and the Report of PwC (Price Waterhouse Coopers 2006a) have indicated the failure of the DSERT in fulfilling its envisioned role due to overload of administrative work¹³.

DISTRICT INSTITUTES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Similar to the SCERT/DSERT at the state-level, the DIETs had also been conceived as key academic institutions at the district-level. Though envisioned to provide decentralized academic leadership at the district level and with autonomy to initiate academic processes suited to local specific needs, the DIETs have been ridden with problems since their inception in the early 1990s. Reports and studies exploring the efficacy of the institution of DIETs have pointed out several concerns principal among them being: lack of interlinkages

with other subordinate academic structures (i.e. the BRCs and CRCs); inadequate technical and specialist capacity of personnel recruited/deployed to the various posts; non-alignment of internal structure and functions with expected roles; and lack of adequate resources. The network of DSERT-DIET-BRC-CRC, envisioned as primarily an academic support structure, is not corroborated through institutional interlinkages between the different levels at which these institutions operate. Each of the higher structures in the hierarchy is content in playing an inspectorial and dictatorial role with respect to its subordinates rather than enabling a process of bottom-up planning and implementation that can match the expected decentralized processes. Personnel posted in the DIETs are either keen on assuming corresponding administrative roles (wherever such transitions are possible) or handicapped in terms of their lack of hands-on experience of the primary school system. Furthermore, though there are provisions for the DIETs to maintain structural and functional autonomy to re-organize the institution and align with district specificities, the commanding role of the DSERT, the lack of adequate planning and management resources (both in terms of material resources and capacity of personnel), and the excessive load of supervisory work with respect to secondary education, seldom

allow any genuine decentralization (NIAS 2007). Several studies have reviewed the DIETs and the problems associated with them (see Appendix III for suggestions related to DIETs).

BLOCK AND CLUSTER RESOURCE CENTRES

The BRC-CRC structure is supposed to be the key framework at the block and cluster level for teacher training, school support and mentoring. However, field experiences reveal that these institutions and the corresponding functionaries (BRC, BRPs, and CRPs) are not enabled with relevant authority, responsibilities, or functional rules/norms¹⁴. Also, in the absence of the above enabling mechanisms, these institutions have become the primary conduit for all schemes, programmes, trainings, and information collection/dissemination which dilute their role as academic support structures. As with DIETs, Block Resource Persons lack commensurate academic abilities and management training to adequately perform their responsibilities. All of the following have led to defeating the very purpose of establishing centres at the block: in-service teacher training has become routinised and lacks linkage to teacher requirements. Subsequent follow-up and reviews are also absent. While the

physical structures and the personnel have been allocated, these centres lack material provisions, such as computers, and more importantly any training and teacher support materials (such as, library, reference sources, teaching learning aids, etc.). Many of these institutions have become appendages to the administrative wings of the education department rather than acting as centres for providing decentralized and specific academic inputs.

Key Processes

This section underlines some of the key processes of the education department in terms of their present functioning and related concerns. Some of these have also been mentioned in other sections of this paper.

Academic Support

While academic concerns should be the primary focus of educational functionaries at all levels, as also programmes directed towards achieving universalisation of elementary education, interactions and experiences at all levels reflect a neglect of academic issues in favour of administrative details. Power in the education department, measured by the extent of independent financial authority vested, lies with administrative officials as against their academic counterparts (for example, the

DDPI-Administration and the BEO have financial powers which are far greater than those with the DIET Principal and the BRC respectively). Not only has this built a rationale for personnel movement towards administrative positions, it has simultaneously devalued academic positions by delegation of routine administrative work (data collection and data consolidation, supervision of schemes and programme implementation) to these positions.

At the key delivery point, the school, there are a number of functionaries who are supposed to be periodically visiting the schools, but these visits are neither regular nor undertaken as academic mentoring exercises. The notion of 'control' and 'inspection' governs the school visit and there is no structured process of school management or mentoring that is facilitated by higher officials. This is evident in the apathy to institutionalize any systemic effort/format for school review on a regular basis¹⁵. Added to this, there are no linkages between pedagogic processes [such as training of teachers – both direct and satellite-based, large-scale learning assessment programmes, supplementary teaching-learning methodologies like EduSat or Education Development Center (EDC) programmes] and realization/translation of these at the school level (either in the form of mentoring/continuous

support for teachers or assessment of usage/practice).

Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability mechanisms are built around 'show-cause' notices, issued to errant officials and teachers, with elaborate processes of verification. Moreover, in certain states, these mechanisms have become increasingly politicized based on teacher-political linkages. Senior functionaries cite political linkages of teachers and express their inability to initiate disciplinary action against them for even serious dereliction of duties. Programmatic focus on administrative and financial issues also implies processes where 'financial deviations' are subject to more rigorous scrutiny (through regular audits and built-in checks and balances) but not other violations. However, such an over-determination of administrative aspects need not result in greater accountability, as financial checks and balances can be easily adhered to through proper financial documentation rather than through adherence to programme-linked budgetary provisioning. Instances of misutilisation of funds for civil works and training are often heard of but seldom revealed in the absence of inspection/monitoring of the processes themselves (i.e. the physical component of civil works or the actual training

programmes). Furthermore, dereliction of duties accorded by parallel structures and diffuse reporting hierarchies also go unnoticed in the emphasis on 'financial audits'.

While corruption is widely acknowledged within the department, there are very few instances of different malpractices drawing disciplinary action. Corruption in the department takes a peculiar shape because much of it is internal without any substantial public interface. Corrupt practices, such as mismanagement of allocated funds, financial favours for transfers, deputations and preferred postings, are generally internal to the department except when political influence/favours are also accessed. In addition, disciplinary action for such misdemeanours, in the rare instances where they are invoked, are not stringent and the current practices are often only temporary (for example, suspension with graduated financial penalization from salaries of erring officials). Otherwise, the education department often reflects tremendous tolerance of ineptitude wherein routinised rituals of 'show-cause' notices and disciplinary committees do not serve as strong deterrents for either dereliction of duties or financial malpractices.

Both at the state level and at the district level, the SSA has provision of fora where

issues of accountability can receive sharper focus. These fora are the Governing Council and Executive Council meetings at the state level and the District Implementation Committee (DIC) meetings at the district level. Experiences of these meetings show that mechanisms of review (for example, of new programmes, proposals, initiatives, and research studies undertaken by non-government bodies) can be strengthened through explicit allocation of time for presentations and discussions. Some of the relevant material in this regard should be circulated to members prior to the meetings to enable engaged participation. These meetings, as are facilitated at present, often seem to indicate a lack of institutional memory as items of agenda or issues previously decided on get repeated in the same tenor against which concerns were raised earlier. Also, there appears to be inadequate efforts on demanding performance indicators from the many new agencies that have aligned/collaborated with the department to strengthen the government education system. Some of the meetings, especially the DIC, seem to have become mere exercises in seeking approval for plans and budgets.

Functional Convergence

Establishment of parallel programmatic structures as part of the DPEP and SSA

has resulted in multiple reporting structures, diffusion of primary responsibilities, tension between perspectives of senior-level functionaries, and confusion at the implementation level. This goes directly against the stated goal of convergence so strongly underlined in the National Plan of Action, (Gol, 2003). As already stated, a single-administration system with coherent reporting structures may be a possible way of addressing the above concerns.

Allied to the convergence issue in terms of parallel structures is one of multiplicity of programmes and involvement of diverse agencies in education delivery. Such a situation manifests itself, in its implications, most prominently at the level of the school. For example, Chamarajanagar, a district in Karnataka, is almost a test-case of a place overloaded with a multiplicity of education programme interventions by an equally diverse number of agencies¹⁶. So too is the case with many other places especially in the context of rising private philanthropy, involvement of non-profit organization, and emergence of public-private partnerships, all directed towards the public education system. The multiplicity of agencies and programmes makes it all the more important that there be a continuous process of social audit and mechanisms of public accountability that monitor and

review all such initiatives in the government education system.

Training/Capacity Building Processes

Experiences show that training under SSA is supply-driven from the DSERT through the DIETs and BRCs, without corresponding identification of teachers' needs or planning for district/local requirements. That training needs to be viewed as a purposive activity with attendant goals and objectives is overlooked in the department's overall approach to training. The lower-level structures of the BRC-CRC that were expected to become "hubs of activity and centres for generating new knowledge on effective pedagogy" (Dhankar 2003:21), have instead become part of the larger administrative machinery that encompasses routinised functions – from implementation of centrally modelled training programmes to collection of data for numerous surveys.

