Governance on Elementary Education in Tripura with special reference to Local Self Governance and State Government administration

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Abstract

This study examines the governance of elementary education in Tripura, India, focusing on the dual administrative systems of the State Government and the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). Decentralization in education is crucial for improving efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness, yet challenges persist in implementation. The research explores the structure, management, and administration of elementary education under these two governance systems, identifying key drawbacks such as infrastructural deficiencies, teacher absenteeism, and geographic inaccessibility, particularly in tribal-dominated districts like Dhalai. Using secondary data and interviews with 12 elementary school head teachers, the study evaluates recent state initiatives such as Nutan Disha, Bochhor Bachao Abhiyan, and Empower U-Shiksha Darpan App to enhance accountability and learning outcomes. Findings reveal systemic inefficiencies and disparities in governance, necessitating reforms to align with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes experiential learning and decentralized administration. The study underscores the need for comparative research on accountability mechanisms for school heads and teacher performance across governance models. Recommendations include strengthening institutional capacity, improving digital governance, and fostering participatory decision-making to ensure equitable and quality education in Tripura.

Keywords: Decentralization in Education, Educational Governance, Elementary Education, Accountability in Schools, NEP 2020 Implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

Education today witnesses the numerous pitfalls and is calling out for more reformed and transformed governance in education. Distribution of powers, authorities and commands for citizen satisfaction requesting for decentralisation system of governance is an international issue, which is why most countries are experiencing, experimenting, or contemplating decentralization in education for a better outcome. Thus, the process which transfers decision-making powers from central Ministries of Education to intermediate governments of the country, local governments, communities, and schools. In a world where most governments have experienced the pitfalls of centralized education service provision, mainly:

opaque decision-making, administrative and fiscal inefficiency, and poor quality and access to services, the advantages of decentralization have become extremely appealing as it substantially improves efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of service provision. Decentralized education provision promises to be more efficient and accountable, better reflect local priorities, encourage participation, and, eventually, improve coverage and quality (Litvak, 1998). Given India's size and diversity, decentralization is very important for the country's strategy for improved educational outcomes, standards, performances, and ultimate poverty reduction of the country. From the first central initiative to establish local governments in 1957 to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992 and 1993, the country has moved in this direction, establishing mandatory provisions for decentralization to local governments in India. NITI Aayog (2017) in India as well concurs that the need of the hour is "governance that enables the system to operate smoothly" and recommends "separation of functions" for accountability in the system. Herein, governance being implementation of policy decisions that influence the finance and delivery of education to citizens of a nation, accountability is a fundamental requirement. Education falling under the concurrent list in India; both the Central and State governments can legislate on the subject. The Central Government sets the general direction of education policy and lays down governing tenets and principles, and the State Governments frame their respective legislation and are responsibility for policy execution within the framework of the Central Government's policy and the local governments bodies are established as third- tier institutions responsible for administering small areas and municipalities of a region (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2010).

The Indian educational governance in Elementary Education still struggles to bring quality concerns and requires more focus to improve the quality of educational delivery in line with the mandates set by different quality assessment like NITI Aayog, NCERT and NIEPA etc. As India's new National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) was approved on July 29, it is set to replace the 10 + 2 schooling system in India with a new 5+ 3+ 3+4 system with which schooling system increases the span of Right to Education, Act covering ages 3 to 18 for seamless and inclusive transition from the pre-school ages right to the higher class. Students of Class 8 falls in the middle stage as per the new policy and are expected follow experiential learning in sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities, this calls for the improved system of governance at all levels. Xuqun (2021) suggests that educational institutions should shift from "New Public Management" to a "holistic and decentralized governance" approach, fostering an environment dedicated to cultivating talent and introducing this feature into the evaluation of teacher performance. Ponguta et.al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study in four countries of the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region emphasizing on the challenges and opportunities decentralization has presented for the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services using key domains of decentralization (autonomy, institutional capacity and accountability) which points to overarching processes that contribute to the perpetuation and possible increase of inequitable ECE including (1) sparse mechanisms for participatory and autonomous policy formulation, with few systematic efforts to strengthen local institutional capacities; (2) fragmented policy approaches to promote the assessment and strengthening of quality at scale; (3) funding frameworks and financing schemes that tend to benefit enrolment in contexts of higher levels of economic development; and (4) few mechanisms for coordination to ensure operational coherence across the ECE sector. Sumy et. al (2016) carried out the implementation of good governance in secondary schools of Bangladesh. Haque (2010) focused on the case of Thailand in order to examine how the country's past tradition of centralization, atmosphere of bureaucratic polity, and local political elitism may have significant implications for its massive decentralization initiatives and local government

