

Management of school education in Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

The attempts to improve school education would not be fruitful unless there in an efficient delivery system which effectively implements the objectives of the school education. The delivery system has to relate to management of school education at the micro(school),meso(district)levels as well as the macro(government) level. This paper addresses some of the quality issues for management of school education in Gujarat state. It describe present system organizational setup and also the factors responsible for deteriorating the management of school education. The school education management is largely driven by the government and depends on the drive, initiative and enthusiasm of a few officers who can initiate reforms and bring about changes but are not effective as they are routinely transferred,and the chances are the successors will undo their work. The stakeholders are largely uninvolved in the decision making process. The education department is sincerely trying to bring about changes but the task is so massive and thorough overhaul of the system is needed and there for is its attempts , however well intentioned can only be adhoc or sporadic ,so this paper describes the recommendations and possible steps for the enhancement of the quality and standard are also suggested in management of the school education in the state.

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Introduction

Education imparts knowledge and skills and shapes values and attitudes. Education is vital for progress of a civil society. Education is universally recognized as an important investment in building human capital ... It is now widely accepted that human capital, and not physical capital, holds the key to persistent high growth in per capita income.-From the report of the prime minister's task force.

A UNESCO report on education for the 21st century entitled Learning-The Treasure Within is as under active discussion these days. It pleads for an education system, which is “rooted to culture and committed to progress”, Gandhiji wanted education system to be so rooted that there would be continuity in the social, cultural and economic environment of life. It should aspire to preservation of one's culture and heritage. Developing a harmonious and integrated personality would just not be possible if the system does not believe in this philosophy. The development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with the corresponding awakening of the soul. Modern education has led to a moral and spiritual anarchy, which continues today and nearly provides an opportunity for the individual to ascertain this aims and objectives of life.

The education sector has largely been neglected in India. This neglect can turn out to be India's undoing and nemesis in the information age where knowledge, research, creativity and innovation will be at a premium. Education oriented to foster a knowledge- based society can place India at the vanguard of nations; this is not the time for just reforms. It is time for a revolution. The need of the hour is the bold steps, not marginal and tentative ones. For fortune, they say, favors the bold. – From the Report Of The Prime Minister's Task Force.

There has not been any significant change in school education in the post-independence era. With our national population increasing more than three times in the last half-century and greater number of students entering the schools, the school system has come under tremendous pressure. A rough estimate says that in Gujarat there are about one crore students in the school system whereas

about fifty lakh students are still to be brought into the school system. This shows the magnitude of the problem. There are about 42,000 primary schools and about 7,500 secondary schools. The school education is largely driven by the government and depends on the drive, initiative and enthusiasm of a few new officers who can initiate reforms and bring about changes but are not effective as they are routinely transferred, and the chances are the successors will undo their work. The stakeholders are largely uninvolved in the decision-making process. The education department is sincerely trying to bring about changes, but the task is so massive and thorough overhaul of the system is needed and therefore its attempts, however well intentioned can only be ad hoc or sporadic. Our goal of massive improvement in quality of school education will call for equally massive reforms in the system of management- both at macro and micro levels as has been advocated by the Prime Minister's Task Force on Education quoted earlier. The existing delivery system simply cannot cope with such a massive problem and alternate school education management system has to be devised both at the macro and the micro levels.

Present System Organizational Setup

At the Secretariat Level

Minister of Education heads the management of education in the state and takes all policy decisions. Two senior officers of the Indian administrative service looks after education at the Secretariate. The secretary Education looks after secondary and primary education, establishment, finance and common related issues. Secretary higher and technical education looks after issues relating to universities, colleges and science education.

At the State (Macro) Level

Commissioner/Director of Higher Education looks after universities and colleges and their grants and recruitment of the staff. There are similar directorates for the technical and medical education at the state level. Commissioner of schools looks after secondary education. The academic issues relating to school education are the concern of the Secondary Education Board. Therefore the role

of Commissioner of schools is to coordinate with the Board and look after the administration. He is concerned with recruitment of teachers, grants, inspection of schools. At the district level he is assisted by the District Education Officer and his staff. Standards 8 to 10 and 11 and 12 are included in the secondary education and are therefore his responsibility.

Director of Primary Education similarly looks after primary education in the State. The district and local offices looking after primary education are under the local authorities. District Primary Education Officer(DPEO) and District Education Office look after rural primary education. Administrative officers (AO) function within the Municipality and Municipal Corporation and look after primary education. The Director of Schools concerns himself with implementation of the government rules and regulations since the management of schools is in the hands of local authorities. Gujarat Council of Education, Research and Training concern itself with the academic matters relating to primary education.

