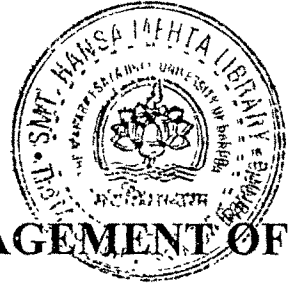


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**A STUDY ON THE DECENTRALISED MANAGEMENT OF
DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

*An Abstract
Of the Thesis
Submitted to the
Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
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Doctor of Philosophy in Education*

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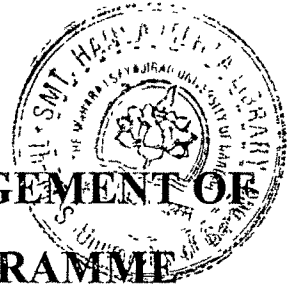
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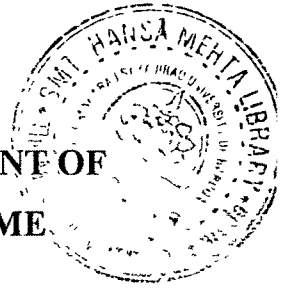
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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is expected to lay the foundation of human development by improving the knowledge, skills and attitude of individuals and thereby changing their economic, social, mental, moral and cultural aspects of human life. The process of education, being continuous of different stages, from Primary Education to University Education, each stage covers a specific age group of learners and provides fixed levels of learning experiences. At the primary education stage, which is the first five years (I-V) of learning, the emphasis is on the 3R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) along with the foundation for the personality, attitude, social confidence, habit formation, learning skills and communicating capabilities of pupils. It assists physical growth, arouses interests in sports and games and also develops manual dexterity.

Primary Education in India has undergone sea changes for the last five decades in the post independent era. Provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years is a Directive Principle of the Indian constitution, Article 45. Since 1950 concerted efforts have been made towards the achievement of this goal. Enrolment at the primary stage increased about five times from 19.2 million in 1950 to 110.4 million in 1996-97. Girls enrolment ratio has grown at the primary stage from 54 million in 1950-51 to 47.4 million in 1995-96 and

the rate of growth of enrolment of girls has been higher than that of boys, gender disparities still persist as girls account for only 43.2 per cent of enrolment at the primary stage. Access to schools increased considerably with 95 per cent of the rural population, living in 8.26 lakh habitations, having a school with a walking distance of one kilometer. However, Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in its totality is still an elusive goal and much ground is yet to be covered. Despite improvement in access at primary level, a large number of children in the primary school age group are still out of school. The participation of girls, Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) children remains a challenge. These groups of children comprise a large proportion of the dropouts. Low level of learning achievement in many schools, particularly in rural areas and urban slums is a matter of concern.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 (as updated in 1992) and the Program of Action, 1992 reaffirm the national commitment to Universalisation of Elementary Education. Para 5.123 of NPE resolves that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality should be provided to all children upto 14 years of age before we enter 21st century. NPE specifies in para 5.5 that UEE has three aspects

- (i) universal access and enrolment,
- (ii) universal retention of children up to 14 years of age,
- (iii) A substantial improvement in quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning

For achieving the target goals several innovations have been introduced. The emphasis has been shifted from enrolment per se to enrolment as well as retention. An array of micro planning based strategies is being formulated for application at the grass root levels to ensure children's retention. The enrolment drives are being replaced by participate planning in which the teachers and villagers would formulate family wise design of action to ensure that every child regularly attend the school or non-formal system of education and complete at least five years of schooling or its non-formal equivalent. However the above measures have contributed towards improving the primary education to a limited extent. It has been realised that Universalisation of Elementary Education can not be accepted as having been achieved unless children acquire Minimum Levels of Learning. Achievement has come to be assigned equal importance along with the access and retention. This is reflected in the revised policy formulation (1986, updated in 1992). The priority shifting in the process of achieving UEE's national experience identified the contextuality of UEE that entails local area planning with desegregated targets and decentralized planning and management. Operationalising the para 7.4.6 of the Programme of Action 1992, which states,

