

Implementation of Rte By Gram Panchayat: Challenges and Action Agenda

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This paper aims to focus on the roles and responsibilities assigned to Gram Panchayat as Local Authority under Section 9 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the challenges in implementation and the action agenda.

As per the law, the Gram Panchayats play pivotal role in monitoring the implementation of the Act within the Panchayat. It also implies strengthening public education by transforming every public school within the limits of Gram Panchayat as a genuine functional neighbourhood school to meet the requirements of the Act under section 3.

The effective implementation of the Act within the Panchayat throws a big challenge before the Panchayats as there are many issues and lacunas in the whole implementation strategies. The paper discusses the importance of Decentralization of Educational management aspects and the core issues, challenges and the action agenda towards implementation of RTE Act by Gram Panchayat as Local Authority.

Design/Methodology/approach - Interviewing of the Gram Panchayat functionaries namely President, PDO, Male and Female members, focus group discussions with teachers of Ramnagar district, documentary studies and drawing inferences.

Findings – The core issues are lack of awareness, lack of systemic information flow, legislation not resulting in appropriate implementation procedures, lack of participation of GP functionaries in the educational processes, overload of other works, lack of human resources, lack of education, challenges of decentralization of education management, lack of resources and devolution of powers and finances to the Gram Panchayat to implement RTE at the grassroots. There is migration of children from government schools to private English medium schools as the private schools promote English Language Education and due to this the public education system which is being catered through government schools is collapsing. Finally the paper discusses on the action agenda for the Gram Panchayat as Local Authority in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.

KEYWORDS:RTE means Right of Children to free and compulsory education Act 2009, Public education means Local government, State or Central government run schools. Implementation of RTE means implementation of provisions of the Act as prescribed under Section 9 of the RTE Act. Local Authority means Gram Panchayat as part of the Panchayati Raj Institution

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PAPER

“Only from his actions, his fixed utterances, his effects upon others, can man learn about himself; thus he learns to know himself only by the roundabout way of understanding. What we once were, how we developed and became what we are, we learn from the way in which we acted, the plane which we once adopted, the way in which we made ourselves felt in our vocation, from old dead letters, from judgments on which we made spoken long ago, we understand ourselves and others only when we transfer the own lived experience into every kind of experiences of our own and other people’s lives”

(Extract from a Case study- Robert E Stake, Quoted in Richman, 1976, page 163 by Dilthy))

BACKGROUND

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009:

The Constitutional commitment of ten years to provide Free and Compulsory Education to all children until the age of 14 years remained elusive by the end of 20th century. At the end of 20th Century when the Indian state was limping to implement the Constitutional directive to achieve the goal of free and compulsory education, the Indian judiciary played a very significant and far reaching role by declaring education a fundamental right up to the age of 14 years. Particularly, in 1992 when the Indian judiciary gave a historic judgment in relation to free and compulsory education in the case of Mohini Jain Vs. State of Karnataka. This position further crystallized with the Supreme Court decision in the case of Unnikrishnan vs. State of Andhra Pradesh in 1993. Since then, many social movements across the nation including NGOs and individuals started pressurizing the government to make education a fundamental right by amending the Constitution. The Supreme Court verdict in the Case of Unnikrishan vs. State of Andhra Pradesh in 1993, with a majority judgment held that “through right to education is not stated expressly as a fundamental right, it is implicit in and flows from the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 and must be construed in the light of the Directive Principles of the Constitution”. This judgment ushered in a new era in the field of school education by declaring the right to education as a fundamental right of every child up to the age of 14 years. The verdict has brought in a new dimension to the necessity of basic education by establishing inseparable linkage between the basic education and right to life. The Honorable Supreme Court held that right to life is inseparable from right to basic education. And therefore, right to life and right to education are complementary to each other. The historic Supreme Court verdict followed by the Peoples’ campaign compelled the Central Government to amend the Constitution of India to pave the way for the ‘fundamental’ status to the right to education. Today, the Eighty Sixth Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 provides the status of fundamental right to the right to education for all

children in the age group of 6-14 years. A new Article 21A was inserted after Article 21 in the Constitution to this effect. The legislative interpretation of recognizing right to free and compulsory education to children from the age of 6 to 14 years call for enacting a central legislation to operationalize the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002. Nearly after seven years since the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 the Central Government introduced “the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill” in the RajyaSabha on 15th December 2008 and it was enacted into a law after it was passed by both the Houses of the Indian Parliament and signed by the President of India. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009(hereafter RTE Act) came into force from April 1st 2010.