Secondary Education Board is a statutory body created in 1972 to look after the academic issues in the secondary education. The board is composed of the elected representatives from different constituencies such as teachers, Principals; a member of the legislative assembly is addition to ex-officio and others nominated by the government. The chairman of the board is appointed by the government. Even though the Board is autonomous by law, in practice this is not so. For one, the chairman appointed by the government is generally an officer of the government, in service or one who has retired. Therefore all decisions of the Board are taken as per the wishes of the government. Further the government has the right to change the decisions and orders of the Boards. Thus the functional autonomy is severely limited.

The Board looks after both secondary (up to and including 10th standard) and higher secondary education (11th & 12th standard). The main functions of the Board are: development of education and establishing standards, curriculum, in-service teacher training, hostels, registration of schools,

recommendations regarding grants to various schools, assessment and examinations, research in education, qualifications and standards of various cadres, standards of physical facilities of the schools, permission to start new classes or schools, conditions for the admission, academic calendar, inspection, appointments, standards of behavior and disciplinary actions, etc. At the district level the Board functions through the District Education Officer (DEO) although he is under the administrative control of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

The government constitutes the textbook Board with the Education Minister as its chairman. The vice-chairman is appointed by the government as a non – government educationist. The director of the Textbook board is a full time officer from the Education Department. The Textbook Boards chief function is to get the Textbooks prepared according to the curriculum finalized by the Secondary education Board for secondary education and by GCERT for primary education. The textbooks thus prepared are to be approved by the Education Board and the government. Since books of other publishers are not permitted the task of the textbook Board is very critical and pivotal. The task includes commissioning authors and editors for preparing a manuscript and getting the same printed.

Gujarat Council of Education, Research and Training (GCERT) are constituted by the government on a model proposed at the national level by the National Council for Education, Research and Training. However, its role is confined only to primary education since the Secondary Education Board deals with issues relating to secondary education. Gujarat Institute of Education Technology (GIET) is constituted by the government for developing techniques and tools for imparting education. At the district level a District Institute of Education Technology (DIET) is involved in training of primary and pre-primary teachers. Additionally Gujarat Council of Primary Education operates the District Primary Education Programmed (DPEP) in selected back-ward districts for improvement and development of primary education.

At The District (Meso) level

The District Education Officer is the most important officer for the education at the District level. He functions both as an officer for the Board as well as for the government. He has powers for appointment and transfers of teachers and staff in the secondary schools and also grants approvals for establishment issues. The grants to school are disbursed through him. The audit of accounts and inspection of schools are done by his office. Further the correspondence in respect of getting approvals from the government is to pass through his office. He is responsible for investigations of complaints and departmental actions to be taken including disciplinary action. Thus the state exercise complete control on secondary schools through the District Education Officer.

In primary education the situation is different. Many of the functions and powers of the government are delegated to the Education Committees of Municipalities or the District Panchayats. Administrative officer of municipalities or the District Primary Education Officer function as Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of such Committees.

There are only a few secondary schools run by the government. Majority of the secondary schools are run by trust and funded by grants from the government. New secondary schools particularly in the cities are non-aided. The government also run Navodaya Vidyalaya as well as Model residential schools in the selected districts. The Navi Taleem primary schools and ashram shalas, which have hostel facilities as well, are run by the welfare department of the government in rural and tribal areas.

Issue in Present Organization Set Up

1. The school education is largely driven by the government and depends on the drive initiative and enthusiasm of a few officers who can initiate reforms and bring about changes but are not effective as they are routinely transferred, and the chances are the successors may not subscribe to the approach put in place.

2. The energy of the top management at the State level is spent on housekeeping (routine administration) and firefighting leaving very little time for development of education.
3. The management of education is not professionalized.
4. The stake- holders are generally not involved in the decision –making process.
5. The Education Department is sincerely trying to bring about changes, but the task is so massive and its attempts, however well intentioned, can only be ad hoc or sporadic and through overhaul of the system in needed.
6. The school education both at macro and micro levels – has become completely unmanageable. Administration has become highly bureaucratic in following procedures rather than improving quality of education.
7. Management in secondary and higher secondary schools has lost initiative and become indifferent as most of their energy goes in complying with government rules and regulation and there is little room for individual initiative in the maze of government requirements.
8. There is considerable interference from the government and it will be a challenge to evolve a system where this is reduce to a minimum.

There is a need for autonomy both internal and external in education. Even the Secondary Education Board, though supposed to be autonomous and representative of stakeholders, in practice is hardly so. Its major efforts are in conducting examinations and bringing about uniformity in teaching and evaluation throughout the State. This leaves little energy for a sustained campaign on quality improvement in education, even though the Board has attempted to come to grips on various critical issues facing education and succeeded in a few cases. However, they are necessary of the nature of ad-hoc approaches, as there does not seem to be a holistic philosophy of educating some one crore of the future citizen of Gujarat who should become an asset to the society. Our goal of massive reforms in the system of management- both at macro and micro levels as has been advocated by the Prime Minister's Task Force on Education quoted earlier. This will definitely call for freeing education from bureaucratic stranglehold and political interference.

