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Roles and Responsibilities of the District and Sub-district Educational Administrators

Mapping the Challenges and Possible Pathways

Kumar Suresh

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National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016, INDIA

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Abbreviations

AEO	Assistant Education Officer
ABEO	Assistant Block Education Officer
AD	Assistant Director
ADEO	Additional District Education Officer
ADPC	Additional District Project Coordinator
APAR	Annual Performance Appraisal Report
APSSSB	Arunachal Pradesh Staff Selection Board
BEO	Block Education Officer
BDO	Block Development Officer
BRC	Block Resource Centre
CBEO	Chief Block Education Officer
CDEO	Chief District Education Officer
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CMGC	Chief Minister's Grievance Cell
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre
CRCC	Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator
CTCP	Combined Probationary Training Programme
DD	Deputy Director
DDE	Deputy Director of Education
DDPI	Deputy Director of Public Instruction
DDSE	Deputy Director of School Education
DEO	District Education Officer
DDO	Drawing and Disbursing Officer
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DIOS	District Inspector of Schools
DoSEL	Department of School Education and Literacy
DPO	District Project Officer
EO	Education Officer
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GPF	General Provident Fund
HM	Headmaster
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRDD	Human Resource Development Department
IFA	Iron and Folic Acid
IIEP	International Institute of Educational Planning
IT	Information Technology
JD	Joint Director
JHS	Junior High School
KER	Kerala Education Rules

KPSC	Kerala Public Service Commission
LO	Learning Outcomes
MDM	Mid-Day Meal
NEP 2020	National Education Policy 2020
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIEPA	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
NPM	New Public Management
OEES	Odisha Elementary Education Service
OES	Odisha Education Service
OEES	Odisha Elementary Education Service
OPSC	Odisha Public Service Commission
OSMA	Odisha School Monitoring App
OSEPA	Odisha School Education Programme Authority
PBA	Performance-Based Approach
PGI	Performance Grading Index
PGT	Post Graduate Teacher
PEEO	Panchayat Elementary Education Officer
PR	Public Relations
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PWD	Public Works Department
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RTE	Right to Education
RTI	Right to Information
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SBEO	Senior Block Education Officer
SDEO	Sub-Divisional Education Officer
SPSC	State Public Service Commission
SPD	State Project Director
SS	Secondary School
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSRB	Services Selection Recruitment Board
SSSA	School Standards Setting and Accreditation
SSS	Senior Secondary School
TA	Travelling Allowance
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UT	Union Territory
VIP	Very Important Person
WCD	Women and Child Development
ZEO	Zonal Education Officer

Roles and Responsibilities of the District and Sub-district Educational Administrators

Mapping the Challenges and Possible Pathways[#]

Kumar Suresh[*]
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Abstract

The District and Block level Education Officers are considered as one of the most important and key officials of school education department at the field level. Field-level administration is a decentralised form of administration, the purpose of which is to bring the service and regulatory functions of the state nearer to the people. Although a vast administrative machinery exists at the state level, administrative officers often find it challenging to visit districts and blocks to address field concerns due to the long distance, the magnitude of the work, administrative costs, and various other responsibilities. Keeping this in mind, field officers are a necessity and a prerequisite for the efficient functioning of administration. The officers posted at the field level, i.e., the District Education Officers (DEOs) and the Block Education Officers (BEOs), have to undertake multifarious responsibilities thus making their job profile extremely crucial. Besides, there is a continuous change and realignment of their roles and responsibilities due to the implementation of different schemes and policy provisions. The shift in the approach towards education, i.e., from input-based to outcome-based education, too, has a direct bearing on the overall responsibilities of the grassroots-level administrators. This, in turn, necessitates a detailed understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

In light of these developments, the present paper aims to provide a comprehensive and analytical picture of the existing roles and responsibilities of the field-level administrators in various domains of educational administration. Drawing from empirical data collected from administrators across different states, the paper highlights the key issues and challenges, as well as overall implications for their job profiles. It is argued that administrative reforms within the last mile bureaucracy will result in improved functioning of the overall school education system.

The paper is based on a NIEPA-sponsored research project on "**A Study of Status, Roles and Responsibilities of the DEOs and BEOs in Educational Administration".** At the outset, the authors are thankful to NIEPA for providing the opportunity to undertake this research with generous funding support. Without this support, it would not have been possible to complete the research. The authors would like to express their gratitude to the anonymous referees of the paper for fruitful comments.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Background

The centrality of field-level educational administrators at the district and block levels remains non-negotiable. Being posted at the fundamental units of administration, they are often referred to as the "kingpins" or the backbone of the administrative machinery. They act as a bridge between the government and the local educational institutions. They are at the forefront not only in implementing schemes and various policy provisions but also in bearing the onus of the entire education scenario at the district or block level. They are the key functionaries of decentralised educational administration as they bring decision-making closer to the grassroots level. The responsibility of access, equity and enhanced quality of education also primarily rests with the field-level administrators. Their local knowledge, resource allocation skills, decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and ability to identify challenges at the ground level significantly contribute to the effective implementation of educational policies and programmes at the district and block levels.

At the district level, the District Education Officer (DEO) is the intermediary between the state-level educational administration and the schools. He/she is responsible for implementing national and state-level educational policies, monitoring school quality, and overseeing various administrative responsibilities assigned to the officer. Likewise, at the block level, the Block Education Officer (BEO) is a crucial link between the district and the schools. He/she has a closer connection with the schools and oversees the education scenario of their respective blocks. He/she plays a significant role in ensuring the effective and efficient management of educational institutions at the district and block levels.

These administrators are responsible for inspecting and supervising schools, managing teacher personnel, ensuring equity, conducting surveys, and overseeing enrolment and retention figures. Bridging gender and social category gaps in elementary education is one of the primary goals of all kinds of educational interventions, and the

onus of realising them rests with the administrators. In addition, they are also responsible for coordinating not only within their own department but also with other departments. The implementation of various educational programmes requires coordination with departments and institutions of the government and other agencies. Managing education during natural disasters or any other unprecedented situations is also a significant responsibility of the DEOs and BEOs. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a vivid example of how DEOs and BEOs managed to continue education despite school closures.

The landmark legislation of the Right to Education Act, 2009, which provides every child, aged six to fourteen years, the right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till the completion of elementary education, has assigned primary responsibilities to the DEOs and BEOs for its implementation. In this context, the role of DEOs and BEOs has become even more important.

The recent National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 policy document has put forward several crucial reforms at the school education level, having a direct impact on the governance of school education. The policy proposes three major reforms in educational governance: a) Demarcation of roles and responsibilities between the Department of School Education and directorates of school education at the state level; b) Setting up of School Standard Setting and Accreditation (SSSA) for quality improvement; and c) Establishment of school complexes as semi-autonomous units for efficient and effective management. These reforms have direct implications for the district and block-level administrators, and numerous changes are expected of their existing roles and responsibilities.

In this context, it is highly crucial to understand the existing roles and responsibilities of the DEOs and BEOs. There have been a few studies that have focused on educational administrators at the district and sub-district levels, analysing their roles and responsibilities in detail. The present study aims to fill the existing void by providing a comprehensive and analytical picture of the roles and responsibilities of DEOs and BEOs in various domains of educational administration. The study also

provides an account of their mode of appointment, promotional avenues and professional development. Thus, mapping out their status, roles and responsibilities in several areas of educational administration across the selected states will not only help in getting a detailed picture of their overall responsibilities but will also provide deeper insights into their overall work profile.

Review of Relevant Literature

Education is an important fulcrum in the social, economic and political transformation of a country. It is linked to almost all the other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mentioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. India has the opportunity to become the global hub for a skilled workforce. However, this window of opportunity is also a challenge, especially when quality education remains a significant issue in school education. Several factors have been identified that are directly linked to influencing the quality of education.

Among these, governance is a significant factor that impacts the functioning and quality of the system. Within the broader gamut of educational governance, field-level administration is critical as it translates policies and schemes into reality at the ground level. Field-level administration plays a critical role in implementing policies and programmes formulated by the government, and ensures that the benefits of government interventions reach the intended beneficiaries. In addition to the effective implementation of policies, the DEOs and BEOs are in a better position to identify the problems and come up with solutions that are customised to the local context. Nevertheless, the changing landscape of educational governance, marked by an increasing emphasis on accountability and transparency, as well as increased monitoring and a rights-based approach to education, has direct implications for the nature of work of the administrators. The same is discussed in the subsequent sections.

Accountability and Transparency in Administration

Although there has been a rapid expansion of the school education system in India, the learning levels continue to remain low. The recent research evidence shows that there has been a rapid migration of students to private schools in India, and the average size of government schools has fallen sharply over the years (Kingdon, 2020). Increased demand for quality education has been one of the primary reasons for such a surge (Kingdon, 1996, 2007; Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Muralidharan & Kremer, 2009). While the system is grappling with poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of basic amenities, the learning crisis has further deepened. The shortcomings of the government school system are often attributed to poor accountability within the system. Though it is challenging to define accountability, ideally, it is a process that helps individuals or institutions meet responsibilities and reach goals. It has three main elements (GEMR, 2017): clearly defined responsibilities; an obligation to provide an account of how responsibilities have been met; and a legal, political, social or moral justification for the obligation to account.

Accountability has become a cornerstone of contemporary education policy and is increasingly characterised by external monitoring and an emphasis on outcomes or results (Smith & Benavot, 2019). The emergence and spread of accountability are attributable to five political and social trends—namely, the massification, marketisation, decentralisation, standardisation, and increased documentation of education (UNESCO, 2017). It is widely agreed that well-designed accountability mechanisms encourage collaboration, clarity in roles, and fulfilment of responsibilities that lead to quality education for all.

In the Indian context, due to the rapid expansion of the education system, the onus has now gradually shifted from inputs to outcome-based education. The Education 2030 agenda has brought a renewed focus on the quality of education, recognising that access alone is not enough and that children need to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values that equip them for life in the 21st century. As more and more students attend school, questions arise as to who is accountable for ensuring the quality of education

provided. As a consequence, accountability of the stakeholders is a significant indicator for improving the functioning of the system. It is a well-established fact that input-based policies on their own are largely ineffective in increasing learning outcomes in the absence of a robust accountability system. The Performance-Based Approach (PBA) to accountability largely rested on the DEOs and BEOs.

Under the broader gamut of accountability, there has been the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the government system by incorporating a wide range of practices of the private sector. It is considered a form of endogenous privatisation that involves the importing of ideas, techniques and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like (Ball & Youdell, 2008). The NPM is based on the premise that the public sector should emulate instruments and techniques from the private sector to become more efficient and enhance its productivity. This new governance mechanism promotes outcome-based results along with decentralisation mechanisms.

