

**ADMINISTRATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ODISHA:
ROLE OF VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE****Voice of Research**

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Abstract

The study investigated role perception of Village Education Committee (VEC) members with regard to their planning, attitude, and involvement for improvement of quality education and the actual activities or performances they were being able to carry out. Sample for the present study consisted of 1120 VEC members from four districts Odisha state viz. Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Nayagarh and Puri. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of VEC members. Semi-structured interviews, an interest inventory and an observation schedule were used for the collection of data. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics like Mean and Standard Deviation. A big gap between the role perception and performance of VEC members was found with respect to the maintenance of school building, using parent-contact as an important aspect of teaching-learning process, impletition of government programs and administrative functions of the school. However, most of the VEC members recognized their training need relating to the activities of the administrative functions of the schools.

Education can act as a powerful tool for reducing poverty and unemployment, improving health and nutritional standards, and achieving a sustained human development-led growth (World Bank, 2004). Within the purview of overall education, primary education is recognized as a basic human right, vital both to the development of individuals and societies (UNESCO, 2008). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by 58 member states of the United Nations General Assembly, recognizes basic education as a human right and calls for primary education everywhere to be both compulsory and free (Article 26i). The gains from universal elementary education can hardly be overstated. It has important advantages for the individual and the nation. It expands the realm of choices available to the individual in almost every instance. The benefits in terms of key demographic variables such as infant mortality rate and fertility rate are substantial (The World Bank, 1997). Equally, it is important for the effective functioning of democratic institutions, the malfunctioning of which impinge on virtually every economic and social outcome. Elementary education covers the primary (6-11 years) and upper primary (11-14 years) age group. In most Indian states, this translates into the successful completion of prescribed educational requirements till Class VIII. The essence of the goal is for every 14-year old to have acquired foundation skills such as the ability to read and write with fluency, numeracy, comprehension, analysis, reasoning and social skills such as teamwork. Equally, elementary education should instill in children courage, confidence, curiosity, independence, resourcefulness, resilience, patience and understanding (Holt, 1967). The story of India's educational achievements is one of mixed success. On the down side, India has 22 per cent of the world's population but 46 per cent of the world's illiterates, and is home to a high proportion of the

world's out of school children and youth. On the positive side, it has made encouraging recent progress in raising schooling participation (Kingdon, 2007).

In Odisha, recently there has been a sea change in the tools, technology and mode of imparting education. Scholars and Intellectuals point to the fact that lack of provisions for good education across and particularly in the interior of the state is responsible for many kinds of social, religious, political and other problems. One of the greatest weaknesses for poor progress towards good education is the lack of community involvement in school programmes. Community involvement would establish a close linkage between school and community and help in improving quality in education, reduction of absenteeism and irregularity. The role of VEC has become very vital in promoting enrolment, retention, achievement and school effectiveness. Although VECs have been constituted in almost all schools, their effectiveness is to be looked after. It is therefore pertinent and rational to begin a study on the functioning of the primary education, and particularly administrative functioning of the VECs in the state which is likely not only to provide clues and answers to the above issues but also would help in promoting a healthy government public partnership management towards developing primary education in the state.

Objectives

The following objectives were raised for the study.

To study the awareness, interest, and aptitude of the members of the Village Education Committee (VEC) about their roles in the school administration for improving the quality of primary education in the state.

To study about the role perception of VEC members with regard to their planning, attitude, and involvement for improvement of quality education and the actual activities or performances they were being able to carry out so that



discrepancies between their administrative role perception and performance can be observed and explained.

To examine the training needs of the members of VEC so as to help them improve their administrative ability for providing quality in the primary education in their locality. To make an in-depth and comprehensive analysis about the functioning of these selected VECs so as to provide a general understanding about administrative functioning of VECs in Odisha.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of VECs of all the primary/upper primary schools located in the rural areas of Odisha. The sample for the study consisted of 1120 members of VEC spread over 4 districts viz. Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Nayagad and Puri of the state. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in the selection of VEC members. In the first stage, 4 districts were selected employing a simple random technique. In the second stage, the unit of sampling was 'Blocks'. Eight blocks from each of the four districts were again selected on a further simple random technique resulting in 32 (8 x 4) Gram Panhayatas. In the third stage, the unit of sampling was 'Schools' and 'Village Education Committee'. Seven VECs from each of the 32 blocks were selected by employing simple random technique resulting in 224 (32 x 7) selected VECs. In the final stage, five members from each of 224 VECs were selected employing incidental sampling technique resulting in 1120 (224 x 5) members in the final sample. The final sample was carefully selected to include people from different categories such as males and females, members belonging to different social class (SC, ST, and OBC), members belonging to different socioeconomic background, members from NGOs, Panchayati Raj institutions, and teachers.