Recommendations from Macro Management – At the State Level.

From our study it becomes very clear that there is need of fresh legislation to user in the reforms for. First an autonomous Gujarat School Education Commission which would be in total charge of school education should be created by legislative action. It is proposed that the role of the government should be to raise requisite financial resources and manage the disbursal of grants. The government may consult the Commission for advice on policy matters relating to school education.

- 1. Gujarat School Education Commission shall incorporate various government agencies at the state level dealing with school education and the Secondary Education Board such as Gujarat Council of Education Research and Training (GCERT), School Textbook Board, Gujarat Institute of Educational Technology, etc. GCERT is created as per the model suggested by the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT).**
- 2. Further the following additional boards are proposed to be created to function autonomously within the Commission.**

- **Primary Education Board – to co-ordinate the stupendous task of educating more than one crore students in the primary schools. The present working of primary education system is as per the Bombay Primary Education Act. Comprehensive reforms are needed in the present functioning which can be done in a comprehensive legislation for the proposed School Education Commission. Alternatively, GCERT may be entrusted with the academic issues of primary education since local bodies are concerned with management of primary education.**
- **Examination Board – It is necessary to de-link examination from other functions of the Secondary Education Board so that exclusive attention can be focused on examinations alone which has been crying for reforms.**
- **Buniyadi Board – It is necessary to form a separate board to encourage Buniyadi education as it has great potential to contribute particularly in the Adivasi and rural areas.**
- **Accreditation-Inspection Board-Elsewhere in the report it is recommended that all schools functioning within the State should be periodically inspected or accredited. This is**

necessary for proper development and monitoring of schools calling for a separate board for the purpose.

- A Separate agency working under the proposed Commission should be set up which will initiate research and coordinate with other agencies under the Commission with functional and financial autonomy. The head of this agency will be a member of the Commission and the Secondary Education Board. This agency can focus on secondary school education while GCERT may continue to undertake research in primary education.

3. Whereas all these agencies will function autonomously within the Commission the advantage would be that their functions could be integrated as a continuum instead of functioning as discrete units in isolation. Overlapping and duplication of functions can be avoided and a much-needed synergy in their working would evolve. For example, GCERT could undertake research and training both for primary and secondary education. It would be easy and more efficient to manage with top trained and qualified professionals doing the job. Further the field officers, such as District Education Officers and their

offices would have direct linkage with the School Education Commission.

- 4. Heads of these agencies would become members of the Commission. The agencies such as Textbook board, GCERT who have the Education Minister as the Head should in future be headed by an eminent educationist.**
- 5. Additional members of the Commission would be representatives of teachers, principals, academicians, eminent persons from the industry and the society at large. For efficient functioning the size of the Commission should be kept as small as possible. All members of the Commission other than the Chairman and the ex-officio members will be appointed by the Commission. The first Chairman of the Commission will be appointed by the government. Thereafter the Commission will appoint a Search Committee who will recommend a panel of three names from which the government will appoint a Chairman.**
- 6. Create a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) if needed for financing school education. Since the District Education Officers and their district offices will only be concerned with educational aspects, a**

new cadre of persons at district level will have to be created for grant-in-aid, audit, etc.

Research and Training in Education.

At present there is a provision for research related to education in several agencies such as GCERT, Secondary Education Board and the Textbook Board. There is a need for assessment of the quality and quantum of research as well as its applicability and implementation.

Additionally there is a need to get regular feedback from all stakeholders such as principals, teachers and Education Officers.

In order that the research related to several issues in education should be given due importance it is recommended that a separate agency working under the proposed Commission should be set up which will initiate and coordinate with other units dealing with education in the Commission such as education, curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, teaching methodology and technology, assessment of students in schools and board examinations, etc. This will have functional and financial autonomy. The head of this agency will be a

member of the Commission and the Education Board. The recommendations of this agency as accepted by the Board and the Commission should be implemented and the research workers should have access and make field visits so that they do not function in isolation. Further it is also suggested that research activities can be outsourced to B.Ed colleges as projects so that the faculty and the would be teachers (students of the colleges) have experience of research on real live issues in education. This agency can focus on secondary school education while GCERT may continue to undertake research in primary education.

In view of large number of teachers in the secondary schools, present and in future, it is also necessary that the training of teachers while in service is also handled by this specialized agency. Again the help of B.Ed colleges should be sought in outsourcing training. The Institute of Educational Technology should work closely with the agency for the training component. GCERT should work together with other training agencies in the State.