In India, several administrative reforms have been initiated with the use of IT to enhance the ease of governance. In fact, e-governance within education has become one of the most critical aspects for enhancing good governance. In several states, recruitment and posting of teachers, transfers, admissions of students, and decisions in respect of administrative, academic and financial matters are done through e-governance, making the administrative procedures transparent, thus facilitating the timely completion of the task (Sujatha & Tyagi, 2019). However, the administrative architecture is so designed that the tasks are delegated to line agents at the district, who in turn, delegate tasks to the block level without significant transfer of authority, power or space to take decisions, thus facilitating the "post office" syndrome (Aiyar & Bhattacharya, 2016).

School Inspection – Link between Accountability and School Improvement

Regular inspections and supervisions have always been important catalysts to improve the quality of a particular sector. The field of education is no exception to this

phenomenon. In fact, supervision is viewed as a key component of a quality monitoring system (UNESCO, 2011). The purpose of the inspection is not only to ensure accountability but also to enhance the performance of schools according to the education policy goals and purposes (Wilcox, 2000). Globally, supervision has been in practice in several countries to improve the quality of the public education system. Since the 1990s, there has been renewed and increased interest in supervision in education. Some countries that had dismantled their supervision services earlier have re-established them (such as the Philippines), while others that did not have them in the past have created them (such as China and Sweden) (UNESCO, 2011).

Pointing out an overview of the characteristics of Inspectorates of Education in Europe, Ehren and Vischer (2008) described how in Portugal, Denmark and France the range of school inspections varies from complete inspections of both schools and individual teachers, to inspections of specific subjects only. In other European countries, too, the areas focused during inspection include aspects of the teaching-learning process, the school results, and the school organisational conditions (such as the school's educational policy).

In the context of developing countries, the term 'supervision' is often used when referring to inspection. As De Grauwe (2007) describes, the supervisors' role is not only to control and evaluate (as is often the case in developed countries) but also to advise, assist and support head teachers. In India, the responsibility of school inspection and supervision primarily rests with the field administrators. Inspecting schools is a significant responsibility of the DEOs/BEOs, who must visit elementary or secondary schools according to state norms and conduct a thorough inspection. However, the number of school visits often remains unfulfilled due to several issues.

Long ago, the PROBE report (1998), for instance, pointed out that schools that are frequently visited are those that are more accessible to the administrators. The schools in greatest need of support from the administration (including single-teacher schools, often located in remote villages) receive the least attention. The report further highlights that among the schools that did have at least one inspection in the

preceding 12 months, a vast majority (82 per cent) reported that there had been no follow-up action. The primary concern of the inspectors was to examine school registers during the visits. In the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP) studies, when asked about their main problems, the most common reply from administrators was excessive workload (UNESCO, 2011). In their view, they are often responsible for too many teachers or schools and because they have numerous tasks as well, many of which have little to do with supervision as such.

Unfortunately, administrative tasks, which are less crucial but generally more urgent, are assigned more time than real pedagogical issues. When visiting schools, supervisors spend little time on classroom observation, and when they do, their attitude is more evaluative than supportive (Sujatha & Tyagi, 2018). In addition, owing to the isolation, remoteness and a poor road network, inspectors could not visit the schools frequently. The administrators also often face a lack of financial and material resources, which prevents practical inspection. Thus, as pointed out by De Grauwe & Naidoo (2004), the current inspection system can neither effectively evaluate the performance of schools nor offer an insight into the schools' functioning. In his study in Odisha, Khora (2012) pointed out that administrators are enmeshed in the conflict between their line and staff functions, leaving them with little time to enhance their academic knowledge and skills. Simultaneously pursuing the goals of quantity and quality, they are only able to 'visit' or 'inspect', but are not able to provide ‘professional support’.

Due to inherent issues in inspection and supervision, this service has been under criticism in recent years. It is often reported that inspections have had minimal positive impact on the teaching-learning and overall functioning of the schools. Several studies have also reported how school supervision has had little effect on school improvement. For instance, research by Earley (1998), Grey and Wilcox (1995), and Kogan and Maden (1999) suggests that inspections generally bring about slight improvements in the quality of teaching and learning within schools. Ferguson et al. (2000) argue that school inspections mainly serve accountability and are not an effective catalyst for school improvement. As many other processes of performance management and quality

assurance developed in public services since the 1990s, school inspection has appeared to be at risk of becoming a 'tick box culture' (Baxter & Clarke, 2013). It is often criticised as a pursuit of a narrow, checklist-driven approach to the evaluation of teaching quality.

Such criticism is also partly because of the role conflicts that exist for the administrators. They have to negotiate between two important aspects (UNESCO, 2011): the tension between administrative and pedagogic duties; and the tension between control and support. In view of this, there has been an increasing emphasis on school self-inspections recently. The focus is, therefore, shifting from the individual teacher/administrator to the school as a whole.

Rights-Based Approach to Education and its Implications on Administrators

Another very significant landmark in education has been the enactment of the Right to Education Act, which has implications for the overall responsibilities of the district and block-level educational administrators. The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to education is rooted in the Declaration on the Right to Development of 1986, together-with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993, which stated clearly that all UN activities, including its international cooperation, should be concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights. Accountability remains the key aspect of the rights-based approach. This approach is rooted in the 4A's framework developed by Katerina Tomasevski, which outlines the explicit obligations of governments to make education "available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable." (Tomasevski, 2001). To summarise the 4As:

- Availability – that education is free and government-funded, and that there are adequate infrastructure and trained teachers able to support education delivery.

- Accessibility – ensuring the system is non-discriminatory and accessible to all, with positive steps taken to include the most marginalised.

- Acceptability – that the content of education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, and of quality; that the school itself is safe and teachers are professional.

- Adaptability – that education can evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and that it can be adapted locally to suit specific contexts.

In India, the RTE Act, enacted in 2009, provided the legal framework for the Universalisation of Elementary Education and has, once again, brought the significance of the administrators to the centre stage. From a rights-based perspective, the obligation of the state as primary duty-bearer is clear alongside its responsibility for ensuring that any non-state providers of education respect and protect the right to education, including the clause of non-discrimination.

Implications of NEP 2020 Policy Provisions

The administrators in any state education department perform six diverse functions (Centre for Civil Society, 2019): policy formulation, service delivery, financing, compliance, dispute resolution and assessment. When a single department performs these six functions, it results in less accountability, leads to conflicts of interest and reduces efficiency of performance. It is even more challenging for field-level administrators, who are responsible for both education and administrative aspects, including meetings, pension cases, salary distribution, litigation, and incentive distribution. In addition, these officers work in an environment where bureaucratic norms are often circumvented by political culture and traditional norms, and they are placed in a system of overlapping and multiple authorities — a system that does not value functional specialisation — and a highly charged political environment (Khora, 2012). Through their empirical study in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, Aiyar and Bhattacharya (2016) pointed out that the elementary education administrators at the block level primarily perceive themselves, or report themselves to be, disempowered cogs in a hierarchical administrative culture that renders them powerless. They refer to

their own roles and offices as "post offices," used simply for doing the bidding of higher authorities and ferrying messages between the top and bottom of the educational chain.

Given these challenges, NITI Aayog (2017) recommended the separation of functions for the system to operate smoothly. Termed as "uncoupling" (Osborne & Plastrik, 1998), it separates policy making and regulatory roles (steering) from service delivery and compliance roles (rowing), while also separating service delivery functions from compliance functions. Here, the steering functions include the formulation of systemic objectives and law, and the drafting of subordinate legislation and regulation (including government orders, rules under statutes, guidelines, etc) by the executive. Within the executive branch, rowing functions relate to the implementation of the objectives and policy mandate set by the steering functionaries (Centre for Civil Society, 2019). While this separation of powers has been practised in some European countries, in India, it has been formally recommended in the NEP 2020. It states:

- The Department of School Education, which is the apex state-level body in school education, will be responsible for overall monitoring and policymaking for continual improvement of the public education system; it will not be involved with the provision and operation of schools or with the regulation of schools, in order to ensure due focus on the improvement of public schools and to eliminate conflict of interests.

- The educational operations and service provision for the public schooling system of the entire state will be handled by the Directorate of School Education (including the offices of the DEO and BEO, etc.); it will work independently to implement policies regarding educational operations and provision (NEP, 2020, p.31).

When implemented in spirit, this uncoupling of powers in the education departments will have implications for the overall work profile of the grassroots-level educational administrators.

Against the backdrop of the introduction and synthesis of the relevant literature, it is evident that the administration at the field level, particularly at the district and block levels, is critical in ensuring educational regulation and facilitating the provision of efficient educational services to the people. The district and block level educational administrators are important functionaries of this decentralised administration and lay the firm foundation for the efficient functioning of the educational administration at the field level. Not only are these administrators responsible for the educational landscape in their respective jurisdictions, but they also play an important role in the implementation of various central and state-sponsored programmes and policies.

Therefore, understanding the existing roles and responsibilities of the district and block education officers becomes critical from the decentralised administration perspective. As evident from the review of literature, there have not been many studies which have focused on the district and block level educational administrators, particularly examining their roles and responsibilities. The present study aims to fill the existing void by providing a comprehensive and analytical picture of the roles and responsibilities in various domains of educational administration.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were framed for the study:

- To understand the status of district and sub-district educational administrators regarding their recruitment, promotion avenues, and professional development;
- To analyse their roles and responsibilities in different domains of educational administration;
- To understand the issues and challenges in undertaking their responsibilities;
- To delineate the suggestions and recommendations for improving educational governance.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The data for the research study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from seven states representing all the regions of the country. For the selection of the states, the Performance Grading Index designed by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education, for the year 2020-21 has been used for the study. The Performance Grading Index (PGI) measures the performance of States/UTs on a uniform scale, and the evaluation classifies states and UTs into grades/ levels, as opposed to ranking. The PGI is constructed based on 70 identified indicators and two categories, which contain five domains. The two categories, namely, Outcomes and Governance & Management, comprise 70 indicators in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000. These categories are further divided into five domains, viz., Learning Outcomes (LO), Access (A), Infrastructure & Facilities (IF), Equity (E) and Governance Process (GP). This performance matrix includes the following domains and weightage:

Table 2.1

PGI Indicators and Weightage Assigned

Indicators	**Weightage Assigned**
Category 1: Outcomes	
Learning Outcomes and Quality	180
Access	80
Infrastructure and Facilities	150
Equity	230
Category 2: Governance and Management	
Governance Processes	360

The domain of governance processes deals with indicators relating to the management and administration of school education. Interestingly, this domain has been given maximum weightage for the PGI 2020-21 and underscores its importance in determining the performance of the school education system in states and UTs. The indicators underscore the use of IT instead of a human interface. This includes digital

attendance of students and teachers, digital transfer of funds, filling vacancies and transfer of teachers through a transparent online system, tracking the files, etc. It is envisaged that compliance with the governance indicators will lead to critical structural reforms in areas ranging from monitoring teacher attendance to ensuring transparent recruitment of teachers and principals.

