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Hierarchical Monitoring and School Supervision for Quality Assurance in Jangalmahal, West Bengal: A Development Agenda through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

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I. Introduction

Adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring and supervision are one of the most important keys to successful implementation of any educational programme. The same is true for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims at providing useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years. It is an effort to universalize quality Elementary Education for all children by 2010 in a mission mode. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 has strongly articulated the need for a substantial improvement in the quality of education.

Access to and qualities in education are two main objectives of all major educational policies of different governments since independence (*Bude, U., Coombe, Ñ., Muwowo, Â., & Nashire, N., 1995*) However, the last three decades have witnessed a shift in focus from issues related to educational expansion to a focus on quality in education. This shift is an obvious reaction to a decline seen in the performance of the schools lagging far behind the rate of expansion of the schools (*Christ, I., 1995*). It was felt that merely expanding the system and injecting more resources into the system could hardly meet the goals of education and fulfill the national aspirations. Rather, the more fundamental issues are those related to the use of these resources at school level, in a way that enhances performance. Consequently, a simultaneous shift is observable in the conception of school supervision. Supervision when interpreted in the context of quality in education connotes a mechanism of improvement rather than as a means to exercise control (*Govinda, R. & Varghese, N.V., 1993*). New dimensions are added to the process of school supervision and its relationship with in-school actors that are now seen as of great significance in assuring quality in education. The formative aspects of supervision are highlighted as substantiation of its salience to ensure quality in education. The sections that follow provide a brief sketch of the meaning assigned to supervision in contemporary era to establish its relationship with quality in education. Consequently outlines of major roles of the education officers are discussed. Finally the major problems that impede the utilization of supervision functions in improving performance of schools are highlighted.

II. Quality Issue and School Supervision

The global initiative for educational expansion has already treaded its path over a long period of time. However, studies conducted globally with special focus on quality in terms of students' performance reveals a declining status of the educational microsystems viz. the school, in developing nations with respect to achievement of the goals leading to a growing concern over quality of the educational micro-systems the basic unit of expansion (*Gray, J. & Wilcox, B., 1994*).. Deliberations over the quality issue within the educational micro-system in terms of its performance, essentially centers around three significant aspects that determine the quality of the micro-system in a cumulative way. The significant aspects are: (i) the material (infrastructure and equipments) and human (learners, teachers and institutional heads) resources (ii)

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the relationships within school, between the school and the community, and between the school and the administrative level immediately above the school and (iii) the daily interaction between teachers and learners that are the direct determinants of performance of a school. Further, the performances of the school through the teacher student interactions are mediated by both the resource as well as the relationship factors. The issue of educational expansion had its focus on the resource factors thus facilitating access to education *(Hopes, Ñ., 1992)*. However, pumping in of resources within the educational system is essential to take care of the access issue. The relevance and hence quality issue need attention toward the other two aspects as well. School supervision emanates out of the relationships of the educational micro-system with the administrative level above the school level in the overall educational macro-system and is thus an important component of the relationship aspects of the educational micro-system. As such school supervision has a mediating impact on quality in the micro-system. The quality concern thus leads to concern with how the input factors are organized and managed rather than on the strength of the resources provided (*Lillis, K. M., 1992*). Since school supervision is related to ensuring organization and management of the resources and is a major element of the factors determining quality, it has emerged as an important phenomena attracting serious discussions and providing a largely unexplored area for empirical investigations with the aim to make it more effective and efficient.

The origin of school supervision could be traced back to Wood's dispatch of 1854 when the fundamental aim of bringing into existence the very concept of school inspection was to exercise authority and control *(NUEPA, 1991-2001)*. The aim of control reflects the traditional sense of supervision more commonly referred to as inspection. Supervision, then in its traditional sense refers to overseeing by someone the work of other personnel. Thus ipso facto every administrator is a supervisor. However such a conception of supervision presents a narrower vision limiting it to control and evaluation of resources and personnel that could hardly satisfy the developmental and formative needs of the complex and dynamic educational micro-system requiring continuous change and modification under expert guidance and control in a systematic, effective and efficient way, to sustain its relevance and vitality. In other words, to ensure quality in the educational micro-system it is necessary that there exists mechanism for effective guidance along with good teaching.