The main purpose of the law is to provide free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. There have been extensive debates across the country on the extent to which this legislation would help the implementation of Right to Education in general and the right of children to free and compulsory education act 2009 in particular to operationalize Article 21-A of the constitution .And henceforth, this paper examines the various documents pertaining to the role of Gram Panchayat as a local authority in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory education Act 2009 through documentary study on Decentralization, Role of PRI in education, Local Self Government along with the interviewing of Gram Panchayat functionaries.

Decentralization of Education Management:

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act follows a great deal fundamental principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and treatment, solidarity and universal access to education as enshrined in UNESCO’s Constitution. One such principle adopted in the process of implementation of RTE Act is that of decentralization of educational management. The education systems must respond to the new social, economic and cultural changes and specially the local level that is mostly challenged by any changes. Hence, it is at this level that any policy must be implemented for its absorption. The most important element of any successful implementation of policy should ensure that the local stakeholders such as community members, school teachers and parents have the necessary knowledge of meeting the challenge of implementation. The decentralization of education management owes a lot to the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts, where the key paradigm shifts happened where the local communities and institutions were involved in planning, implementation, monitoring and governance of various programmes and projects and specially education. And Right to Education is no exception to this; it has provided the statutory powers to the School management committees with parent’s representation so that the development and management of schools is carried out with lot of autonomy and freedom. And this

simply means decentralization of education management so that the local needs are considered and delivery of services happens to the optimal level.

Role of PRI in Education as per National Plan of Action for Children 2016:

The National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2016 is a plan for children developed by Women and child welfare department taking into cognizance all the related acts pertaining to children in the nation and there is a very clear role description to PRI's for implementation. The role of PRIs as stated for Implementation of National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2016 pertaining to education aspects are a) Strengthen Village level convergence platforms and structures like Village Health Nutrition Day, Village, Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committee, School Management Committee, Village Child Protection Committee and SHGs. b) Ensure children's issues are given priority during preparation of gram Panchayat Development Plans. c) Collect data on vulnerable children – child labour, child migrants, drop-out children, children of socioeconomically marginalised communities, girl child, orphan children, trafficked children, those who are victims of abuse and exploitation, children affected by HIV/AIDS or other chronic diseases, and others. d) Collect information on vulnerable families requiring child protection services and support and connect them with relevant government schemes and services. e) Develop integrated child protection plans to address different vulnerabilities of children to prevent and rehabilitate victims of child labour/child abuse and exploitation. f) Hold separate Panchayats with children and incorporate their views and suggestions while making development plans. g) Generate awareness regarding all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation of children. h) Work with community and children to be vigilant regarding various risk factors (child abduction, trafficking in form of child labour, child marriage, child abuse and exploitation) and i) Generate awareness regarding support services for children including CHILDLINE, One-stop centre, CWC, JJB, SJPU. There are a whole lot of convergent efforts for developing the plan so as to realize the Sustainable Development Goals accordingly.

The RTE Act and the Local Self Government

In Indian context, the decentralization of governance and management is vested with Panchayats. Panchayat; a concept of Local Self-government refers to the administration of a locality- a village, a town, a city or any other smaller than a state, by a body representing local inhabitants, enjoying a certain degree of autonomy, raising a part of its revenue through local taxation and spending it on services which are local in character as distinct from the services provided by the State or Central agencies¹. At the time of making the Constitution, specific

provisions were included to provide legitimate space for the decentralization through a federal republic. The process of decentralization further gets accelerated after 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution. However, there are many pitfalls along the way. Not only there are powerful vested interests which are against transferring of powers and functions to local bodies but in recent times, a number of parallel bodies have been set up in the rural areas which are performing the functions which legitimately belong to the sphere of local government. Moreover, these bodies are keeping local governments at arm's length, maintaining a cursory relationship with them, if at all, and not taking them into confidence.²

In this backdrop, the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 again placed the complete onus of providing elementary education on the Local Self Government under section 9 of the Act. This is a very positive step towards strengthening the Local self-government for education management and governance.