Keeping the PGI scores in mind, states across all levels and grades were contacted for administering questionnaires to the district and block-level officers. While contacting the states, the regional representation was taken care of so that no region is left unrepresented. Furthermore, from every grading level of the PGI ranking, at least one state from a region was shortlisted as part of the study. After discussions and follow-up with the states, the following seven states formed the sample of the study: Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Sikkim. From each selected state, a few districts were selected, having a combination of educationally advanced (high literacy rate) as well as the aspirational districts. Accordingly, the sample consisted of the following states and districts:

Table 2.2

Sample States and Districts

States	Districts
Arunachal Pradesh	Changlang, Lower Subansiri, Namsai, Papumpare, Tirap
Jammu and Kashmir	Kupwara, Srinagar
Kerala	Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Wayanad
Maharashtra	Nandurbar, Solapur, Washim
Odisha	Gajapati, Jagatsinghpur, Kalahandi, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj
Rajasthan	Tonk
Sikkim	Gangtok, Gyalshing, Mangan, Namchi, Soreng

From each district, a few blocks were selected through simple random sampling. The nodal officer facilitated the data collection work, and also held meetings with the district and block-level officers. For district and block level officers, a detailed questionnaire was administered to gather information on their roles and responsibilities, job profiles, issues, challenges, and suggestions. Each of these aspects has been discussed in detail in subsequent sections. Under the study, a total of 27 DEOs and 66 BEOs were covered.

The state-wise distribution of the sample is given in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3

Sample Size

States	DEOs	BEOs	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	05	10	15
Jammu and Kashmir	02	09	11
Kerala	05	10	15
Maharashtra	04	08	12
Odisha	05	10	15
Rajasthan	01	09	10
Sikkim	05	10	15
Total	**27**	**66**	**93**

Primary data was collected with the help of open-ended questionnaires, which were translated into regional languages for easy comprehension. The open-ended questionnaires allowed the respondents to answer from their own frame of reference without being restricted by an already arranged short-answer structure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In the questionnaire, the questions focused on their primary responsibilities with respect to different areas of administration and understanding the emerging challenges as also the issues and problems associated with it at the field level. Since most of the questions asked for participants' perceptions, the resultant responses were in the form of words that described and explained observed situations rather than

in numerical form. It may be noted that from the state of Maharashtra, two DEOs from the same district responded to the questionnaire – DEO primary and DEO secondary.

The data received from the questionnaires were entered into MS Excel, and tables and charts were generated for the quantitative data. The data was interpreted based on the results derived from the charts/tables. For the qualitative data, the data were presented in descriptive form using words. The data were sorted and categorised into patterns. The analysis focused on the selection of items from the open-ended questionnaire that related to the understanding of the overall roles and responsibilities of the educational administrators.

Nomenclature of District and Block-Level Officers in the Sample States

The district and block-level education officers are named differently in different states. For instance, in Karnataka, the district-level officers are named as Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI), whereas in Tamil Nadu, they are designated as the Chief Education Officer (CEO). In Uttar Pradesh, Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) is in-charge of the elementary education, whereas the District Inspector of Schools (DIOS) is in-charge of secondary education.

Although the nomenclature varries across the states, there is considerable overlap in the roles and responsibilities of the officers. The nomenclature of district and block level officers of the sample states is discussed in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4

Nomenclature of District and Block Level Administrators

States	District level	Block level
	Designation	Designation
Arunachal Pradesh	Dy. Director of School Education (DDSE)	Block Education Officer (BEO)
Jammu and Kashmir	Chief Education Officer (CEO)	Zonal Education Officer (ZEO)
Kerala	Deputy Director of Education (DDE) for the revenue district District Education Officer (DEO) for the educational district	Assistant Education Officer (AEO)
Maharashtra	Education Officer (EO)	Deputy Education Officer (Dy. EO)
Odisha	District Education Officer (DEO)	Block Education Officer (BEO)
Rajasthan	Chief District Education Officer (CDEO)	Chief Block Education Officer (CBEO)
Sikkim	Joint Director (JD)	Assistant Director (AD) and Assistant Education Officer (AEO)

Limitations of the Study

It is pertinent to highlight that the data collected for the study pertains to the year 2022-23. With new programmes, policy interventions and administrative redesign taking place periodically, there may be some changes in the overall work profile of the administrators. However, the primary roles and responsibilities as well as the challenges they encounter on a day-to-day basis, by and large remain the same. In addition, a larger number of states were contacted for being part of the study, as including a few more states from different regions in the sample states could have further strengthened the research work. However, only those states that responded in affirmation were eventually part of the research study.

III. APPOINTMENT OF DISTRICT AND BLOCK LEVEL OFFICERS AND IMPLICATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The appointment to the post of district and block-level educational administrators varies from state to state. While in some states, such officers are directly recruited, in other states, it is a promotional post while in some other states, it is a mix of both. For instance, it was found that in the sample states of Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Rajasthan and Sikkim, the post of both district and block education officers is a promotional post based on seniority. It is usually done by the Departmental Promotion Committee, which reviews the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR). In other states like Maharashtra and Odisha, it is based on both direct recruitment and promotion. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the mode of appointment of DEOs and BEOs in the sample states.

Table 3.1

Mode of Appointment of DEOs

States	**DEOs**	
	Direct Recruitment	**Promotion**
Arunachal Pradesh	No	Departmental promotional post
Jammu and Kashmir	No	By promotion
Kerala	No	Promotion
Maharashtra	20% by nomination from amongst the candidates recommended by the Commission based on the results of the Competitive Examination conducted	80% by promotion
Odisha	No	By promotion
Rajasthan	No	By promotion
Sikkim	No	By promotion

As far as the appointment of DEOs is concerned, it is evident that, except for the state of Maharashtra, there is no direct recruitment at the district level, and it is a promotional post. In Maharashtra, it is a mix of direct recruitment and promotion.

Table 3.2 provides details on the mode of appointment of the block education officers in the sample states.

Table 3.2

Mode of Appointment of BEOs

States	BEOs	
	Direct Recruitment	**Promotion**
Arunachal Pradesh	No	Promotional post
Jammu and Kashmir	No	By promotion
Kerala	No	Promotion
Maharashtra	20% selection through the Limited Departmental Competitive Examination and 50% by nomination	30% promotion. Provided that, appointment by promotion from the (i) General State Service, Group B, (ii) Maharashtra Education Service, Group C, (iii) District Technical Service (Class III) (Educational) Grade II, shall be made in the ratio of 10:10:10, respectively.
Odisha	33.33% by OPSC	66.6% from the elementary and secondary cadre
Rajasthan	No	By promotion
Sikkim	Entry into the state education service cadre is through the Assistant Education Officer, which is conducted by SPSC	No

The data reveals that in all the sample states except Odisha, Maharashtra and Sikkim, the appointment of BEOs is through promotion. In Odisha, one-third of the officers are recruited by the State Public Service Commission, while in Sikkim, direct recruitment is at the level of Assistant Education Officers (AEOs). The state specific details of the appointment of DEOs and BEOs are given in the subsequent section.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Arunachal Pradesh

The Education Department in Arunachal Pradesh is divided into four directorates – Directorate of Elementary Education, Directorate of Secondary

Education, Directorate of Technical and Higher Education, and Directorate of Teacher Education. In this state, both the district and block level administrators' posts are promotional. The post of Block Education Officer is a promotional post which is filled from among the senior-most Trained Graduate Teachers under Elementary Education with the requisite qualifications. The post of BEO is a Group B Gazetted post at par with other states in the country. They report to the Deputy Director of School Education (DDSE) of the district. At the district level, the Deputy Directors of Secondary and Elementary Education are posts of departmental promotion filled from among the principals of H.S. Schools (on merit-cum- seniority basis) who have completed five years of regular service in the grade, and possess a second-class Master's Degree with B.Ed. The typical tenure of service of the DDSE is three years at his/her place of posting.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Kerala

Based on the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the Government of Kerala has issued orders for combining school education from primary to class 12 and formed the Directorate of General Education for the effective coordination and control of all activities of the Department. For administrative convenience and improving the efficiency of school education, district offices are in 14 revenue districts headed by Deputy Directors of Education. Each revenue district has Educational Districts and Educational Sub-Districts. In the state, 41 Educational District Offices are headed by District Educational Officer (DEO) for the administration of High Schools, and other special types of schools. The educational districts are further categorised as 163 educational sub-districts, each headed by an Assistant Educational Officer (AEO) for the administration of all primary schools within the sub-district.

As far as the appointment is concerned, at the block level, the senior High School Assistant is appointed as head of the high school, which is equal to the Assistant Educational Officer cadre. At the district level, the Assistant Education Officers are promoted and appointed as District Educational Officers. The DEOs are sometimes

appointed as Assistant Directors at the Directorate of General Education on a deputation basis from the district cadre.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, the School Education and Sports Department of the Government of Maharashtra charts the rules for the appointment of Education Officers (EOs) and Deputy Education Officers (DEOs). The district level educational administration is headed by the Education Officers (EO Primary, EO Secondary and EO Scheme). They serve as the primary interface between the State Education Department and educational institutions within the district. The Education Officers work under the auspices of the Chief Executive Officer, who implements the schemes of the Education Department and the Zilla Parishad through the Education Officers. The EOs are the Heads of the Primary, Secondary Education and Scheme Departments. Education Officers are assisted in their academic work by the Deputy Education Officer, Superintendent, Junior Supervisor (Physical Education), Administrative Officer (School), Administrative Officer (Office), Head Clerk, Clerks and other staff.

At the district level, the Education Officers (Group A, Gazetted) are appointed by following three modes:

- By promotion of a person based on strict merit with due regard to the seniority from amongst the persons holding the said post of Deputy Education Officer, having not less than three years of regular service in that post; or

- By nomination from amongst the candidates recommended by the Commission based on the result of the Competitive Examination conducted therefor, who fulfils the following criteria, namely: (i) Age limit - 18-38 years (ii) Minimum educational qualification: Must possess a degree in any discipline from a statutory university or any other educational qualification declared by the Government.

Appointment to the post of Education Officer is made through a combination of promotion and nomination, in a ratio of 80:20, respectively.