Modules produced at the SCERT and DIETs are simply applied on an arithmetic proportional basis, depending only on the numbers of schools and teachers to be covered¹⁷. Another important concern, underlined by practicing educationists, lies in the reduction of the entire training process into one-time workshops¹⁸ and the

lack of conceptualization of training as a pedagogic tool that can inform learning.

Management Systems

Information Management Systems

There are various information management systems which individual states are working on that supplement the District Information System for Education (DISE) initially developed by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration. Some of these are cited by the ***Shiksha Sangam Report*** (Sherry Chand et al 2006) and include SCHOOLGIS (Tamil Nadu), Child Tracking System (Orissa), and Comprehensive Educational Management Information System (Karnataka). We summarize below the trends in terms of information management systems along with specific areas of concern:

1. Increasing comprehensiveness of database, covering more information areas with respect to better management of education delivery, examples: integrating spatial and non-spatial data components; integrating teacher-training information with existing EMIS data components.
2. Faster data collection and processing techniques through use of ICR

(Intelligent Character Recognition) formats.

3. Movement towards provisioning for web-based real-time information.

Concerns

1. There is often no seamless integration of information across the entire education delivery mechanism, i.e., between the State Education Department and Offices of the SSA¹⁹.
2. The information consolidation processes are oriented to state and central decision-making authorities. The information systems have not been able to act as enabling mechanisms for local-level (either at the district or sub-district level) planning or decision-making.
3. Though there are periodic training programmes, there is very little concerted effort at capacity-building of lower-level functionaries (both district and sub-district) to support usage of information systems for everyday work and for local usage.

Financial Management

The following observation aptly summarizes what needs to be addressed to in financial management of education delivery, at both the centre and the states:

“Single line hierarchy, strong vertical linkages coupled with weak horizontal linkages, operate at the inter-departmental level as well, making the process of planning somewhat parallel in approach and control” (Jha et al, 2001: 40). What is particularly observed in implementation of the SSA is that most schemes are based on prescribed financial norms of the MHRD which leave little space for introducing new local-specific thrust areas or even re-allocating across given ‘line-heads’.²⁰

Two key factors affecting quality of financial planning are the lack of reliable disaggregated information and the lack of proper planning and budgeting skills with lower-level functionaries. While the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B) of the SSA is supposedly undertaken as a bottom-up approach (with the district as the unit of planning), field experiences show that these are more in the form of mark-up to previous plans and budgets. Though micro-planning efforts at the village or school-level have been initiated in many states²¹, mostly under various training programmes for either PTAs/SDMCs/VECs, or PRIs, or department officials, these have been sporadic in nature and without mechanisms linking them to the larger AWP&B preparatory exercises.

Finally, the academic planning exercise is not linked to the AWP&B. This follows a different institutional structure with the DIETs forwarding their annual plans to the SCERT/DSERT which in turn consolidates the same. The administrative-academic dichotomy that exists in institutions within the department and its day-to-day functioning is also replicated in the planning and budgeting exercises. In this regard, the suggestion of the report from PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006b) for the post of a Secretary/ Deputy Secretary at the ZP level to enable convergence of administrative, academic and programme management functions at district level is worth noting.²²

Summative Observations

We note from the above that there is a significant variation across states in terms of the specific shapes that both education department structures and programmatic structures have taken. This variation, we also note, is not only limited to the structure of the institutions involved in the delivery of elementary education, but also to policies, processes, and systems that govern the everyday work of these institutions. While a detailed study of such variations across states may reveal possible linkages between educational performance, particularities of institutional delivery mechanisms, and political will, in

our broad-brush approach we can only seek to draw attention to some concerns recurrent across many states and some processes that appear to have worked better than others.

The exercises of bottom-up planning that were purported to have accompanied programmatic interventions, such as the DPEP and SSA, appear to have been underutilized. The reasons for this can primarily be two-fold: a reluctance of the executive structure to match the decentralization processes of elected structures with respect to its existing institutional form; and an information system that has been increasingly overburdened, both in terms of plethora of programmes and their concomitant requirements of data and an inability to represent such data to lower levels of the system for local-level planning or decision-making. It may be reasonable to surmise, and the ***Shiksha Sangam Report*** (Sherry Chand et al, 2006) also bears out this inference that states, such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka which have been able to generate and modify existing education databases to state-specific needs, have been among the better performing ones with respect to education achievement indicators. However, there is a long way to go, even for these states, in enabling decentralized information management

and planning at lower-levels of education administration through such databases.

The DPEP and SSA have also brought newer structures into operation at different levels of the education delivery system and thereby a spectrum of possibilities that characterize the relationships between the education department of the state and the new offices have also come into being. In the absence of a long-term vision informing the policies of both the centre and the states, with respect to these relationships, the sustainability of structures, such as the block and cluster resource centres as well as the DIETs, seem to be in question. As most of the programmatic initiatives have strong linkages to central funding, the sustenance or integration of these efforts into the regular work of the education departments of the states needs to be provided more attention. In this regard, a case may even be made for having a singular policy and structural framework at the state level that can encompass within it both the regular working of the department and the increasing ambit of different other interventions: large-scale programmes (such as the DPEP or SSA), non-government initiatives, corporate philanthropic efforts, and public-private partnerships. Further, in the absence of any mechanism that links these different interventions to the state's own work, often

both credibility and sustainability of these efforts are brought into question. State-level policies that encompass these efforts into the department's own work, provide assurance of continuous monitoring and integration of successful interventions into the departmental work, and finally encourage the department to review its own work in the light of findings from these realms of collaboration, can help address such concerns of credibility and sustenance as well as instill a process of mutual accountability.

At the institutional level, whether it is the school or a district level structure, such as the DIET, experiences across states show that personnel policies within the government machinery have more often than not worked against institution-building mechanisms. Such policies include recruitment (e.g. the case of para-teachers in many states and the de-professionalization of the teaching community), transfers (politicized and leading to frequent shifting of institutional heads), capacity-building/training (top-down routinised), and inadequate accountability processes that are oriented towards financial outlays rather than achievement of educational objectives associated with these financial allocations. Herein, the decentralized elected structures, such as the PRIs and their

statutory committees, can be seen to have a role to play as do the parental monitoring bodies existing at the school level. Such roles and processes can contribute towards ensuring periodic reviews and accountability of the administration by the elected representatives and parent committees. However, as experiences

across states show, decentralization and its impact have not been uniform and even here one does notice a link between political will and extent of democratic decentralization that has been able to bring in noteworthy changes in education achievements.

DECENTRALIZATION/ COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Although periodic expressions of intent to establish local self-governments²³ have made their rounds since 1950, the first coherent stipulation for education decentralization can be credited to the passing of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (related to the establishment of the Panchayat Raj Acts of 1993). The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) 1993 recommended the setting up of Village Education Committees (VECs) at village and school levels and Education Committees (ECs) at the block levels as part of the panchayat system itself. Subsequently, key national programmes, such as the District Primary Education Programme of 1994 and the SSA of 2001, supported by international agencies, and the 93rd Amendment (Right to Elementary Education); have reiterated the need for such decentralized, community-based structures so as to enhance the efficiency and accountability of elementary education administration.

But, in the untidy world of a largely hierarchical social structure, an inequalitarian culture, and competitive politics, the process and realization of such a democratic structure in the context of education institution-building have not been easy. The record is mixed for the realization of EFA through decentralization of elementary education administration (DEEA). In some states, DEEA has highlighted the significance of the contributions of civil society and local community to education, and in others the pitfalls of bureaucratizing decentralized administration have become evident. The first EFA review noted some of these and had called for continued “work towards the goal of decentralization by initiating processes of community involvement and gradually shifting the locus of decision making from state to district level and downwards through panchayat raj bodies” (NIEPA & GoI, 2000; 80). Taking stock of conditions since the past seven years (2000-2007), indicates the following inferences.

Although decentralization in its political manifesto is often presented as the most legitimate form of democracy, the pillars on which it is promoted for elementary education rest on the notions of fostering ownership of schools, making teachers accountable to local people, and improving the efficiency of the schooling system. In reality, the key questions around which the policy is either implemented or not, hinge on several parameters, each of which also impact the realization of the objectives of the programme.