RTE Act in Section 7(1) to 7(6), Section 8 and Section 9 clearly enunciates the roles and responsibilities of the Central, State and Local Authority respectively towards the effective implementation of the RTE Act. Particularly Section 9 of the Act assigns multiple duties to the local authority to ensure that it provides free and compulsory education to every child, in a neighborhood school. It clearly lays down the duties of the local authority to ensure that the children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantage groups are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing education; maintain records of all children up to the age of fourteen years within its jurisdiction; ensure and monitor admission, attendance, and completion of elementary education by every child within its jurisdiction; provide infrastructure; ensure good quality of elementary education conforming to the standards and norms; provide training facilities for teachers ; ensure admission of children of migrant families ; monitor functioning of schools within its jurisdiction ; and to decide the academic calendar³.

Implementation of RTE by Gram Panchayat:

We have completed eight years of implementing RTE Act in the nation. And so, it is important to examine the ground reality to assess how far the local authority⁴ has discharged its responsibilities assigned under section 9 of the RTE Act. The study of 40 Gram Panchayats was taken considering Gram Panchayat as one of the local authorities as part of Panchayat Raj Institutions. The researcher interviewed the President, Panchayat Development Officer, male and female members of 40 GP's of Ramnagar district of Karnataka as part of data collection for the study

on “Role of Gram Panchayat in implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. In addition to this out case study of two Panchayats in Dakshina Kannada districts was carried out to know the extent of participation. Further documentary studies were also carried out to study the whole process of Decentralization of Educational Management as well as role of Gram Panchayat in education delivery to draw inferences.

The inferences drawn from interviewing the Gram Panchayat functionaries revealed that except for knowing that 25 % of children can be admitted to private schools under 12(1) C, no other provisions were known to them. They stated that the researcher was the first person who visited their gram panchayat towards knowing the happenings pertaining to education. It was stated that no circular was received by Gram Panchayat by either Rural Development and Panchyati Raj Department or education department in order to implement the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. As stated earlier, the National Plan of Action for Children 2016 clearly states the roles and responsibilities to Gram Panchayats too, but it is found that there is no awareness itself on basic aspects like strengthening School Management committee in convergence with other platforms and structures, preparation of Gram Panchayat considering issues pertaining to children, collection of data on vulnerable children and even conducting of Children’s Gram Sabha and strengthening of systems for addressing children with conflict. It is learnt that only with 3% of the available finances, the Gram Panchayat would consider the small demands of the schools like electrification, water pipe connections or some incentives in the form of note books is provided without any institutionalization of interventions. It is seen that there is a missing link in having confidence with the Gram Panchayats for implementation of children related matters. Wherever, SMC’s are strengthened and awareness is developed, there are proofs of lots of initiatives being taken up including providing teachers and establishing pre-schools and it is surprising to see that Gram Panchayat with so much of assigned powers and being the bridge between taluk and school is not able to execute the role as local authority. In Karnataka, SDMC’s formation is linked with the PRI and is an extended arm of the Gram Panchayat in management of Primary Schools and it is ironical to know that they know nothing of RTE Act. This is due to lack of guidelines, lack of training, lack of delegation of powers and finances and at the most the lack of awareness building mechanism in place.