reforms undertaken since the early 1990s. Bhuiyan (2010) examined the role of decentralization for the promotion of good local governance in Kazakhstan and raises a fundamental question as to whether the Kazakh government is politically ready to build an efficient and responsive local government in order to achieve policy aspirations. Govinda & Bandyopadhyay (2010) examined the extent to which grassroots level functionaries and local bodies like Panchayat and Village Council in decision making processes and different approaches that have been taken by different states about local self-governance of education, it critically examined the guiding principles of governance reform from two perspectives. 'Top –down' and 'bottom-up' approaches in terms of ensuring the effectiveness of the system and empowering people for active participation in decentralized decision-making process.

The roles of central, state, and local governments in India are shown as below in the figure and explanation:

Governance System	Functions	Example
Central Government		
Ministry of Human Resource and Development	Sets the general direction of policy for the country. Formulates national policy through legislative Acts. Operates Schools	NPE-1968 &1986, PoA 1992 and National Education Policy, 2020. Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act. 2009 Kendra Vidyalayas and Jawahar NavodyaVidyalayas
	Runs Centrally Sponsored Schemes to expand education	National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, Mid-day meal schemes etc.
State Government		
State Government Education Department	Formulates state specific policy through legislative acts and rules	Maharashtra Educational Institutions (Regulations of Fees) Act 2014, Gujarat Self-Financed Schools (Regulation of Fees) Act, 2017 and Rajasthan Schools (Regulation of Fee) Act, 2016
	Executes and enforces central and state education policy	Reimbursement to private unaided schools for admitting economically weak students under the RTES 12(1)(c), ensuring compliance of private schools with recognition norms.
	Provides education to fulfil obligations under the RTE	The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules (Tripura) 2011
	Coordinates the assessment of learning outcomes	Education department at the state level oversees functioning of SCERTs that

		assess learning outcomes of students in the state.
Local Government		
Municipality and Nagar Panchayat in the urban areas/ Gram Panchayat in the rural areas/Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils (TTAADC)	Local Bodies can also finance and run their own schools	Municipal Corporation of Tripura, School Education Departments run by Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC)
	Monitors the progress of schemes that expand education	TTAADC administers and monitors the progress of educational schemes that expands education.
		District Collectors reviews the plans and progress of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

Table 1: Education related functions of the three levels of government

Objectives:
1. To understand the Structure, Management and Administration of Elementary Education Department governed by State Government and Local Self Government, the TTAADC in Tripura.
2. To highlight the drawbacks and challenges of Elementary education run by Local Self-Government, the TTAADC and State Government administrations.
3. To determine on the recent initiatives of State Government for improving the education system in Tripura

2. METHODOLOGY:

The study used secondary data of office orders and unstructured open ended interviews with 12 Elementary school head teachers. The interviews were intended to collect data on the initiatives of Tripura Government. Various notifications and memos issued to the Head Teachers for their accountability towards management and administration of Elementary School were collected as a primary source from both the offices of State Government and TTAADC administrations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

Objective-1: To understand the Structure, Management and Administration of Elementary Education Department governed by State Government and Local Self Government, the TTAADC in Tripura.

India's state governments frame their respective legislation within the framework of the central government's policy, and it heads the administrative setup that executes the policy mandate for school education. A typical state government Education Department, which is also in Tripura, is usually set up into sub-departments called Directorates based on the level of education. The Directorates are headed by a director who reports to the Principal Secretary of Education. In the process of executing the policy mandate, functionaries of a state government Education Department perform six functions viz. Policy-formulation, Service delivery, Financing, Compliance, Adjudicating or Dispute and Assessment (Centre for Civil Society, 2019). Elementary Education in Tripura is governed by two respective departments covering entire 8 revenue districts of the state. 1). The Directorate of Elementary Education headed by the Director of Elementary Education subordinate to Principal Secretary and Education Minister monitors the overall functioning of 1230 Elementary schools [UDISE 2020-21], spread across 08 revenue districts of Tripura, under the Government of Tripura (GOT) and 2). The Department of Education under Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) subordinate to Executive Member (Education) administers 212 Elementary schools (North & Dhalai district only) with full autonomy of local self-governance.

