

## Role of Panchyati Raj Institution Members in Managing Elementary Education in Bihar

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**ABSTRACT:** Elementary education is one of 29 delegated responsibilities upon Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). This study examined the role of PRI members in managing elementary education. It was conducted on 27 PRI members and 8 head teachers of two blocks of Patna district Bihar, selected through multistage sampling technique. Self-developed interview schedule was used for collecting relevant information on the role of PRI members in elementary education. The study found that i) only 19.23 % of the PRI members are involved in procuring infrastructure for the school, mainly involved in developing separate toilet for boys and girls, hand pumps for drinking water, ii) no PRI members are involved in developing boundary wall, classroom, kitchen for mid-day meal and bench desk, iii) no PRI members are involved in procuring the TLM for school like black board, chalk, duster, chart, model, T.V, Computer etc, iv) all the PRI members are involved in preparation, distribution and monitoring the quality of mid-day meal and v) 90% of PRI members want to take training about roles on school management. The study has suggested for orientation of PRI members on their roles and responsibilities so that they can get better involve in functioning of school.

**Keywords:** PRI, SMC, School Development Plan, RTE Act, Monitoring School

### CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROBLEM

There has been growing concern among economists and social scientists world over for enhancing access to education because of the economic and social benefits attached to it. The Indian Constitution recognizing the importance of education and made provision for “free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”, in article 45 of the Directive Principle of State Policy. After 86 amendments (2002) of the Constitution, elementary education is a fundamental right as per the article 21(a) to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years. The success of constitutional mandate is only possible through community participation in education.

For democratic decentralisation of administration and the empowerment of local political bodies, the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) are created which are more accountable to local citizens and appropriate to local needs and preferences. Panchayati Raj Institution is a three-tier system of administration at the grass root level for the development of rural areas, with the Gram Panchayat at the Panchayat level where chairman of Panchayat (Mukhiya) is the head, the Panchayat Samiti at the block level where chairman of Panchayat Samiti (Pramukh) is the head, and Zila Parishad at the district level where chairman of Zila Parishad is head.

M K Gandhi the father of nation, in 1946 had aptly remarked that the Indian Independence must begin at the bottom and every village ought to be a republic or Panchayat having a power. The Panchayati Raj movement was firstly launched in

2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1961 in Rajasthan. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments of the Indian Constitution (1992) were historic attempts to empower local self-governments by giving them constitutional status and identifying 29 areas including elementary education over which they can legitimately have jurisdiction. It recommended for the delegation of authority related to education, including primary and secondary schools, technical training and vocational education, adult education and non-formal education, and spread of literary and cultural activities to Panchayati Raj bodies (Article 243G of the Eleventh Schedule). In pursuant to the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments each Indian state passed their own Panchayati Raj Acts. The section 22 of the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006 identifies some important roles of Panchayats in the area of elementary education.

Community participation in educational management was suggested by Kothari Commission (1964-66). The need for decentralized planning of school education especially of primary education has been strongly stressed in but also a movement towards empowering the local community to take major management decisions in this regard. In 1993 Veerapan Committee recommended that decentralisation of educational planning: through involvement of Panchayati Raj Institution. In District Education Primary Programme (DPEP), decentralisation and community participation are being put into practice on large scale. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which is an elaborative nationwide programme formulated by the Government of India (GOI) to universalize elementary



education also laid emphasis on community ownership of the school system.

In Bihar common school system commission (2007) recommended two drafts bills for enactment in order to ensure better community participation in school management. In Right of children to free and compulsory education (RTE Act) 2009 also talks about involvement of PRI members, parents and local community members as SMC for school management and monitoring. In the section 21(1) of the RTE Act (2009) mention that every elementary school shall have to constitute a school management committee consisting of elected local representatives, HM, teachers, parents and guardians. After implementation of RTE 2009, Bihar Prarambhik Shiksha Samiti (Bihar elementary school education committee) Act 2011 was brought to decentralize school management and community participation. The Bihar government has given certain roles and responsibilities to PRI members for monitoring the elementary schools.

#### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Many commissions and committees on education after Independence has emphasised on the role of Panchayati Raj Institution members in management of education especially in elementary education. The RTE Act 2009 has also recommended for the involvement of local representatives in the School Management Committees (SMC), which will monitor the functioning of school. Realising the importance of the PRI members in the management of school education, many researchers has studied the different aspect of community participation in school education. Some of these are discussed in following paragraph.