Tools for the Collection of Data

The following tools were used for the present study; A semi-structured interview schedule was used for the members of VEC inquiring about their perception of roles as committee members, and the activities or roles they actually perform. An interest inventory for the members of VECs was used to explore their interest in activities for improving the quality education in their schools. A semi-structured interview schedule was also used to assess the perception of the VEC members about their training needs for promoting quality education in the schools. An observation schedule enquiring about the quality of education the study area.

Results

Role perception and Role performance by the VEC Members

The role perception of VEC members with respect to their responsibilities for maintaining school environment were analysed. While 76% of members agreed that they should take part in the maintenance of school building only 40% of them were actually found to be performing some roles. On the other hand, while only 24% VEC members said that they should not have any role in the maintenance of school building, 60% of them actually did not perform any role. The data shows a big gap between the role perception and performance of VEC members with respect to the maintenance of school building.

With respect to sanitation and cleanliness of school environment, 59% of the members accepted the responsibility while 41% declined. On the other hand, only 25% of the members have performed some responsibility which also indicates differences in role perception and performance of the VEC members. With respect to the beautification of the school environment only 38% of the

Table-1. Distribution of frequencies and % frequency for role perception and role performance of the VEC members with respect to School Environment, Teaching- Learning Process, and Administrative Control (N= 1120)

School Environment	Building Maintenance		Sanitation & Cleanliness		Beautification		Safety	
	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't
Role Perception	1705 (76%)	535 (24%)	1318 (59%)	922 (41%)	857 (38%)	1383 (62%)	498 (22%)	1742 (78%)
Role Performance	885 (40%)	1355 (60%)	566 (25%)	1674 (75%)	382 (17%)	1858 (83%)	376 (17%)	1864 (83%)
Teaching-Learning Process	Preparation of Study Aids		Supervision of Study Activities		Attendance & Participation		Parent Contact	
	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't
Role Perception	835 (37%)	1405 (63%)	1628 (73%)	612 (27%)	1856 (83%)	384 (17%)	1312 (59%)	928 (41%)
Role Performance	114 (05%)	2126 (95%)	1414 (63%)	826 (37%)	1726 (77%)	514 (23%)	828 (37%)	1412 (63%)
Administrative Function	Developmental Planning		Administrative Control		Management of Mid-day Meal		Implementation of Govt. Programs	
	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't	Should	Shouldn't
Role Perception	1820 (81%)	420 (19%)	1622 (72%)	618 (28%)	2024 (90%)	216 (10%)	1856 (83%)	384 (17%)
Role Performance	1284 (57%)	956 (43%)	1402 (63%)	838 (37%)	1756 (78%)	484 (22%)	1282 (57%)	958 (43%)



members agreed to their responsibility while 62% of the members declined and finally, only 17% of the members were found to have been performing some responsibilities towards the beautification of the school environment. The results not only shows gap between role perception and role performance, but also shows a lack of adequate role perception by the VEC members about their responsibilities in beautification of the school environment. Finally, it is observed that VEC members did not appropriately perceive their role towards the safety of students as an important aspect of school environment. While only 22% of them perceived that they need to work for safety of students, 17% of them actually did some activities. Hence, although there is not a big gap in their role perception and performance, there is a limited perception about this role by the VEC members.

Role perception and performance of the VEC members with respect to the teaching learning processes in the school were also examined. While 37% of the members agreed to their responsibilities in the preparation of study aids, only 5% of them actually performed some activities in that regard. In effect, 63% of the members did not agree to their role in preparing study aids. Hence, there is not only inadequate role perception by the VEC members about this important teaching- learning process, but also there is a broad gap between their role perception and performance. With respect to supervision of study activity, 73% of members agreed to their responsibilities while 63% of them were actually performing their role. Hence, this one area of teaching learning process where role perception and performance of the VEC members strongly match. Further, with respect to attendance and participation, 83% of the members agreed to their roles and 77% of them have actually performed showing good compatibility in their role perception and role performance. Parent contact is a significant part of the teaching learning process. While 59% of the members agreed to their responsibilities in using parent contact, 41% of them declined. However, 37% of the members did some activities in that regard. Hence, along with inadequate role perception, there is also substantial differences in the role perception and performance of the VEC members with respect to using parent contact as an important aspect of teaching-learning process.