At the block level, appointment to the post of Deputy Education Officer (Group B, Gazetted) in the Maharashtra Education Service, Group B (Administrative Branch) is made by promotion, selection through a Limited Departmental Competitive Examination and nomination in the ratio of 30:20:50, respectively. The rules are as follows:

a) By promotion

- by promotion of a suitable person based on seniority.
- by promotion of a suitable person who has opted for promotion choice in the Maharashtra Education Service, based on seniority, amongst the persons holding the post of District Technical Service (Class III) (Educational) Grade II, having not less than three years of regular service in that post.
- by promotion of a suitable person based on seniority, subject to the fitness of the person holding the post of Superintendent, General State Service, Group-B (Administrative Branch), having not less than three years of regular service in that post.

b) By departmental competitive examination

Conducted by the Commission from amongst the persons holding the post of (i) Superintendent, General State Service (Group B), (ii) Maharashtra Education Service (Group C), and (iii) District Technical Service (Class III) (Educational) Grade II, and having not less than three years of regular service in those posts.

c) By nomination

From amongst the candidates recommended by the Commission (based on the results of the Competitive Examination). A person appointed to the post of Deputy Education Officer by nomination shall be on probation for a period of two years.

The probation period may be further extended up to one year. A person appointed to the post by nomination shall be required to complete the probation training as per the Maharashtra Civil Services to fix seniority of the candidates under Combined Probationary Training Programme (CPTP) recruited directly by selection on the post of Group-A and Group-B (Gazetted) through State Civil Services Examination conducted by the Maharashtra Public Service Commission Rules, 2015, and the rules issued by the Government from time-to-time. The seniority amongst the persons appointed by nomination shall be fixed by the said rules.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Odisha

In Odisha, the issue of re-organisation of the School and Mass Education Department from the state to the block level was identified as the immediate need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of educational administration. To maintain quality administration and a single line of command, it was proposed to have one District Education Officer (DEO) in each district supported by two Additional District Education Officers (ADEO) - one each for elementary and secondary. Similarly, every Block Education Officer (BEO) will be supported by three Assistant Block Education Officers (ABEO).

The state has two cadres – Odisha Education Service (OES) (School Branch) and Odisha Elementary Education Service (OEES). In the state, Block Education Officers are appointed through direct recruitment and promotion. Fresh recruitment is conducted by the Odisha Public Service Commission by order of the Government to fill up one-third of posts. For this, vacancies are advertised mentioning the number of posts to be reserved for different reservation categories. Then, competitive examinations, both written test and viva voce, are conducted, and the candidates are selected for appointment in OES (School Branch) (Group B) posts and posted either as HMs or BEOs.

Secondly, Block Education Officers are also appointed by way of promotion from both the Secondary Cadre and the Elementary Cadre. From the Cadre of

Secondary Teachers, Senior Secondary Schools Headmasters are promoted to OES (School Branch) (Group B) posts. From the Cadre of Elementary Teachers, ABEOs (Odisha Elementary Education Service - II) are promoted to Block Education Officers (OEES-I) after serving for two years as ABEOs.

The HMs (Class II)/BEOs (direct recruit and promotee from secondary cadre) and promotee from Elementary Cadre are again promoted to Senior Block Education Officer (SBEO) as (OES-I, Jr.) and (OEES-I, Sr.) respectively as per their Cadre Rules. The Senior Block Education Officer is the highest post in the Elementary Cadre Rule. The Elementary Cadre teachers cannot be promoted further. The Senior Block Education Officer (OES-I, Jr.) is again promoted to the post of Addl. District Education Officer (OES-I, Sr.). Subsequently, ADEOs are promoted to the post of District Education Officer, OES (Group A) at the district level.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Rajasthan

In Rajasthan, there is no direct recruitment, and all appointments at both the district and block levels are through promotions only. However, it is pertinent to highlight here that the state of Rajasthan has been at the forefront of the reforms in school education, particularly in the domain of educational governance. More specifically, there have been structural reforms at the district and block levels, and such restructuring has resulted in better outcomes in education.

The reforms were initiated in 2018-19 with the introduction of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme. There has been a reorganisation of the administrative structure at the zonal, district and block levels. While the zonal level is headed by the Joint Director, new posts are created at the district and block levels, namely Chief District Education Officer (CDEO – Elementary and Secondary) and Chief Block Education Officer (CBEO). There is also an Additional District Project Co-ordinator (ADPC) under CDEO and an Additional Chief Block Education Officer (ACBEO) under CBEO. There is also the creation of Panchayat Elementary Education Officer (PEEO) under the CBEO, who are usually secondary or senior secondary school principals. Both CDEO

and CBEO are also the Drawing and Disbursing Officer (DDO). It is mentioned by the officers that these administrative reforms have had a far-reaching impact on the overall performance of the state in school education.

Appointment and Promotion Details in Sikkim

Just like the state of Rajasthan, Sikkim has also witnessed remarkable changes at the district and block level educational administrative structures. In Sikkim, the educational administration was not very complex earlier. However, with the increase in population and enrolment, and consequent upon the implementation of SSA in 2001, RMSA in 2009 and RTE Act in 2010, many changes have taken place in the administrative structure and functions at various levels during the last two decades. Additionally, the formation of new districts and blocks has resulted in the expansion of the educational administrative structure of the state. New posts are created, personnel are recruited or hired, and some officers of the state HRDD are given additional charges, which has brought complexity to the structure. At present, the Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) of the state is functioning at the state level, district level, sub-division level and block level. The post of DEO was previously filled by a Deputy Director-ranked officer. However, at present, the Joint Director has been made DEO, the Deputy Director as SDEO and the Assistant Director as BEO. The Directorate of School Education has been split into the separate Directorate of Secondary Education and the Directorate of Primary Education.

As per the notification No. – 44/GEN/DOP, dated 06.05.2021, the government has made some significant changes in the process of recruitment and promotion policy, especially by distributing the posts into bipolar categories, i.e. Pool "A" and Pool "B". In pool "A", induction is done from the post of Assistant Educational Officers (AEOs), whereas in pool "B", the induction is done from three levels, i.e. from the JHS HM/SS HM/SSS Principal, respectively. Further, the post so distributed and earmarked for induction and promotion is not interchangeable. Thus, the classification of posts in Sikkim is as follows (Table 3.3):

Table 3.3

Classification of Posts in the State of Sikkim

Name of the Post	Number of Posts	Distribution of Posts (Bipolar)		Mode of Recruitment
		Pool A (40%) (AEO/AD/ DD/JD)	Pool B (60%) (HM JHS/SS/ Principal, SS)	
Assistant Director (AD) (Junior Grade)	64	26	38	100% by promotion
Deputy Director (DD), Senior Grade	50	20	30	100% by promotion
Joint Director (JD), Selection Grade	44	17	27	100% by promotion
Additional Director (Addl. Director)	12	5	7	100% by promotion
Director	5	2	3	100% by promotion
Total	175	70	105	

In Sikkim, the recruitment at the district level is through promotion only. Apart from promotion by seniority at the district level, there is also a provision for in-service promotion for teachers, HMs and Principals working in Schools. Principals of Senior Secondary Schools are also promoted as Joint Directors.

At the block level, Sikkim has different promotional avenues. The entry at state education service cadre is through Assistant Education Officer (AEO) which is direct recruitment through SPSC. On promotion, AEOs are promoted to the post of Assistant Director. Headmasters of Junior High Schools and senior PGTs are also given direct entry as Assistant Directors on a 50–50 basis through the Departmental Promotion Committee. On completion of six years of the minimum required length of service, they are promoted as Deputy Directors. Secondary school headmasters are also promoted to the post of Deputy Director on a 50–50 basis on completion of six years as secondary school headmaster. Thus, the eligibility conditions for district and block-level officers are as follows (Table 3.4):

Table 3.4

Eligibility for Field Level Administrators of Sikkim

Eligibility Conditions for District and Block-level Education Officers of Sikkim	
Assistant Education Officers (AEOs)	Through an Open Competitive Examination conducted by SPSC (direct recruitment)
Assistant Director (Block level)	• 6 (six) years of regular service as a Post Graduate Teacher. • 6 (six) years of regular service as Headmaster of a junior High School. • 6 (six) years of regular service as Assistant Education Officer.
Deputy Director (Sub-divisional level)	• 6 (six) years of regular service as Headmaster of Secondary School. • 6 (six) years of regular service as Assistant Director.
Joint Director (District level)	• 6 (six) years of regular service as Principal of SSS. • 6 (six) years of regular service as Deputy Director or • 14 (fourteen) years of continuous service, subject to the availability of a vacancy, and should have worked as Deputy Director for at least two years in a substantive capacity.
Additional Director	• 4 (four) years of regular service as Joint Director or • 18 (eighteen years of continuous service, subject to the availability of a vacancy, and should have worked as a Joint Director for at least 2 (two) years in a substantive capacity.
Director	• 4 years of regular service as Additional Director or 22 (twenty-two) years of continuous service subject to availability of vacancy, and should have worked as Additional Director for at least 2 (two) years on substantive capacity.

Impact of the Occupational Profile on the Administration

If we carefully look at the recruitment process of these officers, there are two primary modes: a) direct recruitment, and b) recruitment based on promotion. Those officers who join the education service directly through competitive exams are relatively young, dynamic, and visionary, and they remain in the system for an extended period of time. They possess the required IT and administrative skills. However, they lack insights into the functioning of the education system. On the other hand, there are states where promotions take place based on seniority. Such officers have tremendous experience in understanding the depth of the system as they start their career as teachers and then become headmasters before being appointed as block or district-level officers.

However, by the time they become district/block level officers, they are closer towards their retirement. As a result, they lack the motivation, zeal and change-prone attitude to introduce new ways of working and doing things.

This role conflict between two different personnel is conspicuous in states like Odisha. Other states like Bihar, Assam and West Bengal also have direct recruitment through their respective state-level exams. There are pros and cons in both modes, but this dual mode of recruitment often impacts the overall functioning of the system. Thus, there is a direct link between the recruitment and the outcome in terms of administrative efficiency at the field level. Apart from this, states like Sikkim, Rajasthan and Odisha have witnessed reorganisation in their administrative structure at the district and block levels by creating new positions due to increasing complexity.

As the educational structure varies from state to state, the status of the field level functionaries also differs. The case of two states – Karnataka and Uttarakhand – are worth mentioning here, though they are not part of the study sample. In the state of Karnataka, the BEO post is a Class I post, while the same is a Class II post in Uttarakhand. The BEOs in the state are very much empowered to make decisions about administrative aspects, which may not always be the case for officers in other states. However, officers from most states often point out that they lack decision-making powers, and approval for all matters must be sought from the higher authority. Political interference further affects the functioning of the system. Thus, the block and district level officers require more autonomy and decision-making power in administrative matters so that decentralisation is practised in both letter and spirit.

