

A STUDY OF THE PROGRAMMES RUN BY VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEES IN INCREASING THE ENROLMENT AND RETENTION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN VARANASI DISTRICT OF UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract

This paper is related to the programmes run by Village Education Committees (VECs) in increasing the enrolment and retention of Children with Special Needs (CWSN). This study was conducted on 120 VEC members of Varanasi district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh of India. In this study the identification, assessment, house hold survey, school chalo Abhiyan etc. programmes have been taken. The results of the present study revealed that the VEC members are working properly in disability wise identification of CWSN, identification and assessment of CWSN in medical camps, discussion on house hold survey for enrolment of CWSN, enrolment of CWSN through 'School Chalo Abhiyan', efforts for regular presence and retention of CWSN in school and discussion for new admission of CWSN.

Key-words: *Village Education Committee, Enrolment, Retention, Children with Special Needs*

Introduction

It has been felt since long that the planning and management of education needs to be decentralized to make the system more effective. Accordingly, 73rd constitution amendment act (1993) was passed in response to the demand of decentralized management at three tier level – District, Block and Village. According to Tyagi (1999) local level participatory planning may make schools more accountable to the community and effective in their functioning. This is also reflected in the implementation of National Policy on Education (1986), according to which Village Education Committees (VECs) have been emphasized as an important strategy to promote community participation in education. Even today more than 65% population lives in rural areas in India. Therefore, VECs were seen as remedy to make schools more functional. In fact, VECs were visualized as part of the decentralized management structures. However, decentralization implies mobilizing and involving people to take the responsibility for identifying their own educational needs and participate in planning and management of education at different levels. According to Varghese (1993), this makes the planning process people friendly and participatory, plans more local specific and the educational institutions more efficient and effective.

Background of the study

According to the census-2001, literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) is 57.36% in comparison to national literacy rate of 65.38%. 78.35% inhabitants of U.P. belong to rural area. SRI-IMRB (2005) estimated that in rural areas 7.80% children are out of school against 4.34% in urban areas. According to Mehta (2006) average dropout in primary classes in U.P is 15.50%.

The illiterate population of people in the rural areas and the children among the primary school

dropouts include a significant number of children with special needs (CWSN). They have to be facilitated compulsory primary education. It is a social as well as individual need.

Earlier there was provision of special schools for CWSN. But now the scenario has changed completely. According to Peters (2004) children in special schools were seen as geographically and socially segregated from their peers, and the initial movement to locationally integrate these students in mainstream schools (integration) shifted to one where the whole school was encouraged to become more adaptable and inclusive in its day-to-day educational practices for all students (inclusive education). Pedagogy in particular was highlighted as the key to meeting all students' educational needs by making the curriculum flexible, and so more accessible. By recognising that teaching methods which can make curriculum accessible to children with disabilities can also make learning accessible to all students (Ainscow, 1991; 2005), a teacher or school principal is well on the way to improve the overall quality of their school. In this way, inclusive education is not a disability-only issue, but an educational quality issue.

A centralized system of educational management does not respond to the educational needs of the people at the local level. The strategies of educational management followed over the years may fail to attract children to schools. Therefore, decentralization is advocated to make the delivery of educational programmes more effective. The capability expansion approach also argues that development of human capabilities requires decentralized administration to enjoy the confidence and support of the great majority of the people (Griffin and Knight, 1990). Keeping in view importance of decentralized management of education, national flagship program of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) committed to provide education to all through district based, decentralized special planning and implementation.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993 have enabled decentralized governance through the creation of a third tier of micro- legislators or elected bodies (Gram Panchayat) at village level. Village education committees are an important part of Panchayati Raj Institutions to take care of educational issues for rural population. But still rural educational status of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) particularly Varanasi district is suffering from several problems like gender disparities, high drop outs, low enrolment, poor quality education, miserable school buildings and facilities etc. After a glimpse of whole issue the following question emerged: What type of programmes are run by Village Education Committees (VECs) for increasing the enrolment & retention of Children with Special Needs (CWSN)? Hence, to find answer of this question the present study was undertaken.

Operational Definition of Technical Terms Used

Village Education Committee (VEC): VEC is a committee of head of Gram Panchayat, three parents of children enrolled in primary school which includes one woman of the village (nominated by Block Education Officer) and Senior Headmaster of Basic School.