Promesh (2001) and Ghosh (2002) had concluded that there was lack of coordination among different layers particularly of local bodies and higher levels in hierarchical system of education. Ghatak and Ghatak (2002) had pointed that West Bengal lagged behind other states in terms of devolution of power, finance, and function to Panchayats. Biswal, (2006) found that Panchayat's participation in school through village education committee in provision of the infrastructure development, drinking water availability and had increased the percentage of attending student. Rao and Prabhakar (2011) reported that the framework to facilitate better and micro planning at the school level accommodating school based management practices is very weak in the schools managed by public sector where as facilitation of parents and community in planning is totally absent in the schools run by the private management. Ritu (2012) pointed that maximum Village Education Development Committees are involved in carrying out the activities relating to construction and maintenance to full fill the various procedural requirements but not more

involve in educational matter. Shakti. (2013) found that the role and responsibilities of PRI members regarding assessment of children with special needs mention that neither any work has done to make sure and also emphasize that assessment team is not been adequately trained.

Prasad and Gautam (2013) stated that Panchayati Raj Institutions are the main source for development of primary education through its Shiksha Committees, Shiksha Mitras and various committees. Wushe and Sherge (2013) found that most members of school development committee are in deficiency in financial management skills and this affected the daily operations of the schools. Attari (2014) found that gram panchayat members play role in staff recruitment mainly aganbadi sebika also play role in record maintenance and infrastructure availability. Verma and Singh (2014) found that VEC are not working properly. Kumar (2015) stated that PRIs have been entrusted with various roles regarding formal and non-formal education. But no concrete step has been taken to empower PRIs to exercise their power and functions. Bhattacharya and Mohalik (2015) emphasis that SMC member are not fully aware about the roles and responsibilities as per the RTE Act, 2009 and majority of SMC members do not have correct role perception and role performance in implementing the RTE Act 2009. Mohalik, R. (2017) found that i) 95.83% of HMs and 93.75% of SMC members are aware about the RTE Act 2009 ii) Government has taken steps for developing training and assessment modules for admitting out of school children and CSWN by providing facilities like ramp, aid and appliances, wheel chair, special teachers and home service to these children and iii) No out of school children has taken admission in the school as per the activity)

Analysis of the above studies indicates that the involvement of community members in school education has been widely studied. Majority of researches are on VECs and SMCs and its role in enrolment, attendance of student, infrastructure facilities, utilization of available funds and monitoring school programmes. No study reported that focus on direct involvement of Panchayati Raj Institution members in monitoring of school, providing infrastructure facilities, for promoting education for disadvantage section in elementary education. In this context, study on role of PRI members in managing elementary education is relevant. The investigators has raised following research question for investigation.

*What are the roles PRI members playing for providing infrastructure facilities, teaching learning material and monitoring the daily functioning of the elementary school?*

#### OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

**Panchayati Raj Institution Member:** PRI member means the member of Gram Panchayat at the Panchayat level like Mukhiya, and Ward member, member of Panchayat

Samiti at block level like Pramukhya and member of Zila Parishad at district level is Adhyaksha elected under the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006. For these study PRI members refers to ward members, sarpanch, pramukhya and zila parishad adhyaksha.

**Elementary Education:** Elementary education means the education from class-I to class-VIII.

**OBJECTIVE**

- To examine the role of PRI members in providing infrastructure facilities, teaching learning material and monitoring the functioning of school.

**METHODOLOGY**

The survey method was used to ascertain the role of PRI members in elementary education. The sample for this study consisted of 27 PRI members and eight HMs selected by using multistage sampling techniques from Patna district of Bihar. Initially two blocks were selected randomly from 21 blocks of Patna district, from each block two panchayats were selected, from each Panchayat five wards were selected randomly. The investigator selected Zila Parishad Adhyakshya at district level, Panchayat Samiti Adhyakshya (Pramukhya) at the block level, Mukhiya (Sarpanch) at the Panchayat level and ward member at ward level. The investigator also selected two schools from each Panchayat under the selected ward. Total eight schools and eight HMs were selected and involved as sample. Self developed interview schedule having 17 items was used to explore the roles of PRI members in elementary education. The collected data were analysed by frequency and percentage and accordingly interpretations were made.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

The objective of the study was to examine the role of PRI members in elementary education relating to infrastructure facilities, TLMs, and monitoring the daily functioning of school. The responses given by the PRI members and Head teachers are presented in the following tables and paragraphs.