Data were also analysed with respect to role perception and role performance of administrative functions by the members of VEC. 81% of the members agreed that they should take part in the developmental planning of the school, while only 57% of them actually participated in the developmental programs of the school. Hence, there is a substantial gap in their role perception and performance. Most of the VEC members perceived that they need to take part in the administrative control of the school. While 72%

of memers perceived in this way, 63% of them were actually found to perform administrative functions of the school. Hence, there is little gap in their role perception and performance about the administrative function of the school. 90% of members in the VEC felt that they have role in the management of mid-days in the schools and 78% of them were actually found to have been involved in that affairs of the school. In fact, there is not mucch of differences in their role perception and performance in regard to management of mid-day meals. Finally, 83% of the members believed that they need to take part in the implementation of government programs in the schools while only 57% of them used their resources in implementing the programs. Hence, there is considerable gap in their role perception and role performance of the VEC members about impletion of government programs.

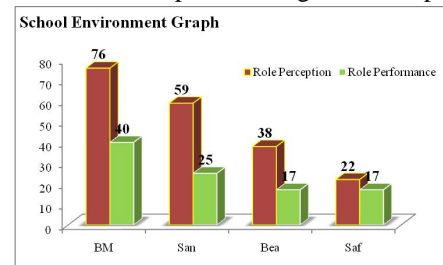
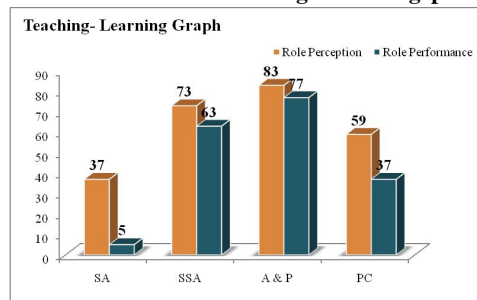


Figure-1 Difference in role perception and performance of VEC members about school environment

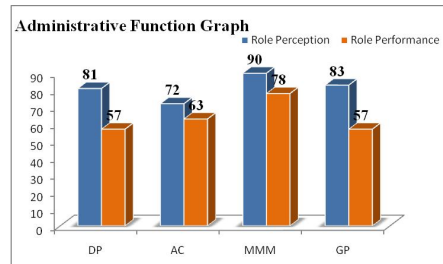
B.M.- Building Maintanance; San. – Sanitation & Clealiness; Bea- Beautification; Saf- Safety

Figure 2 Difference in role perception and performance of VEC members about Teaching- Learning process



SA- Preparation of Study Aids; SSA- Supervision of Activities; A & P- Attendance and Participation; PC- Parent Contact

Figure-3 Difference in role perception and performance of VEC members about Administrative Function



DP. Developmental Planning; AC- Administrative Control; MMM- Management of Mid-day Meal; GP- Implementation of Govt. Programs

The data about the role perception and performance of the VEC members in respect of the School Environment,



Teaching- Learning process, and Administrative Functions are also presented graphically respectively in Figure 1, 2, and 3. Observation of the graphs clearly point to the fact that the role perception of the VEC members relating to maintenance of school environment is inadequate and also at the same time their performance in this regard is substantially low. With regard to teaching- learning process, except supervision of school activities and participation in school functions, both role perception and performance of the VEC members are inadequate. Likewise, there are also differences in role perception and performances of VEC members with regard to the administrative functions of the school.

Interest of VEC Members in different school activities

An attempt was made to assess the interest of members and their perception training needs in different activities of the school. An inventory was used in the present study to assess the interest of the VEC members in different activities of school administration and development consisted of 30 items, 10 each for attributes of school environment, teaching-learning programs, and administrative control.

The Means and SDs for interest measures with regard to different school activities are reported in Table 2. There were 2 items for assessment of interest in respect of each variable having a maximum score of 8. The interest of the members in different school activities were considered as ‘Good’ if the observed mean is 75% or above of the maximum score; ‘Average’ if is between 50 to 75%; and ‘Poor’ if it is below 50%.