Inclusion: It refers to educating Children with Special Needs (CWSN) with normal children in general school.

Children with Special Needs (CWSN) are those who differ from normal children in their physical, mental and social needs and require some extra care and resources for development and adjustment to life. This will include the following categories of children:

- (i) Visually impaired (VI)

- (ii) Hearing impaired (HI)
- (iii) Orthopaedically handicapped (OH)
- (iv) Mentally retarded (MR)

Varanasi: It is a district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh in India.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was, “To study the programmes run by Village Education Committees (VECs) in increasing the enrolment and retention of Children with Special Needs (CWSN)”.

Method of the Study

The details of the population, sample and the tool have been given below:

Method- Descriptive survey method was used in this study.

Population- All Village Education Committee (VEC) members of Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh were constitute the population of this study.

Sample - It was consisted of VECs in 3 purposively selected villages from each block of Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh.

Selection of Respondents: The sample of respondents was drawn from VEC members. The list of primary schools (Villages) was obtained from the officials of Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. All 120 VEC members were responded on Awareness Measurement Scale.

Tool: The researcher used self-developed 'Questionnaire' to study the programmes run by Village Education Committees (VECs) in increasing the enrolment and retention of Children with Special Needs (CWSN). The questionnaire consists of questions related to different assigned roles of VECs in inclusion of children with special needs in education. It has following two parts:

Part I: Primary Information: Its first section is concerned with information related to Block/Gram Sabha. Questions regarding Name of Block, Nyaya Panchayat, Gram Panchayat, Gram, distance of village from Block, Tehsil and District head quarter have been asked. In Second Section information regarding Name, status in the VEC, gender, age, educational qualification and experience have been asked.

Part II: This part deals with the awareness of VEC members (Question Number 1 to 7), enrolment and retention of children with special needs (Question Number 8 to 15), facilities for children with special needs (Question Number 16 to 36) and constraints faced by VEC members in inclusion of children with special needs (Open question). This part consists of 36 closed ended questions and one open ended question.

Data Analysis

The data obtained on Questionnaire was analysed by using frequencies and percentages.

The programmes run by village education committees in increasing the enrolment & retention of children with special needs

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Table 1: Disability wise identification of CWSN

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	106 (88.33)
1.	Disability wise identification of CWSN	July, House Hold Survey	15 (12.50)
		July-August during child census	15 (12.50)
		July	15 (12.50)
		July to September	15 (12.50)
		1 August to 15 August	10 (8.33)
		During child census	5 (4.17)
		First week of July during child census	5 (4.17)
		June and July	2 (1.67)
		No specific response	24 (23.33)
		No	14 (11.67)

Interpretation

The table 1 indicates the findings related to disability wise identification of CWSN. 88.33% VEC members reported 'Yes'. On further analysis eight types of responses were found -(a) 12.50% said house hold survey is held in July, (b) Another 12.50% said in July-August during child census, (c) 12.50% reported identification of CWSN is held disability wise in July, (d) 12.50% said identification of CWSN disability wise in July to September, (e) 8.33% said identification of CWSN disability wise from 1 August to 15 August, (f) 4.17% said during child census, (g) 4.17% said first week of July during child census and (h) 1.67% reported identification of CWSN disability wise in June and July. 23.33% VEC members gave no specific response. Only 11.67% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 2: Organization of Medical Camp for identification and assessment of CWSN

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	95 (79.17)
2.	Organization of Medical Camp for identification and assessment of CWSN	At BRC	41 (34.17)
		July , Kasturba Vidyalaya Shivpur	9 (7.50)
		September, In School	6 (5)
		In School and Kasturba Vidyalaya Shivpur	6 (5)
		August-September at BRC	5 (4.17)
		At Block Level, Shivpur	2 (1.67)
		August, BRC Kachnar	2 (1.67)
		Once in a year	2 (1.67)
		In every four months	2 (1.67)
		Block and District Headquarter	2 (1.67)
		August, BRC	2 (1.67)
		No specific response	16 (13.33)
		No	25 (20.83)

Interpretation:

The table 2 reports the findings related to organization of Medical Camp for identification and assessment of CWSN by VECs. 79.17% VEC members reported 'Yes'. On further analysis eleven types of responses were found -(a) 34.17% said medical camps are organized for identification and assessment of CWSN at BRC, (b) 7.50% said in July at Kasturba Vidyalaya Shivpur, (c) 5% said medical camps are organized for identification and assessment of CWSN in September at school, (d) 5% said in school and Kasturba Vidyalaya Shivpur, (e) 4.17% said in August-September at BRC, (f) 1.67% said at Block level, Shivpur, (g) 1.67% said medical camps are organized for identification and assessment of CWSN in August at BRC Kachnar, (h) 1.67% said once in a year, (i) 1.67% said in every four months, (j) 1.67% said at Block and District Headquarter and (k) 1.67% reported medical camps are organized for identification and assessment of CWSN in August at BRC. 13.33% VEC members gave no specific response. 20.83% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 3: Organization of discussion on house hold survey by VEC for enrolment of CWSN

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	104 (86.67)
3.	Organization of discussion on house hold survey by VEC for enrolment of CWSN	July-August	20 (16.67)
		First week of July, House Hold Survey	15 (12.50)
		July, On the basis of child census, enrolment and presence	15 (12.50)
		1 July to 31 July	10 (8.33)
		July, Information to BRC about CWSN	4 (3.33)
		Meeting in school	4 (3.33)
		July, Rally	2 (1.67)
		Door to door survey	2 (1.67)
		July, Prabhat Pheri by Primary Schools	2 (1.67)
		June and July, Comprehensive strategy for welfare of CWSN	2 (1.67)
		No specific response	28 (23.33)
		No	16 (13.33)

Interpretation

The table 3 indicates the findings related to organization of discussion on house hold survey by VEC for enrolment of CWSN. 86.67% VEC members reported 'Yes'. On further analysis ten types of responses were found -(a)16.67% said in July-August, (b) 12.50% said in first week of July during house hold survey, (c)12.50% said in July on the basis of child census, enrolment and presence, (d) 8.33% said 1 July to 31 July, (e) 3.33% said in July information is given to BRC about CWSN, (f) 3.33% said meeting in school, (g) 1.67% said in July during rally, (h) 1.67% said during door to door survey, (i) 1.67% said in July during Prabhat Pheri by primary schools and (j) 1.67% said in June and July a comprehensive strategy is adapted for welfare of CWSN. 23.33% VEC members gave no specific response. 13.33% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 4: Efforts of VECs for enrolment of CWSN through 'School Chalo Abhiyan'

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	108 (90)
4.	Efforts of VECs for enrolment of CWSN through 'School Chalo Abhiyan'	No	12 (10)

Interpretation:

The table 4 indicates the findings related to efforts of VECs for enrolment of CWSN through 'School Chalo Abhiyan'. 90% VEC members reported 'Yes'. 12% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 5: The determination in VEC meeting for 100% enrolment of CWSN between ages of 6 to 14 years.

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
5.	The determination in VEC meeting for 100% enrolment of CWSN between ages of 6 to 14 years	Yes	106 (88.33)
		No	14 (11.67)

Interpretation:

The table 5 indicates the findings related to determination in VEC meeting for 100% enrolment of CWSN between ages of 6 to 14 years. 88.33% VEC members reported 'Yes'. 11.67% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 6: Efforts by VECs to ensure regular presence of CWSN in school

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	108 (90)
6.	Efforts by VECs to ensure regular presence of CWSN in school	Parents of CWSN are motivated to send their children to school	20 (16.67)
		Motivating children to go school through parent teacher meeting	15 (12.50)
		Parent teacher meeting	14 (11.67)
		By MTA and PTA meeting	6 (5)
		Knowledge about CWSN by contact with parents	6 (5)
		VEC members go home of CWSN, Meena Manch for Girls	5 (4.17)
		Parents are advised to send their CWSN school	2 (1.67)

	Education, Health and Economic aid to CWSN at Panchayat Level by government	2 (1.67)
	At Panchayat Level enquiry of CWSN's condition and education by VEC members	2 (1.67)
	Motivating the parents of CWSN	2 (1.67)
	No specific response	34 (28.33)
	No	12 (10)