The case study of panchayats revealed that the majority of the members in both the Panchayats are unaware about the RtEAct in general and provisions related to Local Authority in particular. However, in the absence of such knowledge, as part of their routine, the Panchayats have taken very proactive role to implement many of the roles assigned to under the Act without knowing actually they are implementing the Act. The focus is more on infrastructure related issues like construction of

classrooms, toilets, providing drinking water, compound wall, whitewash/painting etc. The panchayats have also focused on enrolment and attendance of children in schools. It was found that there is complete disconnect in terms of legislation and execution, as there is a weak link between government schools and GP. There should be some convergent efforts by the Gram Panchayat and schools on the common goals to make system efficient but none of these initiatives could be seen in the case studies. Gram panchayat being the local authority at the ground level becomes the core agency in the implementation of the RtE Act in total, which has to address all the necessary hiccups and obtain the support of all the facilitatory bodies but due to its weak linkages and no devolution of powers and responsibilities in terms of guidelines and training there is no role in concrete. It was found that the majority members including the officials of the GP such as Panchayat Development Officer were unaware of the roles and responsibilities of local authority under the RtE Act. As the preconception is that, it is the responsibility of the education department and the school management committees and that their role is only towards the prescribed roles by Department of Panchayati Raj. More probing during interview only led to their understanding of Rte act as 25% admission to the private institutions. The interview though exhaustive, did not lead to any concrete observation, as the extent of awareness was to minimum. It was found that the GP members were not provided with any training in relation to the various provisions of RtE act including the section 9 which specifies their roles and responsibilities. It is evident that any implementation requires concrete strategy in empowering the implementing agencies. But, mere mentioning of the roles and responsibilities without any measure of bringing awareness leads to ignorance in the field. It was found that the GP are not roped as an authority in practice towards routing the funds and implementation of various programmes as there are parallel bodies or even deviation from Decentralization of Education Management System. It was found that the GP members and SDMC members are keen on placing their efforts for making schools very attractive and promoting quality education as centers of learning but they are not provided with opportunity in exercising their powers and duties in an institutionalized structure. As the efforts of SDMC and GP members were too dilute in terms of internalization of issues and resolutions, focus group discussion with other state holders was the option to know the nitty- gritty of the issues. Focus group discussion with children revealed that children are aware of the existence of GP but not aware about the member's involvement in schooling processes. As the students are trained in mock parliament, they were able to provide responses towards the functioning of Gram Panchayat.

Focus group discussion with teachers revealed that GP and TP members are more focused on infrastructure aspects like rooms, toilets and compound wall and are not concerned about the other aspects of Section 9 of the RTE Act. Further, they expressed that it would be of great help to school

in case gram panchayat is roped in as they are the authorities who can resolve any issue pertaining to instantaneous decision making and execution.

Discussion with GP President and members revealed that the funds pertaining to education is not routed through them and hence, they are not able to proactively engage themselves in schooling processes. Effective implementation comes with appropriate devolution of along with clear directions for implementation is the need for active involvement of GP. The responsibility without funds does not provide accountability for implementation. President of Bramarakutalu expressed his concern that if funds are provided along with responsibility then they would pay the attention. Dakshina Kannada being a progressive district has still to go a long way in empowering gram panchayats for their responsibility under section 9 of the RTE Act. Further, it was found that Gram Panchayat has displayed on the boards to ensure child's right but has no orientation about the roles pertaining to ensuring the appropriate initiation about any aspect of section 9.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of above findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations to the authorities concerned for the effective implementation of the legislation Massive awareness programme should be undertaken within the Panchayat on a war foot basis to create awareness amongst the community in general and members of local self-government in particular about the RTE Act in general and provisions under section 9 in particular Special measures need to be undertaken to build the Capacities of elected members to enable them to implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to them under the Act It is the right time for the devolution of financial powers and additional resources to adequately to the Panchayats, to ensure effective implementation of the provisions under section 9 of the Act There is an urgent need to put in place the Effective redressal Mechanism to monitor the effective implementation of the RTE Act by the Local Authority as specified under section 32 of the Act An orientation of needs assessment pertaining to school infrastructure, TLM, Teachers training, CWSN etc. to be provided to Gram Panchayat President and members of SDMC's along with head teacher Orientation to representatives from School, SDMC, GP, TP and ZP to be provided towards carrying out Special Children Grama Sabha to assess the implementation of , child rights in general the RTE Act in particular .