“ Further efforts would be made to develop district-specific projects, with specific activities, clearly defined responsibilities, definite time schedule and specific targets. Each district project will be prepared within the major strategy frameworks and will be tailored to the specific needs and possibilities in the district. Apart from effective UEE, the goals of each project will include the reduction of existing disparities in educational access, the provision of alternative system of comparable standards to the disadvantaged groups, a substantial improvement in the quality of schooling facilities,

obtaining a genuine community involvement in the running of schools, and building up local level capacity to ensure effective decentralisation of educational planning. This is to say the overall goal of the project would be reconstruction of Primary education as a whole in selected districts instead of piecemeal implementation of schemes. An integrated approach is more likely to achieve synergies among different programme components ”

Imbibing the spirit of the policy provisions, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) emerged in 1994 as a response to various challenges in the primary education sector. DPEP adopts a holistic approach and has the essential ingredients required to universalize access, retention and improve learning achievement and reduces disparities among social groups. Adopting an area specific approach with district as the unit of planning, the key strategies of the program have been to retain the contextuality and sensitivity to local conditions and ensuring full participatory of the community. The emphasis on participatory planning and management and capacity building are clearly articulated. The criteria for selection of districts are:

- Backward districts with female literacy below the national average
- Districts where total Literacy Campaigns have generated a demand for elementary education

Since its initiation in 1994, DPEP covered 42 districts in 7 states; its reach has spread to 149 districts in 14 states to another 33 districts, which is in the pipeline. In



Gujarat State, three districts namely, Panchmahal, Banaskanta and Dangs were identified as DPEP districts in the second phase

The salient features of District Primary Education Program are

- Operationalises NPE's strategy for decentralized planning and desegregated target setting
- Implementation in project model in districts The project period varying between 5-7 years
- Makes a holistic approach, from the schematic to the integrated, with due emphasis on convergence of existing programs and resources
- Focus on sustainability and equity central to the program
- Emphasis on intensive community participation
- Predominance of quality aspects supported by feedback from research and evaluation
- A process based program
- Responsibility of implementation vested with state level registered society empowered to make financial and administrative decisions, with national level co-ordination and support
- A Centrally sponsored scheme with 85% of the project cost being made available to the states by Government of India and states contributing the balance 15 percent.

The Govt of India funds are sourced from international funding agencies

- Approximately Rs.30-40 crores funding earmarked for a district for the entire project period
- Financing is done on the principle of additionally, such that the states continue to maintain at least their pre-DPEP allocations for primary education.
- Special supervision mechanism-bi-annual joint supervision mission with representatives of Ministry and the International funding agencies.

II. DECENTRALISATION OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The issue of decentralisation features quite prominently in all contemporary discourses on educational management. The central control versus regional autonomy problematic is not new to the field of public administration. The developments in the educational management system in India represent a wide spectrum of policies and practices. Conceptualizing the concept of decentralisation, it is any operation aimed at achieving some form of decentralisation is not merely a technical and administrative undertaking; the nature and degree of power transferred within such a reform process are dependent upon political will and the power struggles that underlie all efforts to achieve decentralisation (Adamolekun, Robert and Laleye, 1990). Traditional literature on the subject refers to a variety of management phenomena, all under the rubric of decentralisation (Lauglo, 1990). These include at least three easily distinguishable trends. The first trend is that in some countries decentralisation is perceived to consist of adding to the existing political and administrative structure a number of “deconcentrated” bodies, either at the local level alone or at the two or three levels. An

obvious implication of this process is to move the administrative set up nearer to the action setting but by increasing the weight of the bureaucracy. It is often expressed that this approach to decentralisation is only a means to increase-not weaken- the role of the state. Decision making through locally placed civil servants may be better informed than central bureaucrats and can therefore take more account of local view (Lauglo, 1990).

The second trend commonly identified can be referred as to “delegation”. In this case the state apparently transfers some of the powers of decision-making to bodies outside the government bureaucracy. This would theoretically allow for involvement of non-governmental bodies in the management process. However in practice, such delegation of authority generally involves para-statal bodies, created by the state itself to handle special areas of public concern. Even though such delegated bodies would enjoy some amount of autonomy from state control and allow for participation of non-government personnel in decision-making and they are easily dispensable as their creation is effected mainly through executive orders of the state and not through promulgation of law. Establishment of Textbook Boards in different states of India is a good example of such approach, which includes vesting of decision-making powers with members of the bureaucracy within the governmental hierarchy down the line and away from the center.