Consequently, the authoritarian conception of supervision with a focus on control has given way to a democratic conception of supervision with a focus on human relations and cooperative efforts of administrative personnel, teachers and headmasters, to enhance quality (*Tyagi, 2011*). The democratic perspective on supervision led to a conception of supervision as a service aimed at the improvement of the academic aspects of school, the existence of which, in almost all nations and at central, regional and local levels substantiate sits significance as a quality improvement mechanism. Supervision as a service functions both to control as well as to support the schools from outside through regular visits by the officers endowed with the task. As a service it serves a two-fold purpose (*Olivera, C. E., 1979*). Whereas on the one hand it serves to "interpret to teachers and the public the education policies of the authorities and modern educational ideas and methods", on the other hand it also serves to "interpret to the competent authorities the experiences, needs, and aspirations of teachers and local communities (*Pauvert, 1987, p. 48*). Educational supervision thus catalyzes quality assurance programs by shaping, supporting, operating and controlling the educational micro-system thereby deciding the quality of education to a very great degree.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) also emphasizes the significance of quality education and suggests various parameters to be addressed in State and district plans to achieve the desired goal. The quality dimensions for elementary education have broadly been identified as in Figure 1.

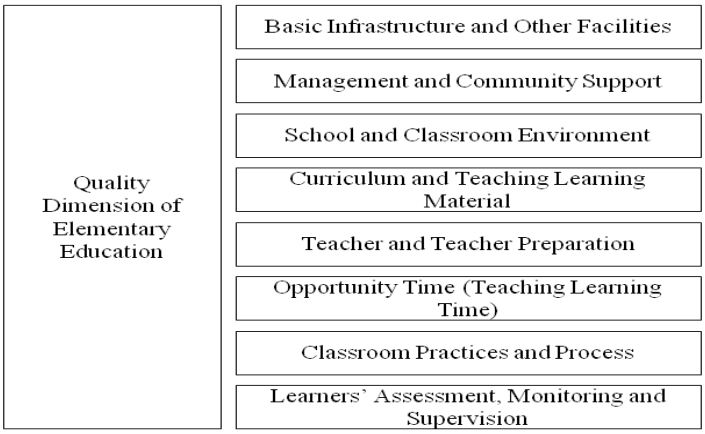


Figure 1 : Quality dimensions for elementary education

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In order to be continuously informed about the parameters and issues related to quality elementary education, both at the classroom level as well as at the systematic functioning level, some monitoring systems had to be put in place. A strong need was felt for periodic monitoring and regular feedback at elementary levels within and outside the classrooms. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan emphasizes a holistic and comprehensive approach and suggests community-based monitoring system and also encourages developing partnerships between communities and research institutions for effective monitoring. In SSA, Monitoring in a broader sense has been defined as a continuous assessment of progress, diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses and provision for remedial and corrective measures. Therefore, continuous and comprehensive monitoring and subsequent learning from one's own and others' experiences is crucial for effective implementation of plans and programmes. The main indicators of the quality of elementary education can be visualized in terms of preparation, classroom processes and learners' achievements (*Singhal, R.P., Bhagia, N.M., Kalpande, V.A. & Nair, T.K.D.,1986*). The monitoring and supervision of the aspects, which are easily quantifiable, have generally received the attention of the planners, implementers and supervisors. Monitoring of quality dimensions, especially of learning and learning conditions of every child, has perhaps not received the required attention probably because these are a difficult terrain to pursue. However, in assessing the progress of the child, one of the main indicators has been the assessment of the child's learning in the classroom rather than qualitative classroom processes. Moreover, the progress of the child in terms of acquisition of knowledge and skill development needs to be followed systematically.