Observation of results in Table- 2 shows that only one activity about which the VEC members have good interest is supervision of study activities of the students in the school. The activities about which they have average interest are sanitation and cleanliness, campus beautification, parent contact, administrative control, implementation of government programs, knowledge of school supervision, and management of school funds. The

activities in which the members showed poor interest were child friendly school atmosphere, furnishing of children’s activity room, preparation of study aids, knowledge of teaching learning practices, knowledge of development programs, and developmental planning. It is evident that the interest of the VEC members is not good enough about many important school activities; rather those are poor for most of the activities.

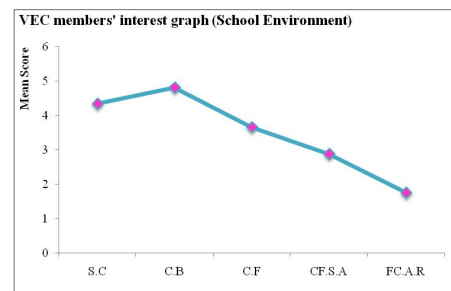


Figure-4 VEC members' interest in School Environment
S.C- Sanitation & Cleaning, C.B.-Campus Beautification, C.F- Classroom Furnishing, CFSA- Child Friendly School Atmosphere, FCAR- Furnishing of Children’s Activity Room

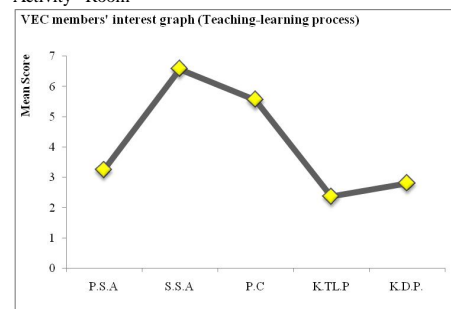


Figure-5 VEC members' interest in Teaching- learning process

PSA- Preparation of Study Aids, SSA- Supervision of Study Activities, PC- Parent Contact, K.TLP- Knowledge of Teaching Learning Practices, KDP- Knowledge of Development Programs

The data about the interest of VEC members are category-wise graphically reported in Figure 4, 5, and 6. Observation of these graphs points to the fact that the VEC members have low interest in most of the activities relating to school environment and teaching- learning process as

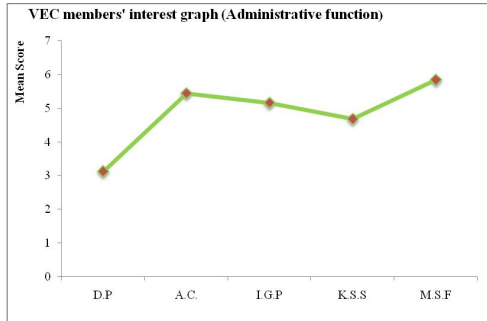
Table-2 Means and SDs for the interest of VEC Members in different school activities

School Environment	Sanitation & Cleanliness	Campus Beautification	Classroom Furnishing	Child-Friendly School Atmosphere	Furnishing of Children’s Activity Room
Mean	4.35 54%	4.82 60%	3.67 46%	2.89 36%	1.76 22%
SD	2.21	1.88	1.06	0.94	0.67
Teaching-Learning Process	Preparation of Study Aids	Supervision of Study Activities	Parent Contact	Knowledge of Teaching-learning Practices	Knowledge of Development Programs
Mean	3.25 41%	6.58 82%	5.56 70%	2.37 30%	2.81 35%
SD	1.18	2.07	1.34	0.78	1.44
Administrative Function	Developmental Planning	Administrative Control	Implementation of Govt. Programs	Knowledge of School Supervision	Management of School Funds
Mean	3.12 39%	5.44 68%	5.16 65%	4.68 59%	5.84 73%
SD	1.05	0.86	1.96	2.22	1.73



they have some better interest in the administrative functions of the school.

Figure-6 VEC members' interest in Administrative Function



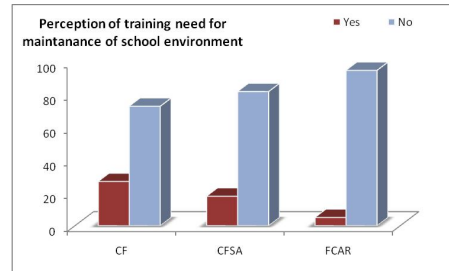
DP. Developmental Planning, AC- Administrative Control, IGP-Implementation of Government Programs, KSS-Knowledge of School Supervision, MSF-Management of School Funds