“Devolution” is the third kind of reform generally considered as representing a more comprehensive and genuine approach to decentralize the management process. In this case, specified powers are transferred to sub-national units through appropriate

legal reform processes; generally these units consist of local self-governments constituted through democratic means. In countries, which adopt such model," decentralisation is considered and perceived as an in-depth reform, which is both a fundamental and an essential part of national development. In this case, decentralisation is presented as a "choice of society".(Adamolekun et al,1990) Caldwell and Spinks(1988) discussed the nature of decentralisation in the educational setup and mentioned the parameters of decentralisation in terms of knowledge(decentralisation of decisions related to curriculum, including decisions related to the goals or ends of schooling); technology(decentralisation of decisions related to the means of teaching and learning); power(decentralisation of authority to make decisions); material (decentralisation of decisions related to the use of facilities, supplies and equipment); people (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of people in matters related to teaching and learning); time (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of time); and finance(decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of money)

After independence India has strived to accelerate the process of development through active participation of the people at the grass-root level. The decentralisation of socio-economic development programmes was conceptualised as early as the First Five-Year Plan. It was envisaged that the villages would undertake and execute the programmes of development with actual support of the state. Accordingly, it was felt necessary to change the structure of development administration. Launching a community development program in 1952 was a first step in this direction. Development was conceived as an integrated process. A need was felt for building

development administration which is sensitive to the aspirations and needs of the people. The significance of decentralization in accelerating the process of development was emphasized by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) which was set up make recommendations on new structures to be created to involve local people in the development process. The committee recommended the establishment of an interconnected three-tier organizational structure of democratize decentralization at the village, block and district levels.

The DPEP has been operationalised on the principle of decentralisation of management and specific management structures have been evolved at various levels i.e. National, State, District, Block, Cluster and Village levels to reach out to the community.

III. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In order to elicit best results by enabling the DPEP to evolve and regain its dynamic character, interventions to improve management practices, decentralised planning, research, monitoring, evaluation and supervision must go hand in hand with the programme. Any reform in education can not be achieved, unless and until the prime functionaries digest the principles, objectives, roles and responsibilities and put them in to practice. The structural changes in DPEP on the lines of decentralisation, provided broad spectrum of participation of local community in planning and decision making process. In the context of DPEP, the critical issue need to be answered is that, a smooth transition from the project mode to the programme mode depends on the way the connected policies, rules and regulations are re-oriented to accommodate the new

initiatives. One of the common tensions that arise in this regard is with respect to project personnel and their integration into the system. The DPEP project became operational with relatively new sets of policy guidelines only in some selected districts while the existing rules and regulations will continue to be in force in the remaining. How do overcome this problem of dual sets of rules and regulations and ensure smooth integration of the project with the regular programme. Since the DPEP is time bound project with lot of financial input, it requires a critical study on the programme implementation level. In this perspective the present study is designed to probe into the following research questions that are vital and implicit in the DPEP model

- 1 Is Decentralization of Management existing in its real terms at all levels with proper autonomy, accountability, participation and professionalism in decision making and implementation?
- 2 What are the management structures, its objectives, composition, processes, functions and its co-ordination with the existing management system working in the field of primary education?
- 3 Do the functionaries at the grass-root levels practicing on the principles of decentralized Management?
- 4 What extent the decentralized system of management achieved its pre-defined objectives and contributed for the attainment of the Universalisation of Elementary Education?



- 5 What are the functional difficulties and challenges in the DPEP district as a unit operating on the basis of this system of management ?

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1 To study the nature of Decentralised Management of DPEP in the Panchmahal District in terms of academic and administrative dimensions
- 2 To study the management structures and processes of DPEP in Panchmahal District.
- 3 To study the impact of Decentralized Management of DPEP on enrolment, retention and achievement
- 4 To study the perception of the Teachers, Village Education Committee and Local Community on the District Primary Education Programs
- 5 To Find out the major difficulties faced by the functionaries at the Panchmahal district

V. METHODOLOGY:

(a) Selection of the Sample

In Pachmahal District, two talukas namely Halol and Kalol were selected purposively for the present study, as these two talukas were accessible to the researcher to pursue the study. Considering the scope and dimension of the study, Unit Sampling Technique was used to draw the sample. Thus the sample consisting of the following;

Size of the Sample and Respondents for the Study

Sampling Unit	Respondents
Gujarat State DPEP Headquarters.	State DPEP Project Officer Director, SCERT
District – Panchmahal DIET	DPEP Project Officer
Block (2) • Halol Taluka • Kalol Taluka	Block Resource Centre Co-ordinators
Cluster (6) • Halol (3) • Kalol (3)	Cluster Resource Group
Village Education Committee(10) • Halol (5) • Kalol (5)	Village Panchayat Parents/Community
School (10) • Halol (5) • Kalol (5)	Teachers/Headmaster

Note: The number in the bracket indicates the number of persons taken as sample.