The Autonomous District Council is an institution of local government along with financial, administrative, and legislative powers on specific subjects as enshrined in the Sixth Schedule provision to the Constitution of India. The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) was initially set up by TTAADC Act, 1979 under the seventh schedule to the constitution of India. Later (with effect from 1st April 1985), the council came under the purview of the sixth Schedule to the constitution of India by 49th Amendment to the constitution of India. The jurisdiction of the TTAADC covers all the 08 revenue districts of the State. The Government of Tripura transferred in different phases the management and administration of Departments with functionaries and schemes from 1986 to TTAADC concerning administration of 1036 Primary and Junior Basic schools with their assets, land, infrastructure, Head teachers, teachers, and non-teaching staff on 25th March 1986 to exercise powers conferred under Sixth Schedule of the constitution of India as Subject Transfer. As per the published record of TTAADC (2021), the Department of Education under TTAADC governance has 1633 Schools, [(1420 are Primary in 8 districts) + (212 are Upper Primary /Elementary in 2 districts -North & Dhalai) + (01 are Higher Secondary in West Tripura)] with 55476 students. The Department of Education under TTAADC has 3 (three) Officers in the Headquarter (1 no. Principal Officer, 2 nos. Dy. Principal Officers); 25 Education Inspectorates and 72 Circle Officers spread across different locations supervising these Primary Schools at field level, in the interior underdeveloped areas revealing educational scenario of poor infrastructures, teacher absenteeism, geographical inaccessibility and deficient communication features.

Objective-2: To highlight the drawbacks and challenges of Elementary education run by Local Self-Government, the TTAADC and State Government administrations.

The last 10 consecutive years' record of Tripura Madhyamik Examination (Secondary) result under Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE, 2012-2022) yielded on an average only 2% of ST students who secured first rank with 60% marks and other category of students were also not in good stand. Besides, within Tripura the highest dropout candidates are mainly from North and Dhalai Districts. Dhalai District of Tripura was declared to be the most educationally backwards Districts in the state by the Ministry of Education (2021) amongst the list of 374 Districts in India (GoT, 2021). In 2006 the Ministry of Panchayati Raj named Dhalai District one of the country's 250 most backward districts (out of a total of 640). The Dhalai District was created in the year of 1995 by bifurcating North Tripura District. As TTAADC administers the major portion of the backward areas in the state particularly in North and Dhalai District of Tripura, lack of inadequate infrastructures, poor health infrastructure, poor education, inaccessible communication, low social standard, and weak economic status sets in the feebleness acutely. All the 212 Elementary schools under TTAADC administration are mostly located in these interior hilly districts where inaccessibility was considered a major challenge. The education scenario in these Districts presents unending cycle of deprivation from quality standard in all forms of education. Management of Elementary Schools are very difficult and challenging due to geographical factors. Both TTAADC administration and state administration also counters the challenges of posting the school teachers in these remotely located villages due to infrastructural divide between the plain and hilly areas. Furthermore, the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules (Tripura, 2011) with "No Detention Policy" (TRTE, 2011) aimed at creating a learning environment for students without any fear of failing in the exams up till class eight, ruled in a psyche of compromising the qualitative learning outcome of the class 8 students.

Objective-3: To determine on the recent initiatives of State Government for improving the education system in Tripura.

The findings on government initiatives for improving the education system in Tripura is evident from the efforts initiated by the Government of Tripura from time to time. The Government of Tripura through Directorate of School Education adopted policies, introduced schemes, promoted best practices and issued several instructions.

Besides, the efforts made to improve the accountability of Head Teachers in compliance to the set norms the government to ensure effective management and administration of Education department, new initiatives of the State Government have enhanced the school education system towards better performance.

The **"Nutan Disha", a**n initiative of Tripura Government School Education department to identify the schools with less students and merged them with another bigger school that has adequate infrastructure in order to provide students better access to education has called for accountability of Head Teachers entrusted under their care. The initiative was to shut down less utilized schools and use the staff strength in schools with more students.

The policy called "**Bochhor Bachao Abhiyan**" in Bengali which means "save the year drive" was launched by the State Government for the students who fail to achieve required marks for passing the

exam. In this case, the Head teacher will take immediate steps for remedial classes and conduct re-examination within two months and ensure the concern student qualifies for next term.