There are tools and mechanisms available for the monitoring of other quantifiable and data specific aspects but not so much for the quality aspects of education (*Perier, P., 1995*). The field experiences and relevant data have shown that there has been considerable progress in access, enrolment and retention of children but quality issues still need to be addressed and monitored. Therefore, it is necessary that a concerted effort be made to build upon past experiences and focus on systematic monitoring of the aspects relating to school effectiveness especially on meaningful learning by every child. There is hardly any standardized tool to assess the key indicators on quality aspects. Some commendable but sporadic efforts have been made by some States in this area, which proved to be a useful base for evolving the indicators for these dimensions. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India has endeavored to put into place a massive programme of monitoring and supervision under SSA. The NCERT was assigned the task of developing the monitoring formats for quality dimensions based upon broad consultations.

Support from the schools (including teachers and headmasters), administrative authorities above them in hierarchy and the support from the community that serves as context for the supervision services are essentially justified owing to the nature of the supervision functions that includes variety of tasks. Similarly the education officers have to identify resources required by the schools, initiatives to be taken for curricular and instructional improvement etc. and report the same to their immediate authorities and seek support from them. Thus co-operation from their immediate authorities are essential in making them efficiently discharge their responsibilities. The actual situation is however quite disheartening where it has been reported that even those educational supervisors who work hard with teachers and head teachers seldom get positive response from them.

III. Study Area

The western part of South Bengal including a major part of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia D istrict is now literary marked as „Jangalmahal". The name says that the major part of this region is covered by forest or jungle and now days the socio economically backward region is strongly Maoist affected. Among the twenty seven blocks of West Midnapore District twenty are extremely Maoist influenced (i.e. Jhargram, Jamboni, Lalgarh , Belpahari, Sankrail etc). A major part of Purulia District also exists under Jangalmahl. Among the twenty one blocks twelve are found in increasing Maoist activities (i.e. Manbazar, Arsha, Ragunathpur, Banduan, Balarampur and Baghmundi etc). Now a days the Maoist activity is gradually increasing at the remote blocks of Bankura District which are mainly located in the Southern part of the district (i.e. Ranibandh, Raipur I & II and Simlapal etc).

IV. Selection and Development of Formats

Based on the above dimensions in **Figure 1.** that have been proposed, the following monitoring levels have been proposed.

i. School/Community Level
ii. Cluster Level
iii. Block Level
iv. District Level

V. Process of Development of Formats

Initially, a set of 59 draft monitoring tools (formats) were developed by the Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, keeping in view the following critical issues:

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- What should be the key indicators for each of the quality dimension of Elementary Education, which require regular monitoring and supervision?
- What type of formats should be developed to monitor quality indicators for each dimension?
- What procedures should be adopted to try out and validate the tools/formats in order to assess the feasibility and practicability in the system?
- What should be the modalities of disseminating these tools for wider use in the system?

In order to address these issues more meaningfully, the draft formats along with identified indicators were prepared and discussed in details with the representatives of NIEPA, MHRD, TSG, Ed.CIL in the meetings organized at NCERT and NIEPA.

VI. Description of the Formats

Monitoring under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme has been envisaged as a multi-tiered one: monitoring at the school/ community level, at the cluster level, at the block level, at the district level, at the State level and at the National level. This necessitates development of a proper monitoring mechanism at various levels i.e. school level/ community level, cluster level, block level, district level, State level and the National level for a functional self-sustained feedback system. For this, there is a need to have an effective monitoring system through which not only the progress of the programme can be analyzed but also timely corrective measures can be undertaken. The levels for monitoring and feedback mechanisms have been envisaged in **Figure 2.**

