

PREFACE

In Gujarat, the Panchayati Raj came into existence in 1963 under the Gujarat Panchayats Act, 1961. In the course of next eleven years, the new system has found a place in all the nineteen districts of the State and in each district in all talukas and all those villages in which it is feasible, to set up Gram Panchayats. The Panchayati Raj is associated primarily with community development, grass-roots planning and democracy. The Education Committees constituted by the Panchayati Bodies on a discretionary basis at the Taluka and Gram levels and on an obligatory basis at the District level have substituted the earlier District School Boards constituted under the Bombay Primary Education Act 1947. There are some Talukas and a number of Grams where the statutory functions deleted at these levels are being carried on by these voluntary committees, and where this has not been done, the work relating to primary education is being looked after by the Executive Committees of these bodies. This infra-structure was created with a view to accelerating the pace of universalising primary education for children in the age-group of 6-14, improving the retention of children in school, stimulating the initiative and interest of the rural community to have better quality

and standards, reduction of stagnation and drop-outs and improved and enriched health services and ancillary pupil welfare services in village primary schools and bring the school and the local community closer to each other with increasing advantages in both.

It is vital to know how far the expectations entertained from the Panchayati Raj institutions in regard to development and democracy in the sphere of primary education have been realised in the decade 1963 and 1973 in Gujarat State. The study of the impact of the Panchayati Raj on the administration of primary education has become very important both for the possible reorganisation of the system and the development of primary education which has turned out in Gujarat and in other States people's minimum education. The effect of the system cannot be just studied through a broad survey by Government agencies as it is done in Rajasthan and some other states. The major variables affecting the development have to be identified, perspectives have to be set up or decided upon, hypotheses have to be formulated and then to be verified and only then valid and reliable conclusion or generalisation can be made with proper sampling, objectivity and accuracy. It is this consideration that has stimulated and guided the present research.

In Gujarat, this research constitutes a second attempt, the first, and the pioneering one, was made by Professor H.R. Joshi of Shri V.T. Chokshi Sarvajanic College of Education, Surat. Professor Joshi's research covered the South Gujarat Region, the present would largely be representative of North Gujarat, though only one district from that region has supplied data for the study.

The research is largely the work of intensive field study. However, the relevant literature, documents, researches on the Panchayati Raj and primary education have been referred to or made use of in weaving the fabric of this thesis. In analysing data, where situation demanded, sophisticated statistics are also used.

In preparing this doctoral thesis, the investigator had all the benefits that accrue from a painstaking, hardworking, quality-oriented, planning-minded and highly disciplined guide. This doctoral work has been completed under the able guidance of Professor D.M. Desai, the Dean, Faculty of Education and Psychology of the M.S. University. That it has been completed in a record time of twenty-six months is largely due to planning, co-ordination, dynamism, communication effectiveness and humanism of this scholarly guide, who has belied the off - levelled criticism that administrators do

not have time to do or guide research work of the doctoral standards. The investigator acknowledges his indebtedness to his guide.

The investigator also acknowledges his profound indebtedness to the generous and precious guidance that he has received in the statistical treatment of his data from Dr. N.S. Pathak, Reader in Psychology, M.S. University of Baroda.

Several other friends have helped him. The investigator would particularly like to mention the names of his own cousin brother Shri Maneklal C. Patel who had helped him very much in collecting field data, his own students who helped in some of the preliminaries of the data-analysis, Shri C.U. Desai, former Principal, Esplanade High School, Bombay for his help in reading the manuscript, Shri H.M. Shah for typing the manuscript speedily and maintaining exemplary regularity, and Dr. L.M. Padhya, the Librarian, Hansa Mehta University Library and his colleagues in facilitating library work to a considerable extent. There are several other individuals in the Panchayat bodies of the Mehsana District, Government Officers of the Education Department, Inspecting Officers of the Mehsana District, Community leaders, teachers and experts who have assisted in supplying information, discussing the ideology and practices and evaluating the performance - behaviours. The investigator would like to acknowledge their precious help.

It is hoped the present research will help in stimulating further similar exercises in educational research pertaining to the Panchayati Raj in the sphere of education.

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