Specific Recommendations:

1. Massive awareness programme should be undertaken within the Panchayat on a war foot basis to create awareness amongst the community in general and members of local self-government in particular.
2. Special measures need to be undertaken to build the Capacities of elected members to enable them to implement the roles and responsibilities assigned to them under the Act
3. It is the right time for the devolution of financial powers and additional resources to adequately to the Panchayats, to ensure effective implementation of the provisions under section 9 of the Act
4. There is an urgent need to put in place the Effective redressal Mechanism to monitor the effective implementation of the RTE Act by the local authority as specified under section 32of the Act
5. An orientation of needs assessment pertaining to school infrastructure, TLM, Teachers training needs, CWSN ectto be provided to Gram Panchayat President and members, SDMC's inclusive of HM's.
6. Orientation to representatives from School, SDMC, GP, TP and ZP to be provided towards carrying out MakkalaGramSabhe(Children's meeting at GP)

Action Agenda for Gram Panchayat to Implement Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009

Based on the roles and responsibilities assigned to Gram Panchayat which is the local authority, an action agenda has been evolved with the objectives for every role and responsibility which is as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Action agenda to Gram Panchayats in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

Roles and Responsibilities as per Section 9 of the RTE Act 2009.	Objective	Action Agenda	Remarks
a. Provide the free and compulsory education to every child;	To meet the constitutional obligation of providing free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 (and also to ensure 3 to 6 age group children are also provided with ECCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of an affordable school place for all children in Primary school age • School mapping (GIS) • Provision of schools (sites, construction and maintenance) 	Taking the support of the TP and ZP and having strong convergence with Department of Primary and secondary education, RDPR, WCD, labor, social welfare departments.
b. Ensure availability of neighborhood school as specified in section 6;	To establish primary school within 1 km radius and HPS within 3 km radius to all children in the GP jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To carry out child census of children in the age group of 0 to 18 so that children mapping can be done accordingly so that children 	Through convergence of all the primary and secondary stakeholders

		enrol and complete full cycle of school education.	
c. Ensure non-discrimination for WS and DG children	To ensure non discrimination of any sort in school, classroom, play, mid day meals, Gram Sabha, Makkala Gram Sabha etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify children from WS and DG Have a special focus on checking whether any discrimination is underway in classroom; play ground, mid day meal, in admissions, incentive provision etc. Discuss the issues of WS and DG in Gram Sabha and Children's Gram Sabha. 	Through strong community networks and advocacy
d. Maintain records of children up to the age of 14 years in the jurisdiction	To have the record of children village and habitation wise in the GP and display the data in display board in GP premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain GP wise DISE data and ensure the use of data for planning for SDPs and resources To track the flow of children within and out of GP To ensure that children are regular to school To ensure that no children will drop out and bring awareness of wastage and stagnation. 	Through community participation and maintenance of data at GP level with the support of CRP's for DISE filling.
e. Ensure and monitor admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by every child residing within its jurisdiction	To enable all children in the GP to complete 10 years of school education without any hiccup.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss issues of children in Gram Sabha To carryout various activities within GP area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that transportation is not a problem for children to travel to school To visit schools and carry out facilitation for good functioning To plan various incentive schemes within GP as per the needs of children and social discrimination in the past. To ensure that no child drops out without completing 10 years of education. To ensure that Girls are empowered and not drop out due to specific issues like lack of facilities or others like child marriage, domestic work etc. To ensure easy transition for children to pursue secondary and higher education. 	Through intense action and functioning Civic Amenities Committee (CAC)
f. Provide	To ensure basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To use a certain percentage 	