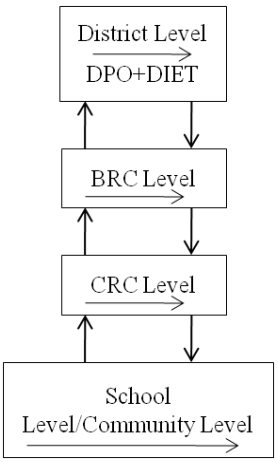


Figure 2 : Information flow systems in the quality monitoring tools (linkages with DIETs and DPO)

It is expected that the information collected at the school level and the information collected by community-based organizations will be consolidated and analyzed by the Cluster Resource Center Coordinator. However, every teacher will also analyze the quarterly data on learners' achievement, to reflect on her own students' learning and performance. CRC Coordinator will collate attendance and achievement data for the entire cluster and will analyze it to identify the trends and various needs. However, CRC Coordinator's direct engagement will be through classroom observations and their quantitative and qualitative analysis. CRC Coordinator, along with his/ her analysis will send data on attendance and learners' assessment to BRC Coordinator. At the block level, BRC Coordinator is expected to go through the analysis and information sent by CRC Coordinator and also will collect some information at his/ her own level. It is important to mention that the BRC Coordinator will collect the required information himself/ herself and not through CRC Coordinator. There are certain items on which BRC Coordinator has to report, which do not figure in CRC Coordinator's formats. For example, data on teacher appointment, etc. The reason behind this segregation is that BRC Coordinator plays an important role in ensuring teacher appointment.

BRC Coordinator will send all the data and the information to District Project Office as well as to the respective DIET (District Institute of Education and Training). It is envisaged that the team in District Project Office will reflect on the information and collate information coming from different blocks, before sending it to State Project Office and SCERT. DPO will send the data on attendance, learners' assessment and other items. The monitoring formats filled by the BRC Coordinators should be sent to the DIETs who should analyze the specific achievements and shortfalls for areas mentioned at No. 4 (curriculum and teaching learning materials, No. 5 (teacher and teacher preparation), No. 6 (classroom practices and processes), and No. 8 (learners' evaluation, monitoring and supervision) on pages 3 and 4 and prepare their assessment and remedial plan for their districts. The DIET should send their comments to the DPO after analysis who will then consolidate the information and forward it to the State Project Office. The DIET Principals

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should also send their comments to the Director, SCERT for State-wise review and consolidation. The DPOs, BRC and CRC Coordinators should take into account the areas identified by DIET faculty members, which, require attention while planning in-service training of teachers and finalize it in consultation with DIETs. The State with the help of SCERT will consolidate learners' assessment data for every quarter. The State Office will also reflect on information about enrolment and actual attendance of children in schools but will not send it to the National Level. DIETs and SCERTs should own the responsibility for improving the areas mentioned at curriculum and teaching learning materials, teacher and teacher preparation, classroom practices and processes, opportunity time-teaching learning time and learners' evaluation, monitoring and supervision. In-service teacher training plan in the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB) should un-ambiguously state the role to be played by BRCCs, CRCCs, DIETs and SCERTs in the process as also the resource support, which may be required by the DIETs and SCERTs to discharge their functions effectively.

The major quality dimensions for improving quality of elementary education covered under these formats are:

1. Children's Attendance
2. Community Support and Participation
3. Teacher and Teacher Preparation
4. Curriculum and Teaching Learning Materials
5. Classroom Practices and Processes
6. Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision

Table 1 : The consolidated picture of formats for monitoring quality dimensions at various levels

Levels	Attendance	Community/ VEC Support	Teacher Preparation, TLM & T-L Processes	Learners' Assessment	Total
School Level	1 Quarterly	1 Annually	-	1 Quarterly	3
CRC	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
BRC	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
District	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
Total	4	1	3	4	12+3 **Analytical Sheets**

The information will be collected for three quarters in an academic year. The details are as following in **Table 2**.