In states with a positive record of implementing PRIs, the track for DEEA is also positive. Kerala leads in the arena of decentralized administration and its support by the two key parties lends it continuity, resulting over the years in enabling to become an established and legitimate domain of political process and institution-building. Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Haryana, and Sikkim have established and activated structures and processes that have seen people engage with and contribute to local school construction, maintenance and functioning. West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh have initiated programmes that seek to address the serious problems of access that children of school-going age face. Focusing on people's demands for schooling, schools have been set up under

the alternative schooling programmes. Madhya Pradesh's Education Guarantee Schools (EGS) and its People's Education Act (*Jan Shiksha Adhinyam*) of 2002, have significantly improved access (Leclercq, 2004, 2007; Bajpai et al, 2005). West Bengal has established the *Shishu Shiksha Kendra* (SSK) for rural areas, the *Shishu Shiksha Prakalpa* (SSP) for urban areas, and the *Madhyamik Shiksha Kendra* (MSK) for establishing upper primary schools through the Department of Panchayats and Rural Development. Karnataka's record is mixed, with frequent interruptions, but political support and civil society's commitment to DEEA, sustains the process.

In addition, the support of active, visible and even powerful non-government organizations (NGOs) or civil society for DEEA enables the implementation and consolidation of decentralized structures and programmes (Noronha, 2003). The roles of the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan, and that of the Centre for Child and Law in Karnataka are testimony to this. The absence of such organizations in most of the other states has buttressed the indifference and even hostility of the state and/or the education department towards DEEA. Despite the potential of decentralized and community-based organizations to support and cater to the

functioning and administration of elementary education, there is a range of problems that beset DEEA.

1. State Variation in Formulation and Implementation of Decentralization

The implementation of the Panchayat Raj Act itself has not been even across the states (with states like Bihar defying the constitutional mandate for long) with the formulation of bye-laws and policies related to devolution of elementary education administration having been left to the states. After the 86th Amendment (2002), states such as Karnataka, Sikkim, Kerala etc. enacted new Panchayat Acts and others such as Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, and Maharashtra amended their existing Acts (Sharan, 2007). While many states have integrated the stipulated bare structure and functions of DEEA, only some states such as Kerala, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh have stipulated detailed structures and specific activities to be undertaken at the two or three tiers of the Panchayat system. For example, bye-laws in Kerala flag detailed activities and responsibilities, including mention of state specific programmes and institutions (such as maintenance and support for the village public libraries) to be undertaken at the two levels. Other states (Assam, Uttar Pradesh) lack clear-cut guidelines and

many have mere legislations passed to concur with the central government's mandate to do so. As a result of such variations in promulgation of Acts and policies, the functioning and impact of DEEA across the nation is highly varied.

2. Confusion about Rules, Regulations, and Procedures

The lack of clear specifications about rules, regulations, responsibilities and powers has led to confusion and therefore to obfuscation of the potential of DEEA. In a study of linkage between PRIs and primary education in six states, Tandon (2002) highlights the different contradictions and confusion that have ensued. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka²⁴, and Sikkim, the various government orders subsequent to the passing of Acts for DEEA have been contradictory and often the orders over rule the ideas and suggestions of the Acts. In some cases, as in Gujarat, the three tiers of the PRI have all been assigned the same responsibility that of constructing and maintaining schools, thereby leading to confusion. That clarity, specificity, and due process are central to the legal backing of decentralization of education, is also highlighted by Florestal and Cooper (1997), who call for the improvement of legal support for such structures.

3. Periodic Alterations and Instability of Structures and Functions

The passage of the PRI Acts and their linkages to elementary education have also been subject to periodic revisions and contestations, a result of which is the instability and dysfunctionality of DEEA structures and the failure to impact the system positively. Karnataka's experiment with DEEA best represents the case of a high potential structure that has been subject to periodic politically driven interruptions²⁵. The School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) constituted to oversee school issues, has been shifted periodically between being an independent structure, to its cooption by Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and to its being claimed by the Dept. of Panchayats and Rural Development. The result has been that the process of establishing democratic SDMCs has led to chaos and the entry of politicians, and the integration of school committees into local and state political vortex has ensued. Concerted actions and demands by civil society organizations and a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) led the state rescinding and promulgating another structure linked to the Panchayat, in which financial powers and powers to take action against errant teachers were assured. Between these vacillating structures and norms, the high potential of SDMCs has

been vastly eroded and precious time, which could have led to improving schools, has been lost. The strife continues with a recent drive by teachers' associations to challenge the relevance, functioning, and powers of the SDMCs²⁶.

4. Lack of Awareness and Information Access among Stakeholders

A key problem in the realization of the potential of decentralized structures has been the inadequate dissemination of information and knowledge among the stakeholders. As studies across the states indicate (Tandon, 2002; Govinda and Diwan, 2003), the establishment of the structures has not been commensurate with knowledge and capability of most members. Banerji et al's study of 280 villages in Uttar Pradesh testify to this, where as much as 92 percent of the people did not know about the VEC and general participation in the new decentralized institutions was very poor. As the authors of the report note, "...overall, participation (at individual or collective level) in the activities to improve school functioning or strengthening learning is negligible" (2007: 1369) and most people were not concerned about learning levels. Although several training programmes and modules have been designed and implemented across the country (by both the government and non-government

agencies), in many cases, the trainings themselves have been inadequate and the knowledge dissemination not pertinent to the range of issues at hand. Periodic alterations in the responsibilities, the processes, and the powers have also led to confusion. A further reason for disengagement emanates from the fact that representatives of decentralized institutions do not see issues of education as priorities and thereby processes and contributions remain inadequate.

5. Lack of Commensurate Financial Support and Power

Another concern is linked to the lack of commensurate financial support to decentralized structures. In most cases, the responsibility of allocating and supervising the construction of school buildings, provisioning new programmes etc. rests with the Zilla Parishad or the district level structure. However, lack of adequate financial allocation has meant that support for infrastructural development and maintenance is not forthcoming and reliance on state level institutions continues (Vasavi et al, 1997; Tandon, 2002). Although West Bengal has initiated programmes through the PRIs to enhance access in remote and urban poverty areas, much of the finance (upto 80 percent) is still vested in the education department (Govt. of West Bengal, 2005). In such

instances, programmes established at the community level or by PRIs remain inadequate or of poor quality and have rendered both the members of these committees and their involvement in 'paper only' (Sinha et al, nd: 6). As several studies have indicated, such differences in financial allocation have implications for the extent to which parallel and differentiated structures and institutions come into being, thereby eroding the possibility of providing equal access and equal quality of elementary education to all (Noronha, 2003; Leclercq, 2004, 2007).

In most cases, genuine devolution of power to decentralized bodies is yet to be fully realized. As one reviewer notes, "...devolution in this respect is hardly taking place. Majority of the state governments have given only soft powers to the panchayats with regard to primary education, like providing land, monitoring attendance of teachers without the authority to take action etc" (Tandon; 2002, 19). As a result, in many cases, the structures exist without teeth and state mandated and directed processes continue to define the everyday life of schools. In such contexts, the key objectives of enabling local accountability and enhancing management of schools remain distant. As studies of the problems of quality in elementary education have indicated, the absence of adequate

administration and management and failure to ensure accountability of teachers remain the sources of much of the problems of inadequate teaching-learning hours and non-utilization of training (see, PROBE, 1999).

6. Political Cooption: Erosion of Autonomy of Decentralized Education Institutions

Like any other significant structures that have both important responsibilities and financial backing, the DEEA structures have also become subject of political contention. Political parties vie and contend with each other for the control of such institutions, and as a consequence the goals of open access and decentralized administration often get sacrificed. The presence of political parties in such structures has led to making schools sites of contestations (Sinha et al, nd; Vasavi, 2006).

West Bengal's experience and trends represent such an instance. Despite a pre-independence record for universalizing primary education, the state has lost momentum since the 1970s. The West Bengal Primary Education Act of 1973 (amended in 1993) focuses on providing free and compulsory primary education and for constituting state and district level authorities to deliver these goals. However,

the focus has until recently been only up to Standard IV and the linkages between the PRIs and primary education administration have not been clear. In fact, as Acharya (2002) has elaborated, the capture of the District Primary School Councils by the state political parties has made these to become enervated institutions²⁷.

Riding on the pattern created by the Left regime, the DEEA structures have become part of the apparatus of party in power in the local area (Acharya, 2002; Pratichi, 2002), thereby excluding those who are not supporters. Its largely political basis and absence of the involvement of parents have also been observed. The fact that child labour, which is rampant and continues to be a problem in a state that espouses equality and justice, is a matter of concern. Much of this can also be linked to what Bardhan and Mookerjee note as the problem of pro-poor programmes in West Bengal, in which programmes for the distribution of public goods are captured by the elite or party-related persons. Although Gram Panchayats were responsible for the functioning and administration of primary schools, "they hardly played any role in the delivery of education or health services to residents; operations of primary or secondary schools and medical clinics still remain under the control of state government officials" (Bardhan and

Mookerjee, 2005: 7). The cooption of these structures by and for larger political gains has meant that immediate and specific issues pertaining to elementary education have often been bypassed. This and the presence of multiple programmes and parallel institutions, rather than the strengthening of the PRIs relating to primary education (Ghosh, 2002), account for problems of access, quality, and retention in West Bengal.