The number in the brackets indicates the number of the sample units included in the present study

(b) Research Techniques Used for the Study

The scope and dimension of the present study demands initially, baseline information and the same was generated through the document analysis by the researcher.

(i) Document Analysis:

An intensive study of the documents related to the different aspects of DPEP with respect to the decentralised management. The following documents were procured and were reviewed by the researcher to get an insight into the norms established under DPEP and the procedure of decentralisation for implementing the programme

- DPEP Guidelines
- DPEP Implementation Manual
- Draft Proposal for DPEP at Panchmahal district
- DPEP Assessment reports and
- The reports submitted by the various supervision missions
- Documents obtained from the district and block levels
- Research reports on DPEP conducted by various organisations

The document analysis provided the researcher, an in-depth understanding of the decentralised management system of DPEP and the issues that need to be focussed at different levels of DPEP structures. The document analysis also provided the

researcher, a direction in preparing the questionnaires for collecting the data for the study

(ii) Questionnaire and Interview

Questionnaires were developed by the researcher specifically for the Village Education Committee and the School Principals of the sample group. After the document analysis, basic points and DPEP components were identified with a focus on the decentralised management. These components were included in the questionnaire with an intention to know the perception of the respondents on the components of decentralisation of management and also their level of awareness on the programme as a whole

The questionnaires that were developed by the NIEPA, New Delhi., for the Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) personnel were initially reviewed and then modified into the context of the field setting by the researcher and used for the data collection. The questionnaires mainly focused on the following parameters

- Awareness of DPEP and its objectives
- Establishment of DPEP structures on the principles of decentralisation as envisaged in the guidelines
- System of Planning and Management of the programme and roles and responsibility of the personnel

- Profiles of committees and details of interaction
- Support and guidance from BRS's and CRC's to the local schools
- Modes of community mobilisation for school programmes
- Steps taken for increasing enrolment and retention in schools
- Issues and challenges faced by the functionaries at different levels

To supplement the data collected through the questionnaire from different functionaries, an informal interview/dialogue was initiated by the researcher to probe into the issues identified through questionnaires. The interview was mainly focussed on the following;

- DPEP as a strategy for achieving the Universalisation of Elementary Education.
- Plan and procedures of the Programme in Operation
- Issues in Community involvement.
- Decentralised Management Structures.
- Impact of the programme on enrolment, retention and quality education.
- Major issues faced by the local level administrators
- School Programmes and Resources

The Researcher met the sampled group at various intervals and initiated discussions by focussing the above points and same were recorded

(c) Procedure of Data Collection:

The researcher had been involved in preparing the draft proposals for DPEP in Panchmahal and Dangs districts in 1995 with the assistance of Government of Gujarat. This helped the researcher to understand the contextuality of the problems of Primary Education in Panchmahal district. The researcher has been attending National and International Conferences on DPEP programme at various places on various themes, conducted by NCERT, EdCIL, DPEP Bureau, Government of India and presented conceptual and research papers and interacted with the personnel involved in the DPEP Mission. Thus a clear national perspective was developed by the researcher in due course of time. The researcher collected all the documents and reports submitted by the DPEP State Project Officer to the Ministry of Education, Government of India of India

The researcher had field visits to the selected Talukas and the sample villages in Panchmahal district and collected the data. The researcher also conducted indepth interviews with BRC, CRC, PTA, VEC, School Principal and teachers to get their perceptions and awareness on the decentralised management of District Primary Education Programme (See the field visit photographs in the appendix) The researcher employed several methods for collecting empirical materials ranging from the interview to direct observation, to the analysis of artifacts, documents, and the cultural records, to the use of visual materials and the personal experience

(d) Analysis of the data

The data collected by the researcher through interviews and the questionnaire were qualitative in nature and therefore the scheme of analysis is mostly of qualitative analysis. However, some data related to growth in enrolment, retention and quality achievement were shown on quantitative measures through certain indicators. Qualitative interpretations are constructive and therefore, the researcher first created Index - a field text consisting of field notes and documents on the field study. Then the researcher has moved from the field text to the research text which is a note and interpretations based on the field text. This text was re-created by the researcher as a working interpretive document on the lines of the objectives of the present study. From this document, the researcher evolved the major findings of the present study and presented them in detail.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- 1 The DPEP has made an impact on the academic decentralisation by linking institutional resources and teacher training with classroom processes. This approach created learning resources in terms of teaching learning materials that envisages joyful learning in the schools.