Perception of training needs by the VEC members with respect to School Environment, Teaching- Learning Process, and Administrative Control

Perception of need by the VEC memers for training in different aspects of school management were examined by an interview schedule consisting of 18 items. The schedule consisted 6 items each relating to maintainance of school environment, teaching-learning process, and administrative control. In respect of school environment, two items each apply to class room furnishing, child friendly school atmosphere, and furnishing of children's activity room. With respect to teaching- learning process, two items each were related to preparation of teaching aids, knowledge about teaching- learning practices, and knowledge of developmental issues of children. Finally, with respect to administrative control, two questions each were asked to the memers about their knowledge of school supervision, management of school funds, and knowledge about the rules of school administration. The results are reported in Table 8. It is observed that with respect all the three activities relating to school environment, most of the VEC members do not acknowledge their need for training and awareness. Likewise, most of the members also do not acknowledge their need for training about the activities relating to the teaching learning processes. However, most of them recognized their training need relating to the

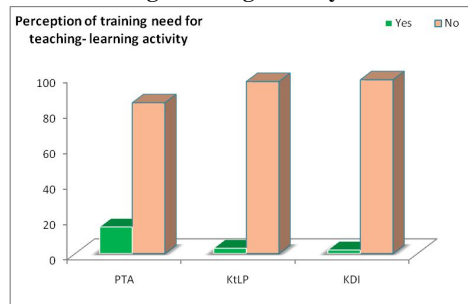
activities of the administrative functions of the schools.

Figure-7 Perception of training need by the VEC members for maintenance of school Environment



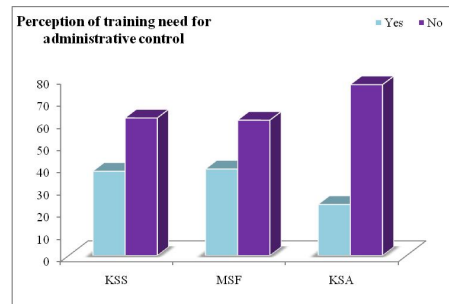
CF-Classroom Furnishing, CFSA. – Child-Friendly School Atmosphere, FCAR. - Furnishing of Children's Activity Room

Figure-8 Perception of training need by the VEC members for teaching learning activity in schools



PTA- Preparation of Teaching Aids, KtLP- Knowledge of Teaching-Learning Practices, KDI- Knowledge of Developmental Issues

Figure-9 Perception of training need by the VEC members for administrative control



K.S.S.- Knowledge of School Supervision; M.S.F.- Management of School Fund; K.S.A.- Knowledge of School Administration

Data relating to the perception of training needs by the VEC members are also presented in the Figures 7, 8, and 9. The observation of all these figures point to the fact that

Table-3 Distribution of frequencies and % of response for perception of training needs by the VEC members with respect to School Environment, Teaching- Learning Process, and Administrative Control (N= 1120)

School Environment	Classroom Furnishing		Child-Friendly Atmosphere		Furnishing of Children's Activity Room	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	612	1628	404	1836	118	2122
	27%	73%	18%	82%	5%	95%
Teaching-Learning Process	Preparation of Teaching Aids		Knowledge of Teaching-learning Practices		Knowledge of Developmental Issues	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	324	1916	058	2182	026	2214
	15%	85%	3%	97%	2%	98%
Administrative Function	Knowledge of School Supervision		Management of School Funds		Knowledge of School Administration	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	856	1384	882	1358	520	1720
	38%	62%	39%	61%	23%	77%



the VEC members did not perceive any least need for training about maintenance of school environment or about understanding the teaching learning activities of the school. On the other hand, they have perceived about their training need for the administrative control of the school.

Conclusion

People's involvement and participation at grass-root level is essential for successful implementation of the programme of universalization of elementary education, which is the major goal of SSA. What has come to the fore, during the course of this study is that, role perception and performance of VEC members were not found congruent with respect to the maintenance of school building, using parent-contact as an important aspect of teaching-learning process, implementation of government programs and administrative functions of the school. VEC members also need training relating to the activities of the administrative functions of the schools. When seen from one perspective, the programme for expanding elementary education appears to have taken off, with substantial progress being made in recent years. However, as illustrated in the discussion above, it is not enough to think only in quantitative terms, community participation

to bring quality education is of utmost importance. Hence, the need and interest of Village Education Committee must be addressed for the smooth functioning of the school and facilitation of quality education to the children therein.

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