**Involvement of PRI Members in the Development of School Infrastructure**

**Table-1: Roles Relating to Infrastructure Facilities of School**

Sl. No	Items	Head Teachers Yes Response (N & %)	PRI members Yes Response (N & %)
1	Enquire about availability of infrastructure in school	3(37.5)	27(100%)
2	Involve in procuring /developing Infrastructure	2(25)	6(22.22)
3	Develop Boundary wall/Fence	0 (0)	0(0)
4	Construct Classroom	0 (0)	0 (0)
5	Separate toilet for boys and girls	0(0)	3 (11.11)
6	Safe and adequate drinking water facilities	2(25)	6(22.22)
7	Kitchen for mid-day meal	0 (0)	0(0)
8	Bench /Desk	0 (0)	0 (0)

The table-1 reveals the opinion of Head teachers and PRI members about the involvement of PRI members in procuring different infrastructure facilities in elementary school. All the PRI members express that they enquire about the infrastructure facilities of the school but only 37.5% of HTs admit the same. 28.57% of PRI members and 25% of head teachers say that they are involved in developing infrastructure. 7.62 % of PRI members state that they are involved in making separate toilet for boys and girls but no head teachers respond the same. 19.23 % of PRI members and 25 % of head teachers told that they are involved in maintaining safe and adequate drinking water facilities. Both PRI members and head teacher respond that they are not involved in developing boundary wall/fence, classroom, kitchen for mid-day meal, and bench / desk. It can be concluded that there is a difference of opinion of Head Teachers and PRI Members about the involvement of PRI in the development of school infrastructure. It can also be said that PRI members are not much involved in the development of school infrastructure except of construction of toilets and drinking water.

**Involvement of PRI Members in Developing and Providing TLMs**



No PRI members are involved in procuring the TLM for school like blackboard, chalk, duster, chart, model, T.V, Computer etc. No PRI members found involved in the process of selecting TLMs, purchasing TLMs, preparation of any TLMs, and contribution of TLMs to school. All the head teachers admitted the same. It can be concluded that PRI members are not involved in the development and supply of TLMs to the school.

**Involvement of PRI Members to Monitor the Functioning of School**

**Table-2: Involved in Monitoring of Daily Functions of School**

Sl. No.	Items	Head Teachers Yes Response (N & %)	PRI Members Yes Response (N & %)
1	Student’s regularity and punctuality	6(75)	27(100)
2	Teacher’s regularity and punctuality	8(100)	27(100)
3	Completion of the curriculum	4(50)	16(59.25)
4	Mid-day meal preparation	8(100)	27(100)
5	Mid-day meal distribution	8(100)	27(100)
6	Mid-day meal quality monitoring	8(100)	27(100)
7	Scholarship distribution	5(62.5)	16(59.25)
8	Dress distribution	5(62.5)	17(62.96)
9	Book distribution	5(62.5)	15(55.55)
10	Regular school functioning	6(75)	18(66.66)
11	Celebrating national days	0	16(59.25)
12	School development plan	0	0
13	Attending school management meeting	6(75)	19(70.37)

It is found from the table-2 that all the PRI members are involved in management of their local school that is also admitted by the respective head teachers. All the PRI members said that they are involve in monitoring the student’s regularity and punctuality, teacher’s regularity and punctuality and monitor the process of mid-day meal preparation, distribution and quality of mid-day meal regularly and also all the head teachers agree with that statements. 61.53% of PRI members told that they are monitoring the completion of the curriculum but only 50 % of head teachers admit the same. 59.25 %, 62.96 % and 55.55 % of PRI members stated that

they are monitoring the scholarship distribution, dress distribution, and book distribution process which were supported by 62.5% of head teachers. 66.66% of PRI members said that they are monitoring regular school functioning and 75 % of head teachers agreed to this. 59.25% PRI members told that they are celebrating national days in school but no head teachers told that PRI members take part in celebration of national days in school.70.37% of PRI members conform that they are attending the school management meeting which was agreed by the head teachers. Hence it can be concluded that the PRI members are involved in different school activities such as monitoring regularity and punctuality of teachers and students, preparation and distribution of mid day meals and distribution of books and dress for students. It can also be said that PRI members are not involved in the development of school development plan and celebration of national days in school.