Interpretation

The table 6 indicates the findings related to efforts of VECs in ensuring regular presence of CWSN in school. 90% VEC members reported 'Yes'. On further analysis ten types of responses were found -(a)16.67% saidparents of CWSN are motivated to send their children in school, (b) 12.50% said by motivating children to go school through parent teacher meeting, (c)11.67% said by parent teacher meeting, (d) 5% said by Mother Teacher Association and Parent Teacher Association meeting, (e) 5% said knowledge about CWSN by contact with parents, (f) 4.17% said VEC members go home of CWSN and Meena Manch is organized for girls, (g) 1.67% said parents are advised to send their CWSN in school, (h) 1.67% said education, health and economic aid to CWSN at panchayat level by government, (i) 1.67% said at panchayat level enquiry of CWSN's condition and education by VEC members and (j) 1.67% said by motivating the parents of CWSN. 28.33% VEC members gave no specific response. 10% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 7: Efforts by VECs for retention of CWSN in school

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
		Yes	82 (68.33)
7.	Efforts by VECs for retention of CWSN in school	Mid Day Meal	22 (18.33)
		By providing facilities to CWSN in school	15 (12.50)
		Mid Day Meal, Book and dress distribution	15 (12.50)
		By extra teaching work	5 (4.17)
		Mid Day Meal, Motivation	5 (4.17)
		Mid Day Meal, Books and by motivating CWSN	2 (1.67)
		By giving resources	2 (1.67)
		By giving Government Books and scholarship	2 (1.67)
		No specific response	14 (11.67)
		No	38 (31.67)

Interpretation

The table 7 indicates the findings related to efforts of VECs for retention of CWSN in school.

68.33% VEC members reported 'Yes'. On further analysis eight types of responses were found - (a)18.33% said retention of CWSN in school by Mid Day Meal, (b) 12.50% said by providing facilities to CWSN in school, (c)12.50% said by Mid Day Meal, book and dress distribution, (d) 4.17% said retention of CWSN in school by extra teaching work, (e) 4.17% said by Mid Day Meal and Motivation, (f) 1.67% said by Mid Day Meal, books and by motivating CWSN, (g) 1.67% said retention of CWSN in school by giving resources and (h) 1.67% said retention of CWSN in school by giving government books and scholarship. 11.67% VEC members gave no specific response. 31.67% VEC members reported 'No'.

Table 8 : Organization of discussion to promote and new admission of CWSN by VEC

Item No.	Item Area	Response Type	Frequency (%)
8.	Organization of discussion to promote and new admission of CWSN by VEC	Yes	100 (83.33)
		No	20 (16.67)

Interpretation:

The table 8 above indicates the findings related to organization of discussion to promote and new admission of CWSN by VEC.83.33% VEC members reported 'Yes'. 16.67% VEC members reported 'No'.

Discussion

The findings related to study the programmes run by Village Education Committees (VECs) in increasing the enrolment & retention of children with special needs (CWSN) show that VEC members are working properly in identification of CWSN disability wise, identification and assessment of CWSN in medical camp, in discussion on house hold survey for enrolment of CWSN, in enrolment of CWSN through 'School Chalo Abhiyan', efforts for regular presence and retention of CWSN in school and discussion for new admission of CWSN. Finding of this study is corroborated with findings of research conducted by many including Soni (2004) which reported that unfortunately, Village Education Committees have not taken any step towards the education of disabled children in the selected schools. Alur & Timmons (2004) argued that the real challenge facing India is that ninety-eight percent of children and adults with disabilities receive no service at all. Dvivedi and Tripathi (2007) reported that the participation of village education committee, gram pradhan are more inclined towards factors like scholarship etc. than the education of their children. Mala (2004) reported that the number of students enrolled in primary schools of rural area is less than the number of enrolment of students in primary schools of urban area, which means that environment affects directly on the enrolment of students.

Conclusion

The study reflected that for enrolment and retention of CWSN, VEC members in Varanasi district are working properly for disability wise identification of CWSN, identification and assessment of CWSN in medical camps, for discussion on house hold survey for enrolment of CWSN, for enrolment of CWSN through school going campaign i.e. 'School Chalo Abhiyan', efforts for regular presence and retention of CWSN in school and discussion for new admission of CWSN.

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