Table 2 : Information collection time for three quarters in an academic year

Quarter	Month Covered	To be Submitted in the Month
Quarter-I	January-March	May
Quarter-II	June/July-September	November
Quarter-III	October-December	February

If any State follows a different pattern in arranging an academic year, then it is free to accommodate the plan accordingly.

VII. Linkages with SCERTs and DIETs in Quality Monitoring and Supervision Under SSA

The existing quality monitoring tools, envisage a close partnership of DPOs and SPOs with DIETs and SCERTs, respectively. The tools ultimately seek to rejuvenate the academic resource support structures at the block and district levels, for improvement in classroom processes and pupil achievement levels. The tools also seek to monitor the provisions of quality-related inputs under SSA, like training of teachers, availability and usage of TLMs, availability of textbooks, functioning of academic support groups DRGs, BRGs, CRGs, etc. Following items, already existing in the monitoring tools, seek to encourage BRCs, DPOs and SPOs in collaborating with DIETs and SCERTs:

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- In the BRC Coordinators' Analytical Sheet, BRCCs are expected to inform the DPO about key requirements from the concerned DIET, for the next quarter, with reasons.
- In the District Level Analytical Sheet, the DPO is expected to inform the SPO about how often DPO/ DIET officials hold coordination meetings for activities under SSA. They are expected to give details of problem areas, if any.
- The SPO is expected to inform whether the DIETs and DPOs in the State are working in coordination and what steps are being taken in the State to ensure this.

VIII. Suggestions for Collaboration with DIETs

a) DIETs can play an important role in training the cluster resource coordinators in using the classroom observation formats effectively. These formats require CRCCs to understand key pedagogical issues like the teachers' methods of introducing lessons (whether teacher-centered or learners-centered), diagnosis and remediation, pupil assessment methods, detection of hard spots, etc. This observation format forms the basis on which other cluster level formats like CLF-II (b) on teaching learning materials and equipments and CLF-II (c) on teaching learning processes (Pedagogy) are to be filled by CRCCs.

b) In the District Level Analytical Sheet, 20% primary schools and 10% upper primary schools showing consistently poor learner achievement levels for the last two quarters are being identified by the DPO. DIETs can play an important role in undertaking action research for identification of reasons and design of interventions for improvement in pupil performance over a defined time frame.

c) DIETs should also organize training programmes for teachers identified through classroom observations, who are having problems in teaching specific subjects.

IX. Suggestions for Collaboration with Scert

a) Pupil achievement levels constitute the key outcome indicators under SSA. The NCERT monitoring tools will furnish quarterly data on pupil achievement levels at every grade in every subject at the elementary stage. SCERTs must assist SPOs in analyzing the pupil achievement data and in instituting remedial/ extended learning measures for students, wherever needed (as is being done in Maharashtra for example). SCERTs can work with SPOs in devising strategies for enhancement of pupil achievement levels based on the analysis of achievement data that will be available on a quarterly basis.

b) SCERTs can collaborate with SPOs to develop school performance monitoring indices and also independent assessment of pupil achievement (like SCERT, Gujarat is doing through the GAP surveys).

c) SCERTs can help SPOs in organizing Annual State Level Achievement surveys. The National achievement surveys conducted by NCERT do not provide information for every district. Also, these surveys are based on common elements of the syllabi of various States. In the State level surveys, tests based on specific syllabi of States can be developed.

d) SPOs can arrange quarterly meetings with SCERTs and all DIETs, to reflect upon the information thrown up by the quality monitoring tools, and draw an action plan to address the key issues that have emerged in the last quarter. SPOs and SCERTs should jointly monitor the implementation of the quality improvement plan, on a monthly basis.

X. Present State of Affairs of Jangalmahal

With the state government planning a slew of projects for Jangalmahal, education in the area is all set to get a boost. School education secretary Vikram Sen met chief secretary Samar Ghosh and held a video-conference with district magistrates to discuss the status of the proposed projects.