The data also reveals that in order to enhance their efficiency, they require capacity-building programmes which are aligned with the present demands of the system. Ironically, the DEOs and BEOs are responsible for the capacity development of their teachers within their jurisdiction. They have to organise training programmes, conduct workshops and sensitise them on various issues to enhance their skills and capacities in order to ensure a quality teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, the data reveals that the picture is not very encouraging when it comes to their own capacity

development on various administrative and IT-related activities. Building the capacities of the administrators is not only a means for the effective implementation of educational policies and programmes but also for improving the overall functioning of the district.

IV. MAJOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEOs AND BEOs – AN OVERVIEW

Availability of Job Chart

Any educational administrator, at his/her own level, is also a planner, inspector, implementer, facilitator, and evaluator of academic programmes, a public relations officer, and a bridge between the school and the community. In such multifaceted roles, the significance of a job chart for any administrator is undeniable. It not only provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the officer but also facilitates more efficient planning and coordination of activities. The absence of a job chart often results in confusion and ambiguity regarding roles and responsibilities.

However, findings indicate that this vital document is not present across the studied states. Barring two, the majority of the states did not have job charts for the DEO and BEOs (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Status of Availability of Job Chart

States having a job chart	Odisha, Sikkim
States/UTs not having a job chart	Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan

It was found that states like Odisha have a well-defined job chart with clearly demarcated roles and responsibilities at all levels - from the state to the sub-district level. A similar case was that of the state of Sikkim. In states without a job chart for district and block education officers, there is a lack of clarity and clear delineation of roles. In such states, the major expected roles and responsibilities of a DEO across the states include: school inspection & supervision, opening & upgradation of schools,

granting recognition to private un-aided schools, monitoring teaching learning activity, official correspondence, management of school resources, establishment matters, academic planning, adult education, financial matters, annual plan & budget, sanctioning leaves, RTI and RTE related works, court cases, monitoring, supervision & implementation of mid-day-meal at school level, grievance redressal, incentives distribution, sanctioning pensions, meeting with visitors, VIP visits, audit and pension related, conducting exhibitions and fairs, co-ordination with other departments, and so on.

The BEO is responsible for overseeing the education scenario and ensuring the smooth functioning of schools within its purview at the block level. In states where there is no job chart, some of the primary expected responsibilities of the BEO include: academic monitoring and supervision of schools, supervise the activities of BRCC/ CRCC activities, collection & distribution of textbooks, micro-level plan & budget for maintenance and repairing wherever requires, to address the grievances of the teachers, to address the grievances related to schools, maintenance grant for aided schools, office administration, pf, leave, pension, service matters of teachers, implementation of educational policies, circulars and notification, coordination with district and head office, coordination with DIET and SCERT, and so on.

It is worth mentioning that the above list is illustrative only, and officers are frequently assigned additional duties as needed. For instance, the administrators are assigned responsibilities for the smooth conduct of pilgrimages, duties during any natural calamity, vaccination camps, etc. Paradoxically, for these non-educational duties, educational administrators are entrusted with the responsibility of discharging them, but on paper, such duties do not find a place in the job charts. Thus, the administrators often end up doing many such non-academic tasks which are not under their purview and, at the same time, extremely time-consuming. Resultantly, the officers end up spending less time on academic responsibilities. Some of the significant administrative duties are mentioned in the subsequent section.

Major Administrative Responsibilities of the Officers

The majority of the officers across the sampled states reported that they are frequently involved in activities like sanctioning leaves, official correspondence, disciplinary actions, legal matters, academic planning, SSA, RTI and MDM-related activities. When asked to list the activities in which the officers are engaged on a day-to-day basis, including those which are not essentially a part of their job & responsibilities, the responses common across all states at the DEO and BEO level are as follows:

Administrative Responsibilities as Listed by the DEOs

- MDM implementation and monitoring: Quality and quantity of food being served in schools.
- Sanction/Grant and withdrawal of GPF advance/CA/Medical reimbursement of employees.
- Data entry and data supply to higher authorities.
- Attend convergence meetings with the Health, PR & Drinking Water Dept, Revenue Dept, WCD Dept, PWD, RD, Urban Dept, Civil Supply, Legal, Sports, District Welfare Office, District Social Security Office, and Zilla Parishad.
- Responsibilities include attending to subordinate staff in schools and offices, ensuring regularity and punctuality, reviewing lesson plans, maintaining teacher diaries, and addressing various complaints.
- Coordination with other department officials to ensure the proper supply of essential amenities in schools.
- Redressal of information sought under the RTI Act 2005.

- Private school inspection: Registration and recognition, academic inspection and other student-oriented facilities.
- Election process & survey activities.
- Health-related activities: Distribution of iron tablets, vaccination of students, participation in health awareness meetings.
- RTE-related matters.
- Participating in social welfare activities, such as *Swachhta Abhiyan* and Anti-Drug Abuse Drive.
- Redressal of grievances of staff.
- Meeting with teachers' associations.
- Managing the visits of VIPs & other dignitaries.
- Disaster management.
- Plantation drives & liaising with the forest department.
- Attend review meetings of Hon'ble Central Ministers, State Ministers, and Hon'ble MLAs on different aspects of education.
- Conduct District Review Meeting for Block Education Officers regarding issues and implementation of different schemes.

Administrative Responsibilities as Listed by the BEOs

- Collect and furnish data required by different departments.
- Monitoring the effective implementation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme.

- To coordinate with the general administration related to election and census activities.
- Liaising with local administration (Block Development Officer) ensures the smooth execution of various tasks, including voter list preparation, Aadhar linkage of voter ID, election conduct, disaster management planning, pre-disaster preparedness, and post-disaster recovery.
- Liasing with the local administration (Tehsil Officer) in the land regularisation work of schools.
- Distribution of deworming tablets and other activities of the medical/ health department.
- Anti-drug campaign, pulse polio campaigns.
- Correspondence to and from higher authorities.
- Report absentees to the authority concerned.
- Visits of VIP's & other dignitaries.
- Attending meetings at the block level, district level, and divisional level for administrative purposes.
- Plantation drives.
- Survey of distribution of mosquito nets, IFA tablets, and sanitary pads.
- Attending meetings which are not directly related to the education department.

It is evident from the activities mentioned above that the DEOs and BEOs do have to undertake an enormous amount of administrative responsibilities. More surprisingly, many of the activities are not directly related to the education department but are assigned by other departments. For instance, the officers are involved in

vaccination drives, distribution of deworming tablets, and other public health initiatives. These activities are not listed in the job charts or expected to be done by these officers, yet they are involved in them. This is further reaffirmed when asked how much time they spend on administrative functions. Tables 4.2 & 4.3 show the percentage of time spent on administrative activities.

Table 4.2

Time Spent for Administrative Activities (DEOs)

DEOs				
Time on administrative tasks (Number of respondents)				
State	**75%>**	**50-75%**	**25-50%**	**<25%**
Arunachal Pradesh	3	2	0	0
Jammu and Kashmir	0	1	1	0
Kerala	3	2	0	0
Maharashtra	2	2	0	0
Odisha	2	2	1	0
Rajasthan	0	1	0	0
Sikkim	2	2	1	0
Total	**12**	**12**	**3**	**0**

Table 4.3

Time Spent for Administrative Activities (BEOs)

BEOs				
Time on administrative tasks (Number of respondents)				
State	**75%>**	**50-75%**	**25-50%**	**<25%**
Arunachal Pradesh	4	1	5	0
Jammu and Kashmir	4	4	1	0
Kerala	2	5	3	0
Maharashtra	6	2	0	0
Odisha	3	7	0	0
Rajasthan	4	4	1	0
Sikkim	5	3	2	0
Total	**28**	**26**	**12**	**0**

It is evident from the above tables that the majority of the DEOs and BEOs reported spending more than 75% or between 50-75% on administrative activities. None of the DEOs and BEOs reported spending less than 25% of their budget on administrative activities. Given their enormous amount of time spent on administrative activities, they do not get sufficient time for academic monitoring of schools, resulting in a lack of detailed school supervision at the ground level.

Other Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to the responsibilities mentioned above, the officers are occupied with several other duties, which are once again an essential part of their routine job. Dealing with litigation cases is one such area wherein officers spend a significant amount of time. The litigation case is resolved according to the nature of the problem. First, officers try to settle the disputes/litigation through negotiation, mediation and arbitration involving administrative authorities, PRI members and local people. If the dispute is not resolved, they may consider seeking help from counsellors and an advocate. Such cases are dealt with in coordination with other departments and local administration, viz. PR department, Police, Bank, district and sub-district administration, PRI members and community members as per requirement. Competent subordinate authorities are entrusted to investigate the matter and suggest alternative ways to mitigate the litigation. It is also done through mutual hearing of the litigants, like teachers vs teachers, teachers vs community, teachers vs PRI; taking disciplinary action against the employees; filing writ appeal/counter affidavit in both the High Court and the Supreme Court. At times, the cases are forwarded to the legal counsel of the Headquarters. In Kerala, there is a nodal officer at the district level to monitor the process of litigation cases. At the block level, all litigation cases are usually forwarded to the higher authority. To minimise litigation cases, some states like Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, and Maharashtra reported that they have grievance redressal mechanisms at the district level. For instance, an officer from Arunachal Pradesh reported:

> *A grievance redressal Cell has been constituted in the office, comprising the DDSE or Chairman and the BEO, as Member-Secretary, along with members from the teacher union. They used to settle the dispute by mediation or arbitration.*

Similarly, an administrator from Odisha mentioned:

> *'There is a grievance redressal section in the District Education Office which works towards redressing and complying with various grievances received from CMGC, Jana Sunani Portal (Collector's Grievance Cell), School Students Helpline and other grievances received in the Office. Weekly one grievance redressal day in DEO office apart from the issues and grievances raised in the joint public grievance hearing by Collector & DM and Superintendent of Police is there to minimise the grievances and litigation.'*

In Kerala state as well, there is a mechanism for grievance redressal, and in the words of one officer:

> *'There are appellate mechanisms at the Director General of Education level and the Secretary to the Government level for minimising litigation.'*

In the state of Odisha, there is a detailed grievance redressal mechanism even at the block level. To minimise litigation, one officer is assigned at the CRCC level to handle litigation at the cluster level. Second, a nodal officer is in charge of grievance and litigation at the block level. The third one is related to the Mid-Day Meals (MDM) matter, for which there is an MDM nodal officer who deals with the case directly. The grievances of teachers are being dealt with by the BEO through the officials to minimise litigation. A day is set aside for receiving teachers' grievances, and initiatives are taken to address them promptly. In other states, officers typically conduct a local enquiry to review the situation and, if unresolved, forward it to a higher authority.