Another key issue that may emerge as a significant and disturbing problem is the possibility of local leaders espousing larger cultural and political goals of their parties and thereby laying siege to the content and orientation of education. The closure of the Hoshangabad Science Training Programme (HSTP) in Madhya Pradesh²⁸ indicates the potential of locally-led and derived inputs to become state-wide problems and challenges to even issues related to curricula and content (considered to be outside the purview of decentralized structures).

7. Cultural Barriers and the Persistence of Exclusion and Non-participation

As a structure and process that could enable the poor and disadvantaged to gain control over elementary education, the DEEA has a long way to go. Although cases of positive contribution and

engagement exist even among the most disenfranchised communities, the ability of many marginalized and non-literate communities to be able to contest forms of education exclusion, dysfunctional schools, and errant teachers, remains limited. Cultural barriers, such as inability to engage with upper caste and traditional elite, the culture of political and social subordination etc limit the capacity of these processes and structures. The need to enable women, members of minority and disadvantaged groups to access these structures and become active participants in the process still remains a challenge. Here again, the importance of training, continuous capacity-building and showcasing of success stories cannot be understated as they would go a long way in enabling disadvantaged communities to benefit from these structures. In and among many of the marginalized communities, a culture of silence retains them in conditions of submission and subordination and prevents them from engaging in such institutions and structures which could empower them.

8. Antagonism of Education Department Personnel and Teachers towards DEEA

Although actual studies and reviews on the hostility and growing antagonism against DEEA by teachers and the education department are few²⁹, the growing

resentment among them needs to be addressed. For long, a department that worked on its own accord and to which the people were largely dependent subjects, the idea and reality of DEEA erodes their sense of power and authority. In contexts where parents are predominantly from the low-ranked caste groups and/or are non-literate, the realization of accountability of teachers to such persons has become problematic. Majumdar (2004) elaborates on these distances (social, economic, and political) which account for making the functioning of such decentralized administrative structures problematic. Govinda and Diwan have noted this and pointed to the “new tensions within the system in many states between the local bureaucracy and the political leadership” (2003: 25). The gathering storm over the SDMCs in Karnataka also testifies to this³⁰. Yet, the resistance and antagonism of teachers to such structures must also be understood perceptively as teachers themselves remain without attendant democratic structures within the education department.

9. Other Gaps: Urban Areas; ‘Backward Regions’, and Minority Institutions

The glaring problems in DEEA are perhaps most evident in the urban areas, especially in poverty zones, where schools run by municipalities and corporations are in a

state of decline³¹. The largely dysfunctional character of urban decentralized administration³² accounts for this. The issue is further compounded by the fact that a cohesive, integral ‘community, especially among the largely migrant and disenfranchised population of urban servantry and working poor, is absent and administration is itself fraught with problems. How urban specific and even community specific structures of decentralized governance can address issues of education exclusion, inadequate provisioning of services, and prevent the integration of children into the vast service economy etc are issues that need to be addressed. The possibility of parents who send their children to Madaras and their rights to draw on these DEEA structures must also receive due attention.

Although the Right to Information Act (RTI) and its associated procedures have been activated in some areas, its use in the context of elementary education is almost negligible. In fact, if the RTI is also made part of the capacity-building activities and knowledge base for all DEEA actors and personnel, then perhaps many of the problems related to financial and other corruption issues can be addressed.

Regions that are classified as ‘backward’ and are marked by ecological, economic, and social disadvantages, do not seem to

have recorded significant gains through DEEA and tailored programmes for such areas have not been designed. For example, Birbhum in West Bengal has a predominance of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim population for whom access to and quality of elementary education remains a problem as planning, coordination and monitoring are inadequate (Sinha et al, nd).

Another key issue is that of the need for EFA to receive support from multiple sectors and departments. For example, how the labour department can function in the context of addressing child labour, how the health and social welfare services can enhance their contribution so that the education opportunities of children of the poor and the disadvantaged can be enhanced, are among issues that need urgent attention. Currently, the inability of the education system to command such services means that the goal of EFA itself is seen as a mandate too tall and too ambitious to realize for either the decentralized community structures or for the department.

The need for continued capacity-building and support for decentralization must be backed with attention to the need for bringing about shifts in the organizational culture, transformation of roles, and enhancement of leadership abilities,

communication, planning and policy processes (Florestal and Cooper, 1997). In addition, in contexts of the vicissitudes of Indian democracy and in the contestations that DEEA is subject to (witness the efforts by the Andhra Pradesh government to dismantle the whole edifice and to bring the entire schooling system under the department); a continued commitment to establishing and sustaining such decentralized mechanisms should be the cornerstone of any education endeavour.

10. Some Questions on 'Communities' and Decentralization

Linked primarily to the decentralization of general administration that is to the Panchayat Raj institutions the decentralized structures for elementary education have not been nurtured as independent or autonomous structures³³. The pitfalls of non-implementation, politicization, and routinization of decentralized education administration structures without the attendant realization of activities have meant that much of their potential have not been attained and even those contributions effectuated in some regions are not wide-spread. Further, there must be recognition that participation, contribution and impact of 'community' on DEEA depend on the larger political

structure and processes, and to a varied mix of local specific cultural, social, and political factors. Perhaps the irony of the situation, in which ideas and policies based on fostering 'community participation' are promoted, and even when organic communities themselves are in state of disarray and displacement, needs to be reckoned with. As Young (2007) has elaborated, the idea and promotion of 'community' itself needs to be interrogated as there is a tendency to obfuscate the details and particularities of communities, associate organic characteristics to them, and to overlook the increasing disembeddness and deterritorialisation to which they are subject and in some cases to the new identities to which they are crafting for themselves. Factoring all these in, there must be recognition that community participation cannot conjure up images of complete contribution and engagement of all communities to issues of elementary education or of them having the potential to bear all the responsibilities. Instead, "the kind of participation that is

likely to be the most sustainable and effective in increasing both educational access and quality is one based on balanced partnerships between the state and communities ..." (Swift-Morgan, 2006: 365).

Since the potential of DEEA outweighs the current problems, much of it linked to the lack of administrative will on the part of the education department itself, there is need to persist with the idea and programmes for decentralizing elementary education administration. Strengthening the structures to ensure participation and representation of parents and community members and support by financial and administrative powers will lead to the realization of the goals of ensuring efficiency and accountability in the system. Persisting with the process and bringing in larger numbers of people within the purview, and providing supporting structures and mechanisms for redress are imperative.

CONCLUSION

Most evaluations of management strategies for public education delivery have focused relatively less on centre-state and intra-department relations that predominantly govern policy and programme implementation processes. While centre-state relations indicate that MHRD guidelines leave the state with very little autonomy to tailor state-specific programmes or even adapt central programmes to state requirements, a similar tension is noted within the department at the state level. Top-down programme formulation and deployment by state offices without broader consultative processes leave the lower level functionaries with very little space to exercise their own prerogatives. There is a strong need to assess the 'programme overload' complaint that the lower level functionaries seem to increasingly articulate. In addition, the issues of relevance of some of these programmes in the 'blue-print' forms that are deployed both across (often by central institutions) and within specific states (often by state

offices or institutions) need to be reviewed. This may lead the way to deliberations on and evolution of more state-specific structures and programmes, and likewise at the sub-state levels. A related issue would be administrative decentralization that seems to have not matched the process of political decentralization undertaken through the PRIs.

The strategies underscored by the National Plan of Action, India (GoI, 2003) towards the realization of EFA goals, and the realities in terms of implementation of programmes within the SSA and different state education departments, reveal a disconnect on key parameters. Convergence of administrative and academic functioning is one such parameter which seems to have been compromised in the multiplicity of institutions engaged in the delivery of elementary education. Related to this is the issue of an administrative-academic dichotomy that often results in the privileging of administrative work over

academic issues. Academic institutions, such as the SCERT/DSERT, the DIETs, and the BRC-CRC seem to have not been enabled with commensurate autonomy, powers, personnel, or resources that are necessary for the local specific academic leadership roles. These institutions were primarily invested with in the vision documents engendering these structures. Review of programmes also seem to be overweighed in favour of utilization of allotted expenses and meeting quantitative targets without a proper assessment of their academic import.