Jangalmahal will soon receive a bag of goodies from the state government. School education secretary Vikram Sen met with chief secretary Samar Ghosh and video-conference with district magistrates to discuss the progress of proposed projects in the area.

Thirty-four girls' hostels, to be set up in Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia, have been sanctioned by the government. PWD in its review meeting on Saturday has assured the government that the buildings will be completed in due time. The 34 girls' hostels which will be set up in West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia have been sanctioned by the government. PWD in its review on Saturday's meeting has assured the government to complete the buildings within in due time. Each hostel will provide an accommodation to 50 girls in each school. Provide 50 accommodations to the girls in each school. Though initially there was a problem with the earmarked site in Purulia, the problem has been resolved.

Nearly 1,200 Santhali-speaking Para-teachers will be provided jobs from Jangalmahal as well. The criterion will be 50% score in higher secondary examinations while for SC/ST candidates there is a 5% relaxation.

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The state government has also decided to upgrade 126 schools in Jangalmahal from Madhyamik to higher secondary classes. Subject to approval of the cabinet, and will employ three teachers in each school through School Service Commission (SSC) for classes XI and XII. There will be more opportunity for science teachers.

Information for the region is that the planning commission has sanctioned to set up 80 more hostels to be set up in Jangalmahal. The funds will be provided through Backward Region Development Funds. The tender will be floated and constructions will be completed within next 2015.

Another proposal from the state government which has received a nod from the Centre is the setting up of fully integrated schools in 23 blocks in three districts of Jangalmahal.

All the schools (Class I to XII) will be run by the government and will offer hostels to the students. PWD will soon start work.

XI. Conclusion

Hierarchical monitoring and school supervision for quality assurance is justified as a mechanism to insure the growth of the educational micro-system in general and of the human input factors in particular. It acts as a process of linking the teachers' previous preparation to their actual professional context. It also serves as a mechanism to possibly keep the education workers abreast of current developments and providing creative suggestions informed by analyses. Logically, hierarchical monitoring and school supervision for quality assurance aims at improving curriculum and instruction thus reflect the support functions of supervision. Supervision when conceived as a control and support service has the immense potential to enhance quality of education provided that the mandated functions of supervision are implemented effectively. However, supervision, like any other profession, is influenced by several problems or an impediment that prevents it in achieving the stipulated goals. The impeding factors includes both internal as well as external factors that together determine the extent of overlap between what the officers perform and what are expected of them. A considerable decline has, however, been observed in external supervision practices by educational administrators. More specifically the academic supervision, that has a direct bearing on improvement in the teaching-learning practices and the overall quality of school, has been subdued by the importance given to the control functions. Thus, there is need to rethink the supervisory systems and procedures need to be rethought so that they respond to the quality concerns of school education. Specific attentions need to be given to the problems of supervision if it is to be used as a quality improvement tool like, hierarchical monitoring. Improvement in hierarchical monitoring of school and needs concerted effort. There is need of rich empirical data regarding the roles of education officers and the hurdles as perceived by them to improve their working conditions, delimit their roles and thus make them more efficient and effective.

Development of such a data base needs committed research into the area. On the other hand the training program to professionally develop the education officers is a dire need of the time. Since the professional contexts of the education officers are variegated, there is a justified need to train them to improve professionally through reflective practices. Thus they are required to become an action researcher if they are to meaningfully contribute to the larger goal of assuring quality in education in their own capacity. Finally, there exists a lack of sufficient research inquiry into the status of supervisory and hierarchical monitoring functions in Jangalmahal context and specifically in context of the backward areas. There is a justified need to investigate into the status of supervision functions specifically at the block level, with respect to their mandated functions and at the same time to identify the problems faced by the block level education officers in their endeavor to discharge their responsibilities. Future studies related to Hierarchical monitoring and school supervision for quality assurance and its different aspects are expected to surely help in the improvement of supervision functions and insure its role in quality improvement of the schools.

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