- 2 The Teacher Grants and School Improvement Grants were found as motivational approaches in strengthening and sustaining the institutional and individual commitment on the achievement of DPEP goals

3. The DPEP has also made an impact on the of administrative decentralisation by creating district, village and community level structures. There has been a great deal of structural revolution that took place under DPEP. Planning process, execution and appraisal of the programme gave a scope for participatory approach.

4. However, there are certain principle areas identified, which require more concern in visualizing the administrative decentralisation as envisaged in the DPEP. These areas for concern are the functional effectiveness of administrative structures, moribund nature of village level administrative structures, autonomy and accountability conflicts, limited levels of co-ordination among various personnel and the low participation of community in the school programmes

- 5 The existing structures for the management of Primary Education and the evolved structures for the management of District Primary Education Programme have been working as parallel structures and in some cases the vertical and horizontal working relationships are not clear

- 6 Block Resource Centers are established in almost all the Blocks of Panchmahal District by creating a full-fledged functional building. The BRC co-ordinators were

appointed on deputation and most of them are teachers in Primary schools. Each BRC is having around 15 clusters

- 7 Cluster Resource Centers are attached to Pay Center Schools and the Head master of the school considered to be the co-ordinator. There is no full-fledged functional building for CRC. Each cluster looks after 10 to 12 schools and provide guidance to the teachers.
- 8 Master Trainers' were identified by the BRC and were trained by the DIET and the GCERT. These trainers, train the teachers in their clusters on various themes. These master trainers do not take regular classes in their respective schools and continue to be the trainers through out the tenure.
9. Village Education Committees were established in almost all the villages of the Panchmahal District and it was found that their participation in school programmes and their level of awareness on the DPEP is not satisfactory. The VEC meets once in three months and the discussion in the meeting usually around the RS 2000/- School Grants.
- 10 Parent Teacher Associations and Mother Teacher Associations are found in most of the schools of the Panchmahal district and their functional utility is found not satisfactory.

11. The members of the Village level and Community level management structures remains to be members for long years. It was felt that there should a rotation among the parents and community to be the members of such bodies to provide equal opportunity to all to take part in the school programmes.
12. The Gross Enrolment Rate of the students at Std. It is found to b increased over the years after the implementation of the DPEP in the Panchmahal District.
13. The Retention Rate in Lower Primary school is also found increased over the years after the implementation of the DPEP
14. In both the enrolment and retention rates, the figures of boys are more than the girls. It was found that these gender differences are mostly due to the socio-economic and cultural issues in the society
15. There has been a significant increase in the academic achievement of the students after the implementation of the DPEP. It was found that there is a near absence of gender based inequality in the lower standards
16. Sixty Eight percent of the respondents opined that there has been a significant increase of the school resources in terms of teaching learning materials and other equipment



17. Twenty Six percent of respondents opined that the community involvement is very much increased and whereas Twenty Five percent of respondents opined that community involvement is not at all increased due to the DPEP
18. Fifty Five percent of respondents opined that there has been a decentralisation of management right from the programme planning to programme implementation.
- 19 At the Village level, it was found that the level of awareness on DPEP is low especially in the components like roles and responsibilities of the community, funding procedures, the nature of decentralisation of management and quality education
- 20 The level of awareness on the DPEP components at village level is seen more on the school development grants, school programmes like shala Praveshostav, Bala mela and the constitution of VEC, BRC and CRC
- 21 Lack of community participation and awareness is found to be the most acute difficulty faced by the functionaries of the DPEP. Politicization is also considered as one of the difficulties faced at the village level
- 22 Repetition of the training programmes by various bodies State, District and Block level for teachers, lack of facilities in the training programmes and the frequently changing text books and methods of teaching are found to be difficulties by the teachers in the DPEP Schools

23. It was found that there is a need to have a well organized monitoring and evaluating system by specifying roles at District, Block and Village levels for the sustainability of the programme in an integrated manner

VII. CONCLUSION

It is clearly evident from the analysis and the major findings of the study that the DPEP initiatives have brought changes in enrolment, retention and achievement. However the approach of decentralisation of management focussing the participation of the community at the schools level needs to be realised in realistic terms.