Neither internal documentation of the education departments nor the Joint Review Mission reports for the states or at the central level indicate any concerted effort to either review norms in the light of local needs or assess actions based on earlier recommendations. Inter-institutional linkages also receive short shrift in the absence of any continuous review mechanism for institutions within the system. What may be considered is the appointment of standing review committees at different levels of the hierarchy which may draw in diverse stakeholders (officials, academicians, NGO representatives, elected representatives, teachers, and parents) to continuously review and monitor programmes, instead

of the annual, rapid assessments by external reviewers that are currently being made. These proposed committees can not only be responsible for a process of social audit of the different public institutions engaged in education delivery, but can also examine the inter-institutional linkages to question how the role of other government structures (such as the Regional Institutes of Education or Universities with education departments) could possibly be adapted to strengthen the overall system.

What is urgent is the need for the system, which has grown overnight in size and complexity, to be endowed with an ability to address and cater to the needs of a mass education system. The inability to do so is manifested in several ways, in which at best issues of supply are met but not issues of quality and equity. Complementing this attention to the mass dimension of the task at hand is the need to democratize the structures, functioning and culture of the education departments. For this to become a reality there is a need to urgently and critically review, restructure and reorient the elementary education system.

ENDNOTES

¹ For this project, we consulted and discussed issues with persons from the education departments in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal. We would like to thank them all, especially Anwar Jafri and colleagues from Samavesh, Bhopal, for sharing their experiences and views with us and for help in our accessing the data. We have drawn extensively from our experiences in the District Quality Education Project, which has been working on elementary education issues since 2002 in Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka (refer URL: <http://www.iisc.ernet.in/nias/site/vidya.htm>).

² The observation of the PROBE Report that “The situation looks quite different from the ...villages, where the school management structure gives the impression of a rigid bureaucracy, unresponsive to the real needs of teachers and children” (The Probe Team, 1999: 84), has not changed much over the years.

³ Again, Dyer’s observations on blue-print approaches of large-scale government programmes are as relevant for the SSA as these were for Operation Blackboard. For more details, see Caroline Dyer (2000).

⁴ Jha et al (2001) note that Madhya Pradesh had moved towards constituting district governments in 1999 which in effect implies “a step towards decentralization in the bureaucracy, leading to a reduced role of the structures at the state level” (Jha et al 2001: 17).

⁵ The need of this convergence and its continuing neglect is amply evident in the case of Karnataka. While the Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission (2001) recommended the integration of the DPEP structure with the department structure at administrative and field level, a more recent GoK document notes that “The posts of the Commissioner and SPD SSA should be merged to bring in convergence in administration, academic supervision and programme management (Karnataka State Education Perspective Plan Committee, 2007: 37). Functionaries in West Bengal observed that a similar lack of convergence was affecting day-to-day processes in the state. Even the Report of the Third JRM for West Bengal notes how “there are several institutional mechanisms that govern separate aspects of elementary education and aligning the efforts of these institutions at the state and district level remains a key challenge” (Third Joint Review Mission 2006: 2).

⁶ Both the Report of PwC (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2006a) and Jha et al (2001) underline this as an issue of concern for the states covered under the studies.

⁷ The Report of PwC observes the following for the state of Karnataka: “Despite having enough number of teachers, there are 4,508 (10.45%) primary schools in the state which are single-teacher schools and another 13,463 (31.21%) primary schools have only two teachers” (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2006a: 37). A similar concern arises from NIAS-DQEP field-experiences where it was noted that a politicization of the deputation process has led to many schools having only a single-teacher though official district-data reflects the complete absence of such single-teacher schools.

⁸ For more details, see World Bank (2006).

⁹ For details, see R. Govinda and Y. Josephine (2005).

¹⁰ While there was a decision by the GoK to change recruitment rules for the DIETs (DPAR/03/SRE/99, Bangalore, Dated 27th December 2001) to include direct recruitment, till date there has been no effort to effect such a change on the reason that the aforementioned notification is inadequately formulated.

¹¹ For example, Jha et al (2001) observe that a “Large numbers of legal cases, relating to service matters, are pending in all the states, indicating, at least to some extent, inefficiencies in the existing grievance

redressal mechanisms. Separate internal mechanisms to redress grievances of the employees do not exist in any of these states”.

¹² This was reported in *Anandabazar Patrika*, 28 April 2007, Kolkata.

¹³ For more details, see Karnataka State Education Perspective Plan Committee (2007: 35), and PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2006a: 56).

¹⁴ The BRC, as against the BEO, does not have financial drawing powers at the block level. Furthermore, the BRC reports to the BEO on administrative issues at the block level, to the Dy P C on SSA programme issues at the district level, and to the DIET Principal on training issues at the district level. In the case of the BRPs and CRPs, school mentoring roles expected of these positions are not matched with provisioning of adequate travelling allowance.

¹⁵ In spite of multiple school visit formats developed by different institutions, the NCERT, the DSERT, and the DIETs, no regular process has been institutionalized for school mentoring by either BRP-CRPs or DIET faculty in Karnataka.

¹⁶ Some of these initiatives include the Edusat programme, EDC radio programmes, and the NIAS-DQEP project interventions.

¹⁷ For more details, see Sarangapani and Vasavi (2003).

¹⁸ Dhankar's observations in the case of DPEP teacher training workshops seem as valid for capacity building processes under the SSA, where "...workshops become mechanisms of certifying certain opinions as valid knowledge without rigorous examination. They produce a false confidence and do not promote reflection. The propagated pedagogy becomes a dogma" (Dhankar 2003: 26).

¹⁹ While some of the JRM reports referred to, observe that there are discrepancies between data provided by the district and state offices, functionaries across the states report that multiple databases are being used across the different institutions (directorates, boards, or programme) working with the same focus. This not only leads to duplication of efforts but often also contradictory data on same issues.

²⁰ For example, while the Commissioner of Public Instruction in Karnataka requested provisioning for school academic planning exercise subsequent to the Karnataka School Quality Assessment Organization (KSQAO) from the SSA, the State Project Director-SSA expressed his inability citing MHRD norms. A similar reasoning is observed for any proposal requesting increased honorarium for teachers in alternative schooling programmes.

²¹ Jha et al (2001) mention such micro-planning for at least the three states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.

²² For more details, see PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2006b).

²³ The historical existence and functioning of viable village-level bodies for local administration have been recorded for India but their democratic and representative characteristics in the pre-independence period are open to debate. In several British colonial provinces, as also in parts of princely India, efforts were directed at promoting decentralized administration but the experiments were patchy and subject to periodic revision through differing laws (see Daswani et al, 1997, for a brief note on this).

²⁴ A series of circulars related to the SDMCs were promulgated; each contributing to the confusion and the erosion of even the functioning of SDMCs. The first circular was on 28th April 2001, notifying the formation of SDMCs over the VECs. Later, two more circulars were issued in August 2001, legitimizing the rights of MLAs to form the SDMCs. The circular and model bye-law of June 14th 2006 overthrew the MLA rights and integrated the SDMCs into the PRIs (details from Niranjana, nd).

²⁵ Drawing on the state's pioneering support and institutionalization of the 73rd Amendment, the state had promulgated and activated a range of community-based organizations, such as Village Education Committees (VECs) and School Betterment Committees (SBCs) for DEEA. However, based on the recommendations of a task force on Education, in 2001 the state had promulgated the establishment of the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC) which was to address the drawbacks of earlier structures and which was to be constituted by only parents of children from the schools themselves. Associated with this structure was a range of responsibilities, including financial powers, to develop infrastructure and authority to oversee the functioning of schools. Even as this structure was established and reports indicated its largely successful contribution, the MLAs of the state challenged the structure and the government issued a notification indicating that the MLAs had the powers to nominate the nine members of the SDMCs and the president and to also become the presidents of the high school SDMCs.

²⁶ The suicide by a woman teacher in April 2007 alleging continued and unbearable harassment by a SDMC president has led the teachers' union to call for the withdrawal of the SDMCs and for the curtailment of their powers. The Government of Karnataka has subsequently instituted a committee to review this.

²⁷ Acharya (2002) provides a summary of a study conducted in six panchayats and indicates that most parents, teachers and school inspectors considered the primary schools to have declined in quality and functioning, and highlighted the disinterest of panchayat members and the questionable recruitment of teachers as key problems in primary education.