infrastructure –school building ,teaching staff and TLM	infrastructure facilities availability in all schools within GP area.	<p>of GP income from revenue collection to Primary education specially for basic facilities like toilets, drinking water, electricity, incentives to children from marginalised sections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To plan infrastructure needs and accordingly collate with the state and central programmes for education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that no duplication of utilisation of funds happen within the GP area and to integrate and converge various initiatives. 	
g. Provide Special training	To ensure OOSC children to be bridged with appropriate competencies for mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify children who were Out of School. To organise a team of resource persons from within panchayat to address the needs of OOSC children by the way of creating learning centres, facilitatory counselling centres and alternative learning and rehabilitation centres. To follow up the children who were mainstreamed after bridging them for age appropriate classes. 	Through collaboration and meeting with Education, Labour Department, WCD, NGO's working with Children, Community based organizations and civil society as a whole to carry out research needs by reviewing all the circulars and guidelines issued by various departments.
h. Ensure good quality EE conforming to standards and norms in the schedule	To ensure that the RTE norms are abided by all schools within the GP area including private, government and aided schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To know the norms of schools as per the schedule (awareness building and understanding) To follow up with line departments for the required facilities Teacher recruitment at GP level for primary schools and anganawadi as per the guidelines issued by respective departments fulfilling the criteria. To issue NOC to private players only if it is not a possibility of establishing a government school within the GP jurisdiction. 	Through experts in RTE and other well known people working in the field of education. To develop pressure groups for piloting the recruitment at GP level and then scaling.
i. Ensure timely prescribing of curriculum and course of study;	To provide the materials required for schooling in time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that books, uniforms, shoes & socks, bags etc are distributed before the commencement of school. To ensure that a uniform curriculum is adopted within the GP area. 	Through convergent mechanisms and follow-up without compromising
j. Providing training facility for Teachers	To provide training of required number of days (20 days of training in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make a need assessment of training needs To report the data to the 	To work in convergence with the taluk, district , state and national level along with the

	an year) for all teachers within GP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> concerned training centres Establishing training centres at GP Developing resource group for a staggered mode of training for school based training. Roping in of philanthropists for inputs on training facilities. Monitoring and supervising the training programmes and ensuring that all teachers undergo training. 	state academic bodies in brining the focus for training programmes following bottom up process and participatory mode and approaches.
k. Ensure admission children from of migrant families	To ensure that no migrant child missing the schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have the record of children who migrate (monthly) Fit the child into certain school facility like residential or urban deprived children initiatives. 	
l. Monitor functioning of school within the jurisdiction	Monitoring and supervision of schools as a mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that GP CAC visits every school at least once a month To have a regular monthly joint meeting with the SMC's and Head teachers. To ensure that issues of schools are resolved through GP proceedings. 	
m. Decide the academic calendar	Decide uniform academic calendar to all schools within GP as per the local conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspective plan and annual plans to be designed by CAC in consultation with SMC and Head teachers of all schools within GP jurisdiction. To follow up with all schools on the academic calendar To display the academic calendar in GP display board. SDP's to be displayed in school premises and GP to consolidate the needs of each school and accordingly link it with the Link document of PRI for allocation of funds. 	SDP's to be prepared involving all the stake holder departments under the supervision of GP to promote bottom up process of planning and implementation.

The Awareness and Knowledge of Right of Children to Free and compulsory education to be provided by the department of education and all other experts in a big way for PRI's so as to take the lead in participation and execution for the successful implementation of RTE. There has to be devolution of funds accordingly based on the School Development Plan prepared by every Gram

Panchayat. The evolution and sustainability to be attained consistently, by handholding the GP functionaries through participatory process of research and implementation. The greater association and knowledge construction for strengthening of Local Authorities to be the focus of all stake holder departments like Department of Education, Department of women and child Development, Labour, Social Welfare, Tribal Welfare, Youth and Sports Service Department etc. The skill development of the GP functionaries, for delivering educational services to be ensured by RDPR, department for greater participation and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

As early as 1961, Jayaprakash Narayan pointed out that ‘After having accepted Panchayat as the agency responsible for planning and execution of plans.... There is no longer any valid reason for continuing individual allocations subject-wise even to serve as a guide’ as stated by Raghunandan T. R (2013). In reality the status is the same even after 50 years. Despite the various initiatives in decentralization of educational management like that of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 with clear delegation of roles and responsibilities to the local authorities, hardly any serious attempt is made to empower the Gram Panchayats in implementation of the Act in full spirit. Mere assigning the roles and responsibilities without any fund allocation and empowerment is like assigning the job of chewing without the provision of teeth. The local authority to be devolved with structured functions, manpower provision, power delegation and authority in massive mode with greater political will is the need of the hour with respect to the provisions as prescribed under Section 9 of the RTE Act.

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