Powers Vested with the DEO/BEO

Given the profound significance of DEOs and BEOs at the field level, providing them autonomy and giving them elemental powers within their ambit is imperative to ensure better functioning of the system. For instance, teacher vacancy is an endemic issue in the majority of states. Due to a shortage of teachers, multigrade teaching and single-teacher schools are a reality in urban, rural, and tribal areas.

In this context, when the DEOs and BEOs were asked about having any powers or responsibility to fill up vacant teacher posts, all the officers across the states responded that they lack powers in the regular appointments of teachers.

For instance, a DEO from Arunachal Pradesh reported:

> *With the prior approval from the higher authority, vacant positions in schools are filled on a contractual basis. But regular appointments of teachers are made by APSSB.*

A DEO from Kerala too echoed a similar opinion:

> *An officer can fill up a vacancy provisionally as per the directions of the education department. We report the vacant teaching posts to KPSC. The officer can provide guidance to headmasters for filling up temporary teaching posts on a daily wage basis.*

The situation remains the same in every sample state. They need to report the number of vacant posts to the higher authority, and then recruitment takes place as per the state recruitment rules. However, they do have the power to appoint contractual teachers to ensure that the situation of teacher shortage is resolved temporarily. For instance, a district-level officer from Odisha reported:

> *The District Education Officer doesn't have the power to fill up a vacant post in a school. It is a state intervention. The directorate is filling*

> *through notification. We can provide temporary deployment of teachers and engage guest teachers for secondary schools.*

The scenario is the same for the block-level officer as well. They only report the number of teacher vacancies and can adjust teachers internally to rationalise the teacher workforce. They can appoint temporary teachers to address the teacher shortage issue. For instance, a BEO from Maharashtra observed:

> *BEO has no power to fill up the vacant teacher posts in the school. Only in urgent and unavoidable situations or administrative exigencies, the proposal for the deployment of a teacher is sent to the DEO to fill up the vacant post temporarily until the posting of a regular teacher against the existing vacancy.*

A block-level administrator from Jammu and Kashmir also reported:

> *The officer can only adjust teachers internally. The power or responsibility to fill up the vacant post of teacher lies with the J&K SSRB. Thus, only need-based temporary deployment of teachers can be undertaken by the BEO.*

Thus, the voices of the administrators reflect that they lack the required power and autonomy to make decisions and wait for the decisions to come from the higher authorities, thereby reducing their role to performing the routine functions.

V. INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION

The educational administrators at every level, from the DEO to the school heads, have a crucial and comprehensive role to play in terms of inspection and supervision of schools. At the district level, the DEO, with the help of the supervisory staff, is supposed to inspect and supervise administrative and academic aspects of the schools in the district. They should prepare an inspection report and provide educational and administrative feedback to schools to improve quality and other activities. For the opening of new institutions and the upgradation of existing institutions, the DEO is

involved in inspecting and supervising the existing level of classes and also ensuring that the required conditions are fulfilled. They should also take necessary action to ensure the institution is monitored and continues to show signs of improvement/development. At the block level, the block education officer has the primary responsibility for inspection and supervision of elementary schools under its jurisdiction. They also supervise, monitor and inspect the ongoing educational schemes of the schools. At the school level, too, inspection and supervision are essential aspects of the duties and responsibilities of the headmaster or principal. The Headmaster of Secondary School and Principal of Senior Secondary School must inspect the attendance of teachers and students. They supervise and ensure the quality of ongoing civil works, cooked MDM and the teaching and learning process. The Heads of Schools also supervise the classroom practices in their own respective schools. They observe the classroom teaching of teachers and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement, if needed. The Headmaster inspects the quality of construction works, cooked MDM, and maintenance of records kept by administrative staff, lab attendants, librarians, and teachers.

The district administrators conduct the following three types of inspections in the schools:

- Surprise visits: Surprise visits are random visits without informing school-level officials. These visits are confined to some checkpoints to assess school functioning and academic activities.

- Panel visits: Panel inspections are tools for monitoring school-level activities profoundly and thoroughly. These inspections are conducted based on prior information. The school has ample time to prepare for the inspection. A team of experts in various subjects is deputed by the district authorities for meticulous monitoring. Through this visit, the team evaluates academic and administrative activities.

- Annual inspections: To investigate the proper functioning of teaching and learning activities and their efficiency.

Usually, the officers inspect the school to assess the academic progress, thereby checking the class routine, homework, and class tests conducted for students. Besides, they also see the teacher-student ratio, classroom management & teacher engagements and subject-wise results of its annual examinations. Furthermore, they examine the school infrastructure, including toilets, drinking water, textbooks, and supplies to MDMs, among other facilities. For panel inspection, a district-level team is constituted comprising the district administrator, DIET principal and DPO, *Samagra Shiksha*. Generally, the BEOs/BRCs/CRCs conduct uninformed visits to the school for supervision and to ensure regular functioning of the school by checking teachers' & students' daily attendance. On finding any teacher absent on the day of visit, the reports are submitted to the district authority in the prescribed/ standard monitoring format provided by the district office. Further action lies with the district authority.

Though the primary responsibilities for inspection and supervision remain the same across the states, the process of inspection and supervision varies. Some states have detailed norms for inspection and a well-developed inspection proforma for supervising the schools, which are lacking in other states. For instance, the state of Odisha has developed an app for monitoring schools. The Odisha School Education Programme Authority (OSEPA) has developed a monitoring app called Odisha School Monitoring App (OSMA), which allocates ten schools to each officer for monthly inspection. Apart from this, the District Education Officer monitors other schools as per necessity and priority. Various important aspects of school functioning, both academic and administrative, have been included in OSMA.

Likewise, in the state of Rajasthan, the entire school information management is done online through the *Shala Darpan* portal. *Shala Darpan* is a dynamic database management portal, where information about all government schools and education offices is kept online and updated as a continuous process. In this portal, "live data" is

compiled in connection with primary and secondary education students, schools and academic and non-academic staff.

In the state of Kerala, as per the Kerala Education Rules (KER) chapter 15 and rule 13, the DEOs are supposed to thoroughly inspect all the high schools, and AEOs should thoroughly examine all the primary schools in his/her jurisdiction at least once by giving seven days' prior notice each academic year. Apart from this, he/she should also make surprise/occasional visits to monitor the functioning of the schools.

About the norms of inspection among the sample states, Table 5.1 provides the state-specific norms and other details:

Table 5.1

School Inspection Norms in Different States

State	Number of schools to be inspected per month		Inspection Proforma
	DEO	BEO	
Arunachal Pradesh	No specific norms	No specific norms	No
Jammu and Kashmir	No specific norms	No specific norms	No
Kerala	8	8	Yes
Maharashtra	No specific norms	No specific norms	No
Odisha	10	10	Yes
Rajasthan	12	12	Yes
Sikkim	6-8 schools	At least 6 schools per month	Yes

Lack of Mobility Support for School Inspections

For practical inspection and supervision, and to visit the schools located in far-flung areas, vehicle support is a prerequisite. While district-level officers are provided vehicles for school visits in some states, but block-level officers do not have access to

vehicles for school visits. They reported that due to lack of cars, the inspection and supervision of schools are greatly affected.

For instance, a BEO from Arunachal Pradesh reported:

> '*There is no government vehicle for BEOs during inspection at the school. The transport costs are borne by the individual, and a refund is sometimes provided through 'TA', if applicable.'*

The provision of transport allowance was also mentioned by the officers from the states of Kerala, Odisha and the UT of Jammu and Kashmir. However, it is often noted that transport allowance is very low compared to the travel expenditure incurred by the officers. For instance, a BEO from Odisha mentioned:

> *'There is no vehicle support for inspection of schools. However, the transport cost is met by the officer, and a fixed transport allowance is given to the officer by the SPD, OSEPA, which is not sufficient to cover all the needs in school.'*

As a result, officers end up spending from their own pockets. This has been reported as a significant issue across all states. An officer from Sikkim reported:

> *'It is very much necessary for the Block Education Officer to be provided with a vehicle for inspection, supervision and implementation of various programmes. Transport costs are covered by personal expenses.'*

The data reaffirms that block-level officers do not receive vehicles for school inspections, and any provision for mobility support is inadequate. As a result, school visits often become challenging for the block-level officers due to a lack of vehicles, which can be demotivating when officers have to spend their own money on official visits.

VI. CONVERGENCE AND CO-ORDINATION

The Education Department of any state at any level cannot and does not function in isolation. The educational administration at the District level, or at the Block level, and even at the institutional level has a compact interface with the local bodies, public representatives and communities. The District Education Office is closely connected with the District Administration. Everything is done with the knowledge/due approval of the Collector & District Magistrate. Furthermore, the governing body of *Samagra Shiksha* at the District level comprises the District Collector as the chairperson, and other members are representatives of the social justice, women empowerment, women and children welfare department, and the tribal welfare department. Some representatives of the Zilla Panchayats and the NGOs are also included in the governing body of *Samagra Shiksha* at the district level.

In case of local administration, Zilla Parishad plays a pivotal role in sanctioning buildings, toilets, compound walls, etc., in schools of rural areas of the district. The municipality does the same for schools located in the urban areas of the district. The linkage and interface between the local bodies and other departments is also observed at the block level. The BDO is the overall head of the Block administration, and the BEO is accountable to the BDO on every positive and negative aspect of education in the block. The education department also works in close collaboration with the PRI. At the school level, the school is a part of society, and hence, there exists an inseparable link between the community and the school. The school management committee comprises representatives from parents, PRI, and NGOs.