Micro Management At The District /School Level : Problems & Solutions.

Role Of Teacher

The teacher is the important person in the entire system as he is the one who delivers education. It is commonly observed how ever that the teachers them selves are not motivated nor do they take their work seriously barring a few honorable exceptions.

Regular assessment of the teacher by the principal and inspector should be done and authority should take appropriate action.

Cooperation Of The Parents And The Community

Parents and society at large must take responsibility for there children by actively participating in the management system of the school, parent - teacher association etc...

It is suggested that the principal of the school must take responsibility in this regard to take action on matters within his powers and refers the other matters to the managing committee of the school. The records of holding regular meeting of the parents and complains of the decision taken at such meetings and action taken on the same would be consider at the time of inspection and accreditation

Public – Private Partnership.

Public – Private Partnership in addressing major socially relevant issues is now an accepted principle. I t is based on the premise that both have common objective of plying a social useful role, that both can play a complementary and supplementary role and thus releasing a synergy for larger social benefit. It is suggested that the state needs to evolve a policy to enable the corporate

world a significant role, subject to social control. Most important issue is to give a free hand in the management of schools without governmental interference.

Policy for Grants to Schools.

The present grant administration has come in for severe criticism on account of

- Great irregularities and corruption
- Inefficient and wasteful decision making process including undue delays in making appointments, payments, etc.

It is suggested that the government appoints a high level committee to examine the grant system and suggest a thorough overhaul of the policy to take care of the present problems. It is also suggested that the committee may examine the alternate models for financing school education for deserving and needy students in lieu of the grant system. This may take the form of making all secondary schools self- financing and the government may pay directly to the schools the fees for the needy and deserving students.

Recruitment Of Teachers And Principals

In secondary school whenever a vacancy for teacher arise a prior approval of government is required to fill up same. This leads to long delays and corruptions.

It is suggested that the committee should only compromise of the nominees of the managing committee of the school, the DEO and some external experts. It is also suggested that the proposed Commission conduct regular tests for candidates wanting to become teachers. The marks obtained therein may be consider for recruitment. For Principal a certificate course should be designed and such a course can be offered by PTC or B.Ed college.

In primary school the recruitment of teachers is now done in recruitment fair. The choice of location for the candidate is dependent on his merit. Thus the system is quick and transparent and has eliminated rampant corruption prevailing in recruitment. The present practice is to give promotion to the post of the principal on the basis of seniority in primary school. This neither good for teaching as a senior teacher is lost to education, nor for management of the school, as he may not possess requisite expertise

It is suggested that direct recruitment of principal should be done with the qualifications of the diploma in education (proposed course) – 1 year after PTC should be required.

Discipline For The Teachers.

It has been observed that there considerable indiscipline among the secondary teachers and also primary teachers both in rural area as well as school runs by municipality.

It is suggested that there should be a local education committee it conveyed to district education committee to take disciplinary action. Such action should be mandatory for the district education committee.

Conclusion

- While reviewing the current scene of the school education and also how school education is managed in the developed countries it is obvious that the present role of the government as a doer must be replaced with its new role of enabler and facilitator.

- Truly autonomous mechanisms must be created by legislative action where needed. It is also necessary that such a mechanism should be insulated from political influence and intervention.
- Management of education needs to be professionalized.
- It is high time that education is left to educators and not to bureaucrats and politicians. Of course autonomy has to be coupled with accountability.
- For an efficient functioning there is need for both external autonomy for the unit and internal autonomy so that other departments within the unit also enjoy autonomy. This applies both at the macro-level at the State as well as at the micro-level at the schools.

Finally, we would like to take note of two things, one, it is this background that a novel concept of the peoples commission on school education composed of eminent educationists and experts in state. Initially some 15-17 Task Groups were set up with experts drawn from various institutions in Gujarat. These groups Met individually and co-opted local members. The commission met the task groups individually and collectively and discussed in details the findings of the groups. The report of the peoples commission on school education looked at education in its totality: objectives, teaching methodology, teaching aids and education etc. It has also looked at perhaps for the first time ,the whole issue of managing school education as the commission has fest it to be the most component of the school education. Second _the efforts of the state government in iproving quality of school education and other policy initiatives. The following quotation from the Hon. Chief Minister is taken from the report on curriculum reforms in Gujarat- stakeholders feedback by the education department, Government of Gujarat.

“ In the new millennium, the demand for quality human resources is going to increase manifold. Education is the main tool to create human resources to meet the market need. In this context, a sustainable but immediate re- positioning of education system and its delivery

mechanisms are essential. Fully aware of such demanding situation, government of Gujarat has to initiated action to revamp its education system from primary from primary to higher and technical education.”