²⁸ The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme was conceptualized and developed by Kishore Bharati (and later by Eklavya, Madhya Pradesh) but was supported and then integrated into the state curricula in Madhya Pradesh. However, based on a complaint by an MLA from one of the districts, the programme was subjected to scrutiny and amid allegations of infiltration of left ideology and accusations of inappropriateness; the state withdrew the textbooks and the programme and substituted new textbooks.

²⁹ There are a few studies which indicate this specifically. Both the rising tide of resentment by teachers and their unions against DEEA in Karnataka and discussions with groups working in other regions indicate this trend.

³⁰ Refer endnote 26.

³¹ For more details, see NIAS (2002).

³² See Ramesh Ramanathan (2007) for details on the problems of decentralized governance in urban areas.

³³ Despite the political and populist rhetoric of the importance and centrality of PRIs, the increasing tension between devolution of administrative and economic powers and increasing presence of the bureaucracy and politicization have made many of the PRI structures problematic (for overview of a decade of PRI, see Narayana 2005). In fact Mahmood Mamdani's (2001) observation for Africa that the departments for "Local Government" are really departments for the control and capture of peasants is largely true for India also. However, the challenge is to focus on the potential of PRIs and enable people to engage with and contribute to the process of decentralization.

APPENDIX-I

KEY PROGRAMMES

The Appendix focuses attention on some of the key programmes implemented across the country under the present SSA, drawing upon the summative study conducted by the Ravi J. Matthai Centre for Educational Innovation, IIM-Ahmedabad in 2006: the ***Shiksha Sangam Report*** (Sherry Chand et al, 2006). The above study is drawn upon as indicating broader trends and this is supplemented with critical commentary drawn from field-experiences in Karnataka.

School Assessment and School Quality

Both existing and newly implemented information management systems, as well as independent state initiatives, have been directed towards mapping of school quality, particularly in 'quantifiable' terms. The case of Karnataka School Quality Assessment Organization (KSQAO) represents this.

The KSQAO has been the 'flagship' programme of the Karnataka Education Department with one of the main objectives being to "assess the learning outcomes of students in selected competencies of different subjects prescribed for the class by using universally accepted scientific methods" (KSQAO 2006: 3). Sherry Chand et al (2006) in their report indicate that there are a number of other states undertaking similar initiatives: Educational Quality Improvement Program (Maharashtra), School Performance Mapping System (Uttaranchal), and even Learning Achievement Tracking System (Orissa). Most of these exercises for mapping quality have common objectives and underlying processes which flag possible concern areas:

1. A grading system of the schools based on the results of the mapping exercise. Though this is supposed to provide a benchmark and serve as a planning tool, field-experiences show that teachers associate the process as a 'judgmental instrument' with related consequences of punishment or penalties. As a result the implementation may be non-objective and also lead to narrow focus of teachers 'drilling' the children towards learning stated competencies that are to be tested.
2. The follow-up processes that should accompany large-scale school assessments in terms of enabling bottom-up planning (School Plan, Cluster Plan, Block Plan, and District Plan) are not integrated with the process and neither receive concerted attention consequent to consolidation and publication of disaggregated results. There is also a need to integrate parent bodies

(PTAs/VECs/SDMCs) in the follow-up process in terms of sharing of school results and evolving school academic plans.

3. As 'quality assessment' is focused at the school-level, the linkages of such assessment processes with other areas of education delivery are often ignored, for example, identifying training needs of teachers and resource persons based on results; planning training modules based on student performance in different 'competency areas'.
4. Narrow definitions of 'school quality', for example a focus on only performance in subject/academic areas, often get propagated by assessment techniques. An exception to this is the grading and mapping exercise of Uttaranchal which appears to be more holistic as compared to the other states³³.

Supplementary Pedagogies

Supplementary pedagogical inputs from the SSA have been channelized primarily through different media for distance education. As noted by Sherry Chand et al (2006), the following states at present have EduSat based teacher-training and supplementary educational inputs: Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Haryana. While the usage of the EduSat has not been extended to all schools or even all districts across the above states, there is a gradual expansion of the programme taking place across the states. Besides EduSat, radio-based programmes are also being used by different states as interactive teaching-learning methods, for both mainstream learners as also special groups. Mention may be made of "Vindam Nerchukundam" (Let's Listen and Learn), and "Vindam-Chaduvukundam" (Let's Listen, Let's Study) from Andhra Pradesh, and "Keli-Kali" and "Chukki Chinna" from Karnataka.

As distance education modules seem to be extending their reach across the country, some caveats are in order:

1. Some of these programmes are treated as alternative to classroom pedagogies rather than as supplementary tools. Furthermore, overload of such programmes, as is evident in the district of Chamarajanagar, Karnataka implies that there is a corresponding decrease in direct instructional time for the teacher.
2. While EduSat can form the basis for SatCom trainings and even teleconferencing for teachers and resource persons, these can only be short-duration intensive programmes which need to be followed up with direct contact training sessions. Presence of facilitators during the SatCom trainings is also an issue that needs to be addressed for greater efficacy.
3. Associated technology for the programmes, particularly EduSat, often is sourced through centralized vending processes and makes it imperative to channel all maintenance and repair work through the department hierarchy. A resultant outcome at the field-level is unutilized machines and systems that lie in disrepair.

Addressing Special Groups

Survey of reports on SSA-programmes addressing the needs of special groups reflect the following trends:

1. Efforts are in collaboration with other relevant government departments (Social Welfare, Health, etc.) and local NGOs.
2. Innovative approaches have been integrated through sub-district structures: Inclusive Education Resource Teacher (IERT) in every BRC, Inclusive Education for the Disabled (IED), resource rooms in the BRCs.
3. Residential Bridge Courses are being facilitated for Children with Special Needs.

Alternative Schooling

While there have been strong academic debates about relevance and efficacy of alternative schooling, particularly the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), trends seem to indicate movement towards mainstreaming of school goers into formal schools: “The EGS enrolment has declined drastically from 49.8 lakh children in 2003-04 to about 24 lakh in 2006-07. The number of EGS centres is expected to decline to about 70,000 in 2006, from about 129,000 in 2004. One reason is that EGS centres are being upgraded in many states—chiefly Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Rajasthan—using small school norms. By 2008, all EGS centres are expected to be upgraded to primary schools.” (Sherry Chand at al 2006: 35). However, not all states reflect such a trend and, therefore, need specific attention³³.

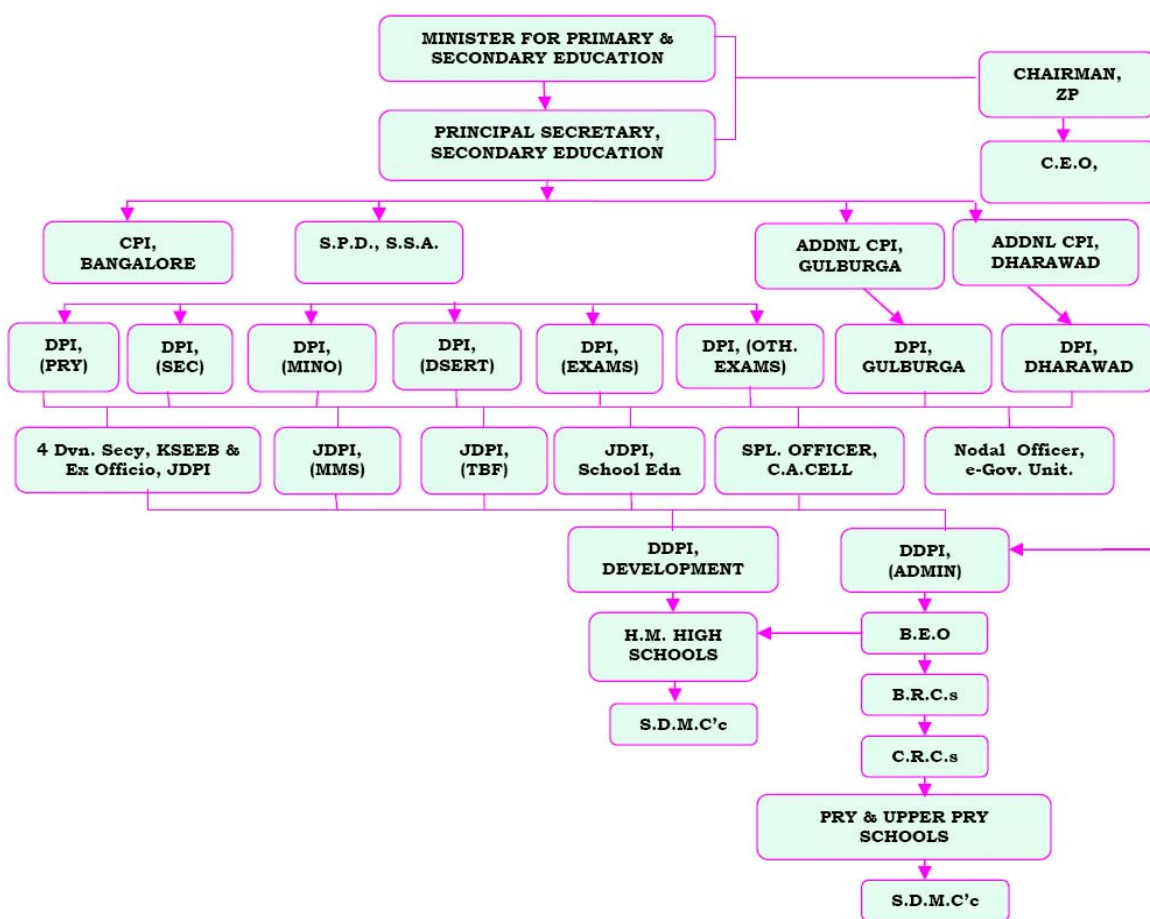
The concerns on alternative schooling are again those that have already received much attention from both academics and policy-makers:

1. Insufficient provisioning for facilities (facilitators/animators/para-teachers and materials) that are not addressed by existing norms for such programmes under SSA.
2. Inadequate efforts to involve mainstream structures to ensure attainment of minimum levels of quality of teaching-learning.
3. Lack of a multi-pronged approach that can involve some or all of the following: adapting pedagogies to local-needs (curricular and teaching-learning process), activity-based inputs, flexi-timing and locational convenience for target groups, and, networking with other government departments and NGOs to address wider issues (livelihood, child labour, etc).

APPENDIX-II

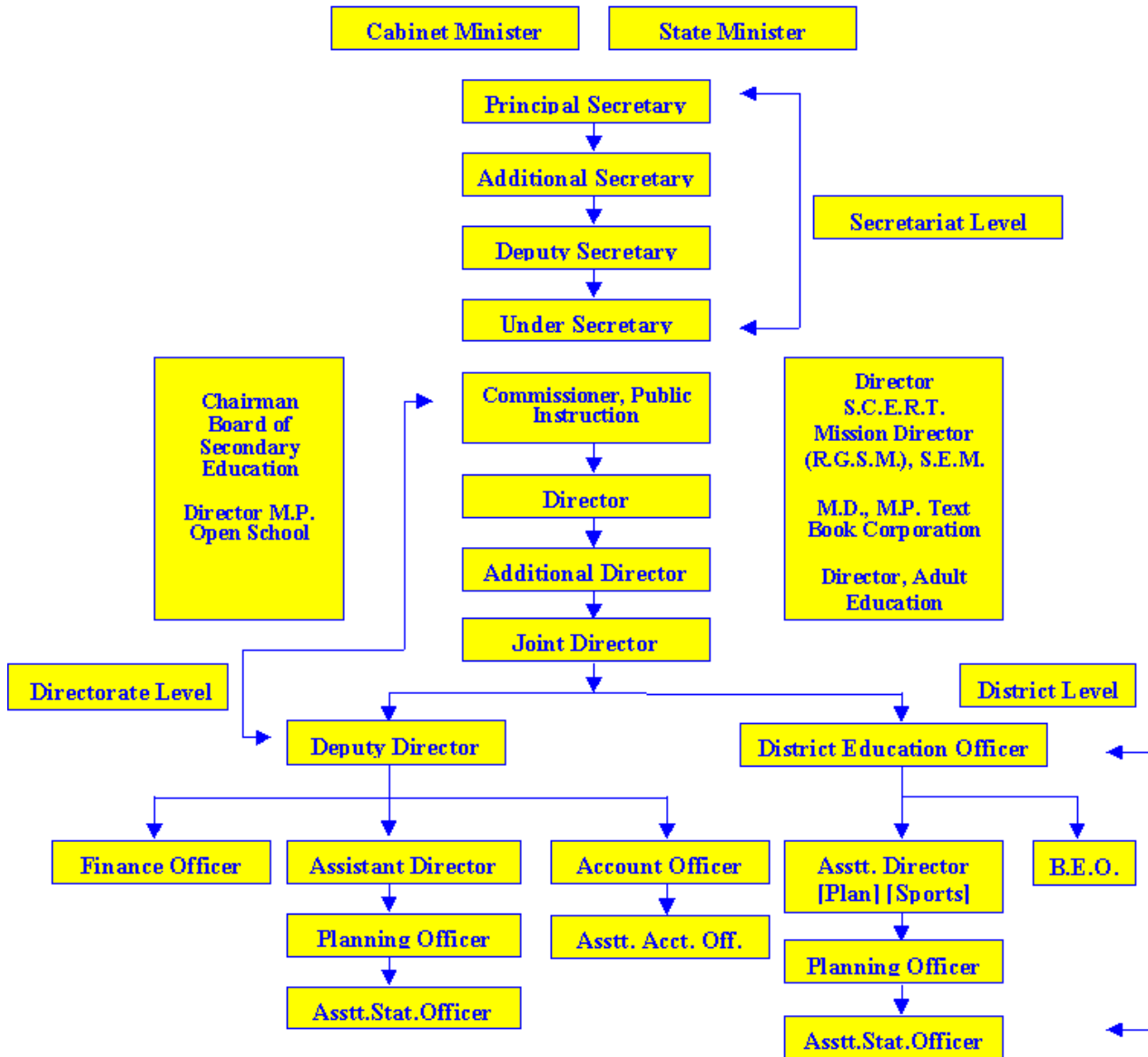
Structures of Education Departments of State

Organisation Chart of Department of Public Instruction



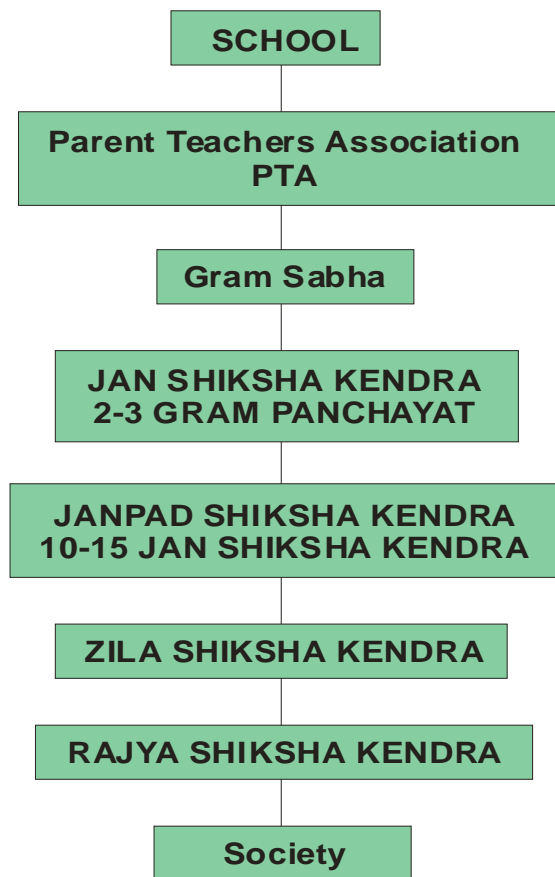
Source - Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka website:
 URL: <http://www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in/pdf/files/OrganisationChart.pdf>