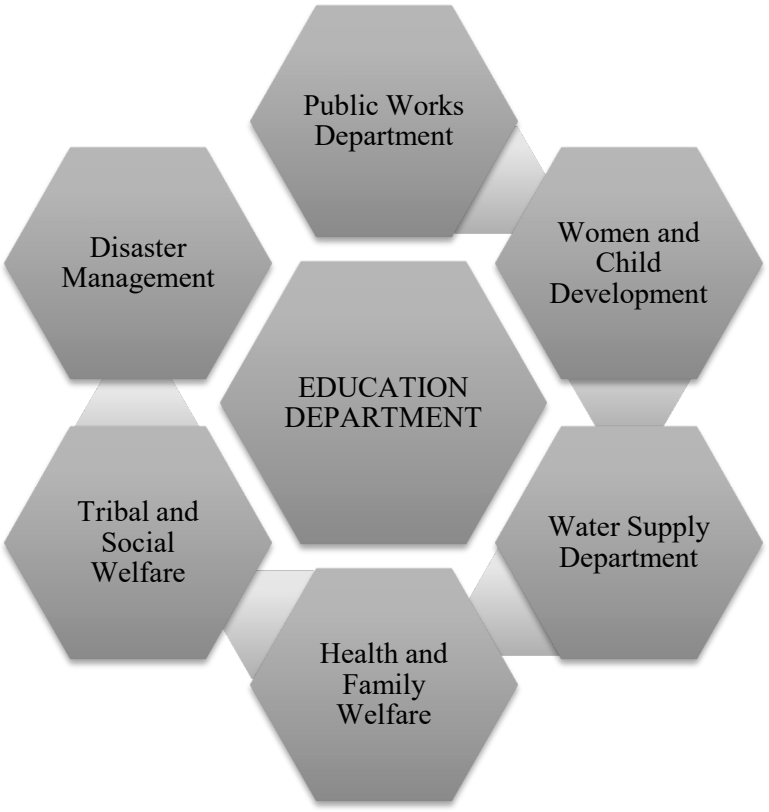
The interconnection between the school and other departments is also noticed in schools across the states. The Health and Family Welfare Department organises health camps in schools for health check-ups. The school collaborates with the health department to organise awareness camps on various topics, including sanitation, adolescent education, mental health, and AIDS. The Forest, Environment and Wildlife Department also has an interface with the schools. Similarly, the Social Welfare Department is providing pre-metric and post-metric scholarships to meritorious ST and

SC students. Eklavya Model Residential Schools are run with the financial support of the Social Welfare Department. The departments related to rural development, land revenue, disaster management, etc., also have their connection with the school in different ways. Thus, we can find that administrators across the states have to constantly co-ordinate with other departments for various requirements of the school.

Some of the departments with which the education officers have to constantly co-ordinate are mentioned in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1

A few Areas of Convergence with other Departments



Some of the specific programmes and areas that require co-ordination and implementation in schools across all the states include:

- MDM programme
- School health programme

- Water supply to schools and hostels
- Development of infrastructure facilities
- Financial assistance for the quality improvement programme
- Ensuring access to vaccination and other essential services provided by the health department
- Monitoring and completion of infrastructure-related works by PWD
- Smooth conduct of SSLC examinations in the district
- Co-ordination with various departments for the implementation of national-level programmes, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Khelo India, Environmental issues, and plantation drives.

Interface with Samagra Shiksha

The Block Resource Centres, at the block level, and the Cluster Resource Centres, at the cluster level, are the major academic support institutions. The senior teachers are appointed as the BRC and CRC Co-ordinators. The programme operates in different areas of educational development to provide quality education, including life skills. However, the concerns and focus of the Samagra Shiksha are not articulated adequately through the mainstream block-level educational administration. There is no integration between the administrative structure of the department and the SSA. The convergence is said to be missing at the field level. The quality and academic concerns are being addressed through the BRCs and CRCs. The issue of educational guidance and support for quality education is not adequately addressed by the administrators, as they are more preoccupied with non-academic activities.

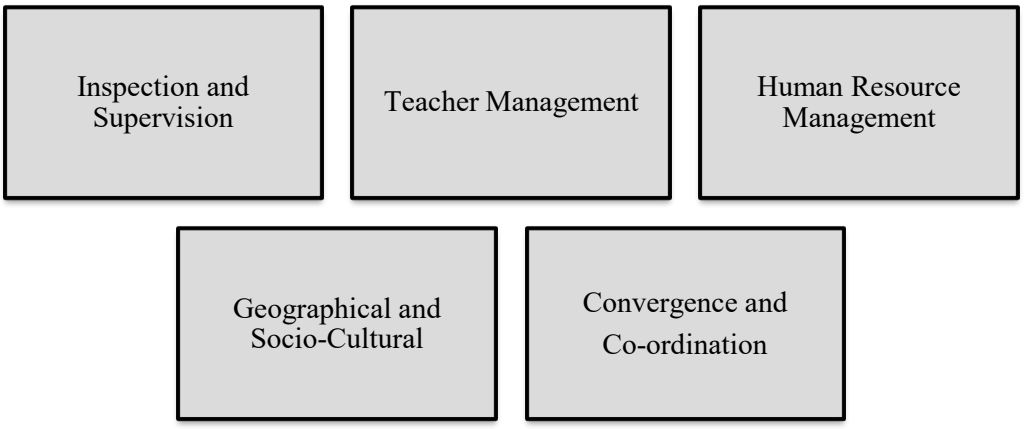
VII. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The myriad roles and responsibilities of the DEOs and BEOs were discussed, underscoring the nature of work undertaken by these field-level functionaries and how the onus of effective governance rests with these officers. They are involved in almost every aspect of the system, including administration, academics, finance, MDM, school inspections, monitoring, liaison with district administration, convergence with other departments, VIP visits, and fairs. They are also responsible for monitoring, resource allocation, community engagement, and ensuring effective delivery of educational services. Thus, it was evident that their overarching role in every aspect of academic governance is paramount. All these aspects are critical to the smooth functioning of the system, and any issues in one domain will affect the quality of the teaching-learning process and act as an impediment to the working of the system.

However, given the multifarious responsibilities of the DEOs and BEOs, it was noted that the officers often face challenges in fulfilling their roles effectively in different areas of educational administration. Some of the areas wherein the officers face challenges are given in Figure 7.1:

Figure 7.1

Major Areas where the Administrators Face Challenges



The specific issues and challenges faced by the officers in different domains of administration are discussed below.

Issues in Inspection and Supervision

An inspection and monitoring system plays a vital role in the effective management of education. It is a means of improving the performance and efficiency of the education system. If the inspection and monitoring system is lax, there will be resultant negligence in duty, attendance, absenteeism and punctuality, which will not be taken seriously by the staff. If there is a lack of proper administrative efficiency and if the academic standards are not up to the mark, the primary responsibility would fall on the mechanism and process of supervision.

It was reported by the officers that they do not have adequate powers in both administrative and financial aspects. Furthermore, they are overburdened with administrative responsibilities, which may prevent them from visiting and inspecting the schools regularly. Lack of any kind of vehicle support to visit the schools is a significant challenge, particularly at the block level.

The enormous workload often becomes a challenge for the administrators to perform their duties efficiently. For instance, a DEO from Arunachal Pradesh reported:

> *'Due to a heavy workload, the monitoring & supervision of schools is severely hampered. Further, a maximum number of schools are located in far-flung areas, resulting in non-coverage under monitoring & supervision.'*

Thus, if the schools are located in rugged hilly terrain and in scattered habitations, it poses difficulties for regular inspection. The officers from Arunachal Pradesh further reported that, though the Dy. Director of School Education is entitled to a government vehicle for visiting the schools, several DDSEs, particularly in the newly created districts, lack government support. Cars are used for this purpose, which

restricts their movement for regular school inspections. For instance, a BEO from Arunachal Pradesh notes:

> *'No fund is allotted for office expenses, office maintenance and T.A. for school visit. School visit is done at one's own expense.'*

Similar responses emerged from the officers belonging to Kerala, Maharashtra, and Sikkim. For instance, an officer from Sikkim reported*:*

> *'A government vehicle is needed to reach the far-flung areas to check the schools. Comparatively, the other departments have facilitated vehicles for the smooth functioning of the system. However, there is no financial assistance for making regular school visits.'*

Encouragingly, in Odisha, a recent order (Letter No. 10951 dated 30.08.2022) provided mobility support to the BEO-cum-Addl. DPC for hiring of vehicles.

Ironically, in every state, though the number of schools, teachers and enrolment has increased tremendously, yet the administrative machinery has not increased proportionately. Officers report that the target of inspecting one hundred per cent of schools every year is unachievable due to a lack of sufficient inspection staff. They do not get adequate time for detailed inspection because of other administrative responsibilities. As a result, inspection is carried out hastily, and such an important aspect usually assumes a ritualistic practice. Highlighting the difficulties in planning their activities, one DEO from Maharashtra reported:

> *'Time management becomes complicated when multiple meetings are scheduled on the same day in different locations by various departments, including the Collector, the CEO, the Director, the Commissioner, and the Deputy. Director, etc. Thus, there is a shortage of time for monitoring in the quality development of schools.*

Thus, it is evident that the involvement of DEOs and BEOs in multifarious activities severely affects the process of inspection and supervision. Due to a lack of time, there is little academic supervision during school visits, and no follow-up actions thereafter. Owing to such limitations, the entire exercise of inspection and supervision, which is very critical for quality improvement, has become a mere ritual at the field level. In view of these issues, most of the officers across the sample states reported that the existing system of educational supervision requires a complete overhaul.

Issues in Teacher Management

Undeniably, teachers remain the backbone of the education system, and ensuring transparent and effective work practices in the teaching profession makes the entire system function smoothly and efficiently. Sadly, this cardinal aspect of education is grappling with several issues across the states. For instance, the state of Sikkim is facing problems due to the lack of norms or guidelines about the transfers and postings of teachers, which has affected the functioning of schools located in the remote corners of the state. There is no rational distribution of teachers as well. Some schools in the districts are overcrowded, with an excess of teachers and non-teaching staff. At the same time, some schools are facing a shortage of human resources. Furthermore, it has been reported that the Grievance Redressal Cell of the department is very inactive and a small number of teachers approach the cell with grievances. The ineffective functioning of the cell has compelled the teachers to approach the court for redress of their grievances.

The geographical location of the school is yet another challenge for retaining teachers in schools located in difficult areas. A DEO from Arunachal Pradesh highlighted this issue:

> *'Most of the schools in the district are located in hilly terrains, making it a challenging task to post and retain teachers in these schools. Due to interference from public leaders and the lack of accommodation*

facilities near the district's remote schools, the rationalisation of teachers could not be carried out correctly.'

Similar issues were reported from Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Odisha and Rajasthan. In addition, engagement of teachers in non-educational activities like census & election-related duties has also been reported by the states. In fact, this is one area which deserves adequate attention. It has been reiterated time and again that the teacher workforce should be focused on the academic aspects. However, teachers are being utilised for several non-teaching activities. Furthermore, the Education Department is not the only one involved in non-teaching activities; other departments also engage in duties such as conducting vaccination camps, household surveys, and disaster management. This severely impacts their presence in the school and classrooms, resulting in reduced teaching activity.

Issues in Human Resource Management

One aspect of human resource management, i.e., teachers, has been dealt with separately in the previous section, as it was imperative to raise teacher-related concerns separately. In addition, the human resources, specifically the staff assisting the field-level administrators, are extremely important. Their competency, combined with adequate numbers, ensures the well-functioning of the DEO/BEO office.