**MAJOR FINDINGS**

- Less than one fifth (19.23 %) of the PRI members are involved in procuring infrastructure of the schools, mainly involve in developing separate toilet for boys and girls and hand pumps for adequate and safe drinking water.
- No PRI members are involved in developing boundary wall, classroom, kitchen for mid-day meal and bench desk.
- Both the head teachers and PRI members told that no PRI members are involved in procuring the TLM for school like black board, chalk, duster, chart, model, T.V, Computer etc.
- Both the head teachers and PRI members told that no PRI members are involved in the process of selecting TLMs, purchasing TLMs ,preparation of any TLMs, and there any contribution of TLMs.
- All the PRI members are involved in preparation, distribution and monitoring the quality of mid-day meal.
- All the PRI members are involved in management of their local school. They monitor teacher’s regularity and student’s regularity. But only 59.25% of the PRI members monitor the completion of curriculum.
- No one PRI members are involve in school development plan
- 40 % of PRI members told that teachers do not tolerate their involvement in school functioning.
- 90 % of PRI members need training for better involvement in the school functioning.



## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULT

The present study investigated the roles of PRI members in the functioning of elementary school relating to different dimensions of elementary education. The first dimension is related to role of PRI members in providing infrastructure and teaching learning materials. The study found that few PRI members are involved in the development of infrastructure, no PRI members are involved in procuring of TLMs.

The second dimensions is related to the monitoring the daily school functioning of school by the PRI members. The present study found PRI members are involved in the monitoring of Mid Day Meals, regularity and punctuality of teachers and students, distribution of books and dress. It also found that the PRI members are not involved in the completion of curriculum, celebration of national days in school and development of school plan. The PRI members are not involved in the development of school plan as per the RTE Act 2009, which indicates that the Act has not been fully implemented in the state of Bihar. It can be said that the involvement of PRI members in elementary education is very superficial.

This result is supported by Prabhakar and Rao (2011) Verma and Singh (2014), Kumar (2015) who reported that the roles of VEC/SMC is not satisfactory. But the study conducted by Biswal (2006), Rao (2009) found that VEC/SMC including PRI members are satisfactorily involve in developing infrastructure facilities and TLMs in school. This result may be attributed to the ignorance of the PRI members about their roles in the management of the elementary school. It can also be said that illiteracy and poverty of the PRI members may be another reason for the non-involvement in school functioning. Hence more and more educated people must be encouraged to come to the PRI as elected representatives so that they can contribute better for the school and children.

## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The PRI members have been entrusted with various roles regarding formal and non-formal education. The RTE Act 2009 has given special roles and responsibility for managing the school as part of school management committee. In this context, the present study will helpful to understand to what extent PRI members involved in elementary education. The study has many implications for educational planners, policy makers, SMC members, PRI members as well as Head teachers.

- Awareness and orientation programmes may be organised for the PRI members on their roles and responsibility in managing the elementary education, especially in the

context of the RTE Act 2009 and RTE Model rules of Bihar state. Care must be taken to provide copy of these acts to all the PRI members and Head Teachers. The PRI members must be oriented about the process of developing school development plan as part of the RTE Act 2009.

- One of the reason for non-involvement of the PRI members in school functioning is illiteracy and poverty. Initiatives need to be taken for making PRI members as functional literate through non formal education and open education.
- Community members such as parents and guardians must be sensitised about the “our school” concept where all will treat the school as their school. The interest of the community members to the betterment of school need to be created.
- The HMs and teachers attitude towards PRI members need to be changed for the betterment of elementary education. Both PRI members and school HM/teachers required to work together for realising the objectives of the RTE Act 2009. The HMs and teachers should involve the PRI members in each and every activity such as enrolment, school functions etc of the school so that the quality education can be ensured for the children.

## CONCLUSION

The PRIs have been entrusted with various roles regarding management of formal and non-formal education at elementary level. But no concrete step has been taken to empower PRI members to exercise their powers and responsibilities. Steps must be taken to transfer school education to PRIs and urban local self-governments in true sense not in pen and paper only. Mere transferring of school education to PRIs will not be much, Panchayat fund must be provided adequate financial and human resource to look after the management of school education. Hence provisions must be made for PRIs budget for expenditure, requisite staff and secretariat for independent functioning of PRIs. The existing staff, moveable and immovable properties under the control of the state government may be transferred to PRIs / other local bodies. The PRIs should devise their mechanism to manage schools in their jurisdiction and involve communities in their functioning so that the quality of elementary education can be achieved.

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