Organization of School Education Department, Madhya Pradesh



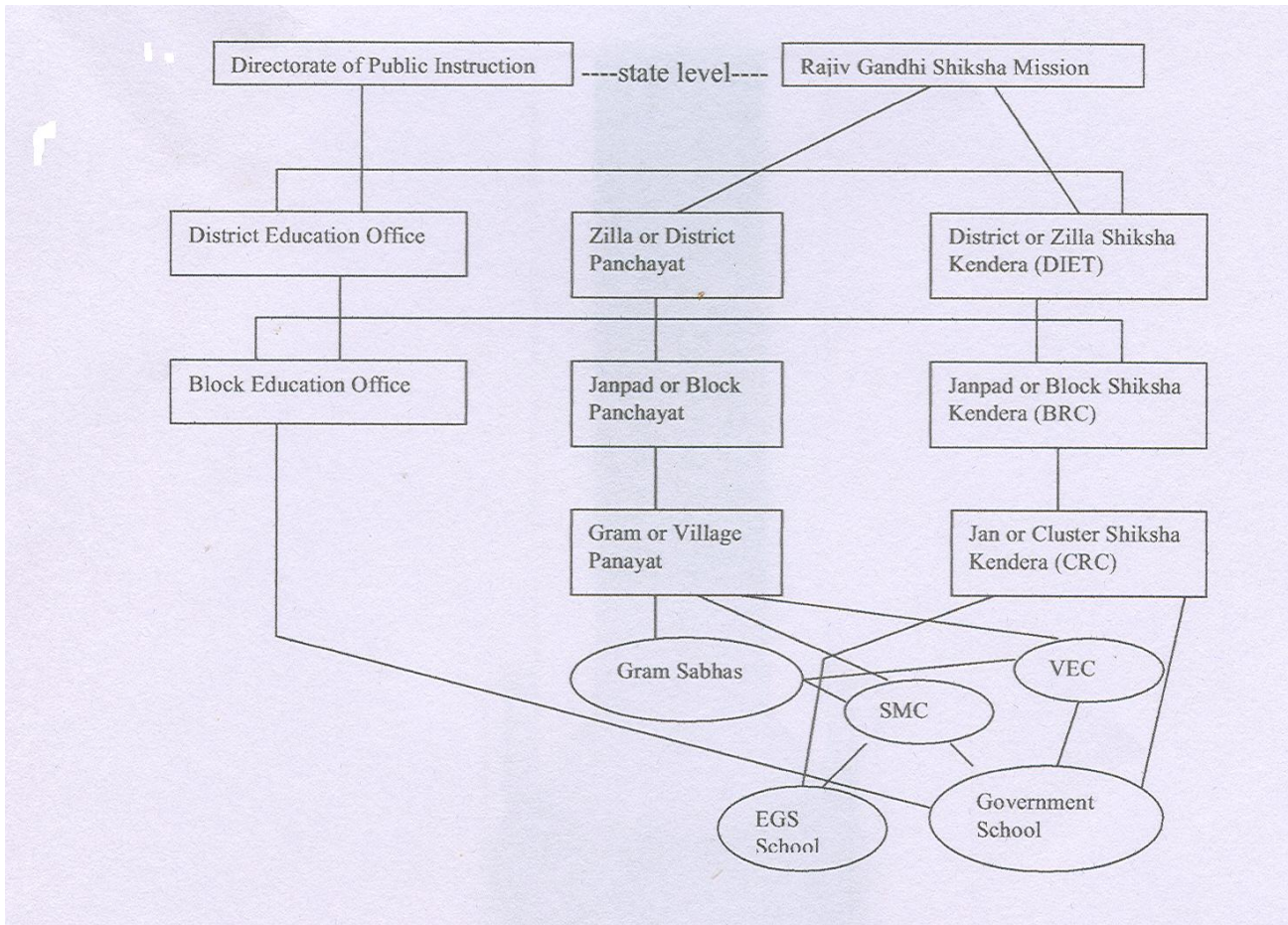
Source - Department of School Education, Government of Madhya Pradesh website:
 URL: <http://sednmp.nic.in/organ.htm>

Organizational setup for SSA, Madhya Pradesh



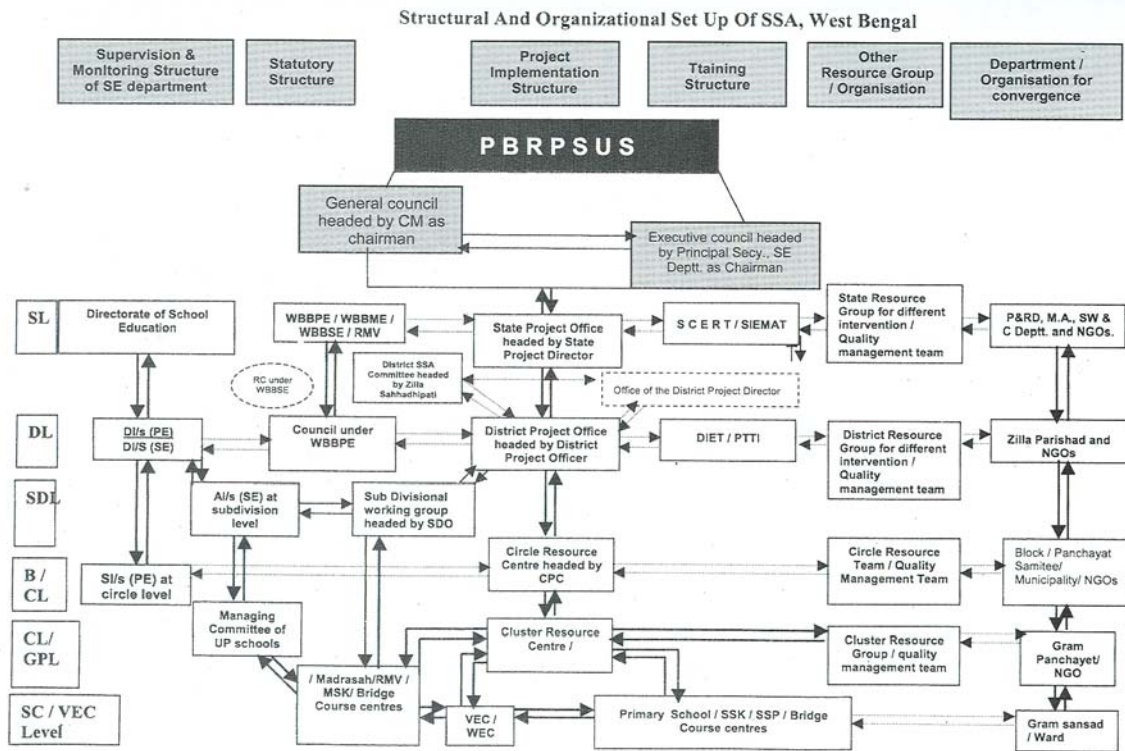
Source - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Madhya Pradesh website:
URL: <http://www.ssa.mp.gov.in/management.htm>

Institutional Structure of Education, Madhya Pradesh



Source - Clarke, Prema (2003). Education reform in the Education Guarantee Scheme in Madhya Pradesh, India and the Fundescola Program in Brazil. URL: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2003/10/15/000160016_20031015180654/Rendered/PDF/269480Clarke0Education0Reform.pdf

Structural and Organizational Setup of SSA, West Bengal



Source- Annual Report 2004-2005, Department of School Education, Govt. of West Bengal.

APPENDIX-III

Suggested Key Changes for DIETs

The summary of key changes suggested for the DIETs, as consolidated from various studies*, are given below:

Structural Changes:

- Redeploy staff of two wings of the DIET (Work Experience and District Resource Unit), which will help the DIETs allocate their resources efficiently to the functions that contribute directly to achieving their primary academic goals; also rethink structure of seven wings in terms of specific requirements/activities of the DIET and the particular district.
- Establish a common reporting authority for all the senior most district level education functionaries (i.e. DDPI-Administration, DIET-Principal, Dy P-SSA). This is to enable Chief Executive Officer-Zilla Panchayat to have a holistic picture at district-level; similarly convergence of the three functionaries is suggested for work and financial planning.
- Enable a distinct academic structure with reporting relations reflecting this distinctiveness (DSERT -> DIET -> BRC; with organization of both personnel and work at each level congruent to those in the subsequent levels).

Personnel Changes:

- Separate cadre for DIET (and the entire academic structure) based on specialized academic qualifications and possibilities of direct recruitment. At present there is a mismatch between competencies/qualifications and expected tasks (primarily that of secondary school exposure of faculty and primary school tasks they are supposed to engage with) as well as inadequate skills for providing training or academic support.
- Process of faculty appraisal as a basis of career progression within a distinct academic cadre (BRC -> DIET ->DSERT).

Functional/Work-Related Changes:

- Processes of involvement of DIET in sub-district academic support functions (for example, facilitating and strengthening district, block, and cluster resource groups; promoting concept of lab areas; explicating role of nodal officers).
- Autonomy to facilitate district-specific training programmes, both financially and administratively.
- Processes to enable training management, tracking, and assessing training efficacy at the district-level.

- Delink DIET from Diploma in Education (D.Ed) related work.

Infrastructure/Institution-Building Support:

- Orientation/induction training of faculty through higher institutions [National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), and universities] and non-government organizations; ongoing capacity building measures in the area of current pedagogies, educational research, computer-skills.
- Proper selection of Principal to provide sustained academic leadership.
- Provision of adequate infrastructure in terms of computers, training and teaching-learning resources, Satcom linkages.
- Deputation of experts and academicians to DIET as visiting faculty.

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