Unfortunately, in all the sample states, such a scenario was missing. For instance, a BEO from Arunachal Pradesh reported:

'The BEO office requires one regular data operator and one regular peon, as the previous ones have retired almost a decade ago. Presently, one has to act like a BEO and, at the same time, like a peon, too!'

Due to a lack of human resources, the DEOs and BEOs end up doing most of the clerical work, which is not only time-consuming but also hampers their school visits. The same was also reported by the officer from Jammu and Kashmir, who mentioned that there is a severe shortage of clerical staff to handle service matters of employees.

In addition, a lack of trained staff with proficiency in specialised work has also emerged as a significant challenge. If there is any clerical staff at all, they lack the basic IT proficiency and the required skills to perform the day-to-day activities. For instance, a DEO from Odisha reported:

> *'Non-availability of requisite ministerial staff for the disposal of different official work is affecting the system. Additionally, the lack of professional acumen and skills, inefficient human resource, and the prolonged vacancy of various posts are among the significant challenges.'*

Similar responses emerged from other states as well. An officer from Sikkim reported that, being understaffed, it's challenging to handle all the responsibilities. There is not just a shortage of staff across the states. Still, irregularity of the existing staff is also a grave concern, resulting in additional responsibilities on the shoulders of district and block-level officers. Furthermore, the absence of a specific job chart to streamline the work leads to a lack of clear definitions of roles and responsibilities.

Geographical and Socio-Cultural Challenges

In addition to the challenges in various domains of education administration, like inspection supervision, teacher management, and human resource management, there are challenges related to the topographical and socio-cultural aspects, which are neither under the purview of the DEOs/BEOs nor under their control. Still, they play a significant role in the overall functioning of the system.

For instance, in the hilly states, due to a lack of all-weather road connectivity, programmes are delayed in their implementation and timely execution. Schools located in complex and far-flung areas remain without supervision for several years. This has already been pointed out in the previous sections that such schools do face a shortage of teachers. As a result, children in such schools are in a doubly disadvantaged position, suffering in almost every aspect, including a shortage of teachers, poor communication, inadequate infrastructure, and poor internet connectivity.

In addition, the linguistic aspect deserves attention here. The importance and impact of teaching and learning in one's own mother tongue have been widely researched and well-documented. The NEP 2020 too has further reiterated this aspect and emphasised the learning of the child in his/her mother tongue at least till the primary stage. However, there are implementation challenges in places where there are children belonging to different ethnicities. For instance, officers from states like Arunachal Pradesh reported that there are 26 major tribes, and each tribe has its own dialect. Hence, the medium of instruction remains English while the informal connecting language is Hindi. Therefore, the officers feel that it is a challenging task for the state to implement mother tongue-based education in pre-primary classes.

Issues in Coordination with other Departments

It is nearly impossible for the education department of any state to function in isolation. Constant co-ordination and communication with other departments is inevitable. The administrators are required to co-ordinate and liaise with other departments to complete various works, including civil works, electricity connection, drinking water supply, health and sanitation, and revenue. The programmes launched by the government periodically require co-ordination with the relevant department to ensure their successful implementation.

However, some situations or problems make ensuring co-ordination a challenging task. For instance, poorly defined and understood objectives, ill-defined lines of authority and improper division of work often result in conflicts within existing roles and expected outcomes. Officers also pointed out that there is no proper mechanism of communication for co-ordination with other departments. There are no regular meetings with nodal officers from different departments, resulting in a lack of clarity on the work to be done by educational administrators.

The questionnaires administered to the field-level administrators revealed a sense of dissatisfaction with the present arrangement of educational administration. On the whole, it has been noted that vacancies of various posts for a long time, lack of

training and exposure to the field officers and functionaries, poor convergence with other departments, entanglement in multifarious tasks at a time, long pending of court cases, overburdened with compliance of RTI applications, and excess of non-academic work across the states describe the work profile of the administrators. Such a work profile also makes one ponder over the academic roles and responsibilities of the administrators. While the education system is being shouldered by these administrators, their minimal or complete absence in fulfilling academic responsibilities calls for urgent realignment of their work profiles.

VIII. POLICY LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The myriad roles and responsibilities of the DEOs and BEOs often result in a lack of clarity in expected and actual duties to be performed, thereby leading to fragmented focus. The role conflict between pedagogical and administrative roles leads to an overburdened, demotivated, and stressed officer, who struggles to balance multiple responsibilities, often in vain, as the system demands his/her involvement in every aspect, both intra- and inter-departmental.

The officers are so overburdened with administrative responsibilities that they find it challenging to perform inspection and supervision of schools. Even when officers try to visit the schools, they are not provided with vehicles or any mobility support to undertake their responsibilities efficiently. If we carefully scrutinise their workload and responsibilities, they are more like compliance officers trying to address everything coming from above. In such a scenario, quality takes a backseat due to reduced focus on the overall functioning of schools and, particularly, the learning process. Along with their administrative responsibilities, the focus on academic/pedagogic responsibilities is the need of the hour.

The innumerable responsibilities assigned to the field-level administrators and the umpteen issues faced by them in discharging those responsibilities are primarily due to a lack of clarity in their roles, a dearth of capacity development programmes for building or upgrading their skills, and a complete absence of any sort of powers given to them to discharge their duties efficiently. The responses received from the DEOs and

BEOs are a testimony to this fact, and also a clarion call to relook and realign their roles for effectively discharging their responsibilities. In addition, it is imperative that the voices of administrators are heard and their opinions assigned utmost primacy, as they are the last-mile administrators for the implementation and execution of various educational services.

The fact that administrators need to be delegated adequate decision-making powers to discharge their duties is indisputable. Against this backdrop, suggestions and recommendations were sought from administrators across the sample states. It was commonly reported by all that the following powers need to be delegated to them to enable them function effectively:

i. *Administrative powers:*

a) Transfer of teachers within the district/zone to rationalise teacher postings according to school needs. Some officers noted that, since they are not involved in teacher transfer decisions, their district has schools with both excess and severe shortage of teachers.

b) Appointment of teachers for three months or more, on a purely temporary basis against leave or temporary vacancy, from the Reserve Panel (district-wise) drawn up by the Education Department as a result of competitive test/interviews. This will help in the continuation of classes even when regular teachers are on leave.

c) Taking minor actions against non-performing teachers/staff, such as temporarily stopping pay and instituting disciplinary proceedings. There should be a provision for filing an appeal by the aggrieved teacher/staff against the orders before the authorities concerned.

ii. *Financial powers:*

a) Powers for sanctioning of minor repair works of school furniture and buildings of Primary Schools, Junior High Schools and High/Higher Secondary Schools in a year.

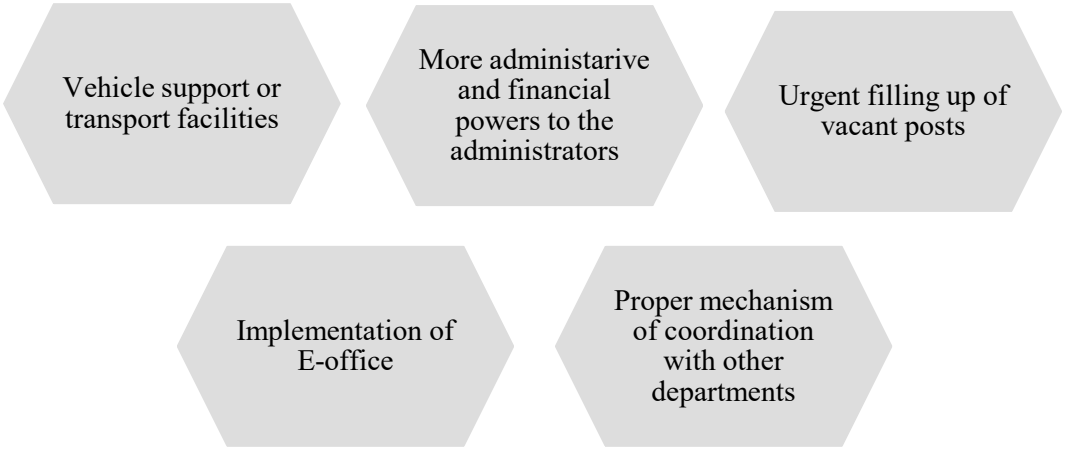
b) Powers for sanctioning the purchase of stationery items for use in schools in the absence of supplies from the Directorate.

c) Powers for sanctioning funds for training and capacity building of teachers/staff.

Some common recommendations given by the administrators across all the states are shown pictorially in Figure 8.1:

Figure 8.1

Major Recommendations given by the Administrators



A closer look at the job profile of the administrators, understanding their roles and responsibilities, issues and challenges they face on day-to-day basis reveals that it is not an easy job to undertake myriad responsibilities and to maintain the zeal and enthusiasm, particularly in a scenario when there are no rewards (either monetary or social) to those officers who are doing excellent work at the grassroot level.

Policy makers should enable the administrators to be less involved in non-academic work. Adequate support staff should be there to look after the non-academic, legal and other ancillary activities of the district. Proper emphasis should be laid on frequent orientation of teachers to acquaint them with various academic issues and challenges, and keep them abreast of recent knowledge of plans, policies and schemes. Furthermore, the officers should be the educational leaders of the districts or blocks rather than mere administrators.

Most of their issues can primarily be addressed through working on the following three Es: Empower, Equip and Enhance. It is evident from the previous observations and findings that the officers lack the power to make decisions or initiate actions regarding any concerning matters. According to them, many of the issues can be resolved in time if they are empowered with autonomy to make decisions. Apart from this, they also lack the basic physical and human resources in their offices to perform their duties efficiently. Hence, they should be equipped with basic infrastructure and support staff to perform their duties. Moreover, given their vast range of roles and responsibilities, and working in the digital era, they are required to enhance and upgrade their skills at regular intervals. It is necessary that the officers have the capacity to perform their functions effectively and efficiently. The emerging challenges of education require both administrative efficiency and academic leadership. They require specialised training that is crucial for addressing the emerging challenges in education, as well as in educational administration and management.

To enhance their managerial effectiveness, they need to improve their skills through capacity development programmes in areas like time management, managing stress, legal and financial aspects, etc. In addition to these areas, they are also required to further build their IT skills to meet the demands of the ever-changing educational scenario. Enhancing their skills and competencies will help them deal with the issues of academic governance and the different activities related to educational administration and management.

Thus, empowering the officers with autonomy, equipping them with adequate resources and enhancing their skills and competencies to deal with diverse educational situations remain the need of the hour.

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