The "**Empower U-Shiksha Darpan (Android) App**" has been launched by School Education Department to monitor information of schools where Head Teachers were instructed to monitor uploading of data on leave management of teachers, transfer or posting related information, grievances of teachers, lesson plans of teachers and e-contents. Students' attendance and obtained marks of various examinations are being uploaded in this platform. So, the Head Teachers are held accountable even in digital management of education system in Tripura.

The introduction of "**Sadhana and Prerana**" is another recent development of education department in Tripura where the head teachers are being entrusted with the responsibility of identifying slow learners lagging behind other students in the same class. These weak students are categorised are under 'Sadhana'. The students with above average performance in the class are categorised as 'Prerana'. After identification of Sadhana and Prerana students, the Head Teacher is accountable for the improvement of the weak students. Head Teacher then assigns weak students with teacher in-charge for the improvement through remedial coaching or extra classes. The progress of the students with improvement from Sadhana to Prerana category are being reported to the Head Teachers by the teacher concern.

3. WAY FORWARD

Studies with regards to roles and duties, professional competencies and commitments, responsibilities towards the product of students, schools, society, and the nation calling for an adherence to norms and policies, rules, and regulations of the government by the school head is much in need. Alongside, teachers' performance in curricular and co-curricular service deliveries as per the statutory norms of the Central Government of India is an awakened call-in order to suggest possible improvements to administrations controlling the Education Department in the state of Tripura. Considering the students of Class 8, who in their middle stage of school as per the National Education Policy, 2020 and transiting to secondary stage of schooling to class 9, critical learning objectives of four subjects like English, Science, Mathematics and EVS would demand a major shift from rote learning methods to experiential learning, standards performance of the teachers is a desirable concern. Moreover, aligned to the Central Government of India, Government of Tripura also introduced many schemes and initiatives to promote quality education through Nutan Disha, Sadhana & Prerana, Ektu Khelo Ektu Poro, NISHTHA, Bochhor Bachao Abhiyan, Empower U– Shiksha Darpan, Neighbourhood Classes, NIPUN Bharat etc with emphasis on making teachers responsible for quality of learning of the student, the importance of the study's implications may suggest measures of improvement to both the governance system. For the quality concern of Elementary Education in Tripura under the two-governance system i.e. the Government of Tripura (GOT) and Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), a comparative study is inevitably the need for further study. The study also poses concern over accountability of head teachers and performance of the teachers at the elementary level.

i. What are the accountability criteria concerning norms/policies/rules set for compliance with regulations for Elementary School Heads (ESHs) by two governance system of Government of Tripura (GOT) and TTAADC? What are the differences and similarities?

ii. What are the accountability criteria concerning policies/rules set for the professional norms of the ESH's while managing, administering the staff, resources (finance and infrastructure),

curricular/co-curricular activities and participatory relationship with school management committee (SMC) and community across the governance system? What are the differences and similarities?

iii. What are the accountability criteria concerning norms/policies/rules set for the ESHs' result-oriented service delivery to students, teachers, parents, community, and the nation across the governance system? What are the differences and similarities?

iv. Are there variations in the ESHs' degrees of accountability with regards to compliance of regulations, adherence to professional norms and result oriented service delivery of students across the governance systems, districts, sex, and training?

v. Is there a relationship between the different degrees of accountability of the ESHs with that of various levels of performance of the ESTs across the governance systems, districts, sex, and training?

4. CONCLUSION:

In India, the elementary schools children are in classes 1 to 8 (6 to 15 ages), segregated as primary (1st to 5th Standard) and upper primary or elementary (6th to 8th Standard). Earlier, elementary education enables a child to learn, to read and write, following their own vernacular language, simple rules of mathematics (NCERT, 1964) were using rote memorization. However, with NEP, 2020 this middle stage school students will work on experiential learning in sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities calling for a improve system of governance. So, the learning outcomes of the students will depend on the quality of elementary school heads' accountability and performance of the teachers. Also, the performances of the students are based on the service delivery of the teachers which is depended on the efficient management and administration of the Head Teachers or headmasters. Amidst the quality concerns of NEP, 2020, what are the degrees of accountability of elementary school heads and standards of performance of teachers in Tripura under different systems of governance is the concern. Considering the present challenges and initiatives in the management and administration of the State Government and Local Self -Government (TTAADC); what could be the possible strategy in improving the governance of Elementary Education in Tripura to meet the standard set in NEP 2020 paves the way for further study.

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