Chapter VIII
A Summary of Conclusions
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VIII. 1. Introduction:
The objective of this research was to examine the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in universalisation of elementary education in West Bengal. The study was carried out in the light of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment that stands out as a significant intervention empowering local bodies in rural areas. With the recent policy shift towards decentralized education programme and statutory status being assigned to the it is argued that the Panchayati Raj Institutions have now got formidable opportunity to participate in development activities at the grass root level to share the task of universalisation of elementary education. West Bengal has a decentralization process Panchayats in the state took roots fairly early in comparison with several other in the eastern and northern India and have been working for the past 35 years. It has played active role in 1978 flood programme, major rural development programmes like Food for Work Programme of the seventies, anti poverty employment generation, water supply and social forestry schemes and achieved great success. But it fails to score well in the context of elementary education. Therefore the question arises as to why panchayats could not bring any significant in the context of universalizing elementary education? Is this because the demands are not coming from the grass root level or the lower priority accorded to school related issues on the panchayat’s agenda. Against this background it was necessary to examine the processes that are responsible for the elementary education not being fulfilled.

In order to understand the dynamics of the processes, role of Panchayat was examined in a triangular relationship where school, community and Panchayat were the focal points. It explored the pathways and linkages between the household, school and Panchayat and their role in augmenting or constraining sustained enrolment. This research also studied the government policies and interventions in this relevant areas and changes therein. It needs to be emphasized that the scope of this research was to examine the modes and methods of
interactions between and among school, community and panchayat in order to understand the problems and prospects of Panchayati Raj Institutions or community based organization in bringing about all encompassing improvement in schooling/learning conditions. Hence understanding non-attendance or other enrolment related factors have been examined here primarily in the light of the central objective.

The major questions to address pertains to why universalisation of elementary education remain unfulfilled with identification of out-of-school children in the age group 5-14 years, examine their magnitude and nature of their activities; the pathways of interactions between Panchayati Raj Institution, school and community and their institutional capacity (i.e. financial and human resource capacity) in promoting enrolment of out-of-school children and sustaining them in schools; the socio-economic, cultural, political structure in their historical context in rural areas; the school related problems in both primary and upper primary levels that creates conditions for which children remain out of school; the impact of incentive schemes, other programmes and Panchayat’s interventions in getting out-of-school children in West Bengal. The sample of 2053 persons, 385 households and sample of 768 children of the 6-14 years obtained from four villages of two districts of West Bengal were drawn on the basis of multistage random sampling. Two villages – the relatively better off village of Debanandapur and less developed village Thaipara were surveyed from Hughli district. Similarly Charra (relatively developed) and Uparbatari (relatively less developed) villages from Puruliya were selected based on sufficient scheduled caste/scheduled tribe population, the level of literacy, female literacy and the change during 1991-2001. House listing was done with the help of patwari and find their size of land, caste and social groups. Households were then classified on the basis of size of land and reclassify on the basis of caste and arrange randomly. At the next stage, a random sampling method was used to select households having children in the school age since the focus is on elementary education. Households having children in the school age who were not going to school, households having children where some children attending school and some not going to school were
interviewed. All primary and upper primary schools within the sample villages were interviewed.

A plethora of varied methodologies were used in the study. Households, schools teachers and committees and the Gram Panchayats were interviewed. Information was collected from Panchayats, schools and households about their broad functioning, how far Panchayat discussed about schools during past five years, what was the role of community focusing on specific themes of internal functioning of education committees, school teachers, block functionaries, bureaucracy story, party politics etc. Focused Group discussion among certain groups of people, out-of-school children, teachers and Panchayat were undertaken regarding the functioning of the Panchayats and school committees. In focus group discussion the inquiry was conducted among certain groups selecting a number of three to five people of similar characteristics. The groups selected were people from scheduled caste/scheduled tribes, women belonging to scheduled caste/scheduled tribes and non scheduled population, parents from household having out of school children etc. Conversation with these groups were carried on about broad parameters like how they participate in schools, how create a situation where village through Panchayat could ensure participation in running schools, bring school in the centre stage of village, problems of the schools, whether village education committee were forthcoming, whether were forthcoming and how they feel integrated in the process. The questions asked were whether Village education committee, Panchayat and teachers approached the people, whether people and bureaucracy were forth coming and the constraints in their functioning? Focus group discussion permitted exploration of the familiarity; feel of things, ways of how people interact, their attitude and opinions in particular aspect. Besides, various methods and techniques were used to analyze them quantitatively and qualitatively. Chi-Square tests was done to examine the relationship between the categorical variables like households having school attending children, out of school children with Panchayat's intervention through Village education committee, and also between school and Panchayat's intervention. Chi-square test is used to see the association between the predictor
variables (row) and dependent variable (column) of the currently attending school and out-of-school children.

The study presents a profile of elementary education in the state in a temporal and spatial framework in terms of growth of enrolment, attendance and non-attendance patterns across various cross sections of households and populations. Although explaining variations in school participation or pattern and magnitude of out-of-school children did not form the central objective of this research, an attempt was made to identify their causes and determinants. Plausible causes for the significant incidence of out-of-school children were examined from the households and school related factors. This study addresses the problems and suggests the alternatives to the existing system of decentralized governance in order to bring universalisation of elementary education in West Bengal.

The study arrives at the major conclusions related to the objectives, which are as follows.

1. The state of West Bengal has lagged behind several states with respect to educational development. It has a large proportion out-of-school children (32 percent) in the age groups 6-14 years. The position was even poor when one looked at the disaggregated picture across regions, social groups and gender.

2. There were significant inter district, inter village variations in the incidence of out-of-school children. The relatively less developed district of Puruliya had high percentage of out-of-school children (47 percent, pooled at district level), compared to Hughli. The percentage of never enrolled children was very high among girls (51 percent) compared to the boys in Puruliya. The percentage was higher in the remote village of Uparbatari (57.97 percent). On the other hand, the percentage of never enrolled children were found to be practically non-existent in the relatively advanced village Debanandapur of Hughli.

3. Puruliya district had lower attendance rates (53.45 percent) than Hughli (70.95 percent). There were inter village differences in the attendance.

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rates in both the districts. The low attendance rate coupled with high non-attendance and never enrolled children in the less developed areas continued to be the major concern for the policy makers.

4. The attendance /nonattendance patterns by social groups and sex informs that the proportion of currently attending school girls was more compared to the boys among the higher and middle caste groups in the villages of Hughli district. On the other hand, it was lower among all the social groups in the Puruliya district. Viewed across caste/ social groups it appears that the historically vulnerable groups such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and intermediate castes, had a much higher proportion of never enrolled children and high non-attendance rates.

5. It was observed that the proportion of currently school attending children increased with the landholding size, income, educational level of father and mother. While a significant proportion of the never enrolled boys came from the self-employed households, majority of the girls were from agricultural and nonagricultural labour households. Households with mother’s participation in work had higher percentage of non-attending and never enrolled children particularly among the girls. However, the inter-district variation was less pronounced in this regard.

6. The analysis of NSSO 52nd round data revealed major reasons for drop out as ‘not interested in studies’, ‘failure’ ‘other economic reasons’ and ‘busy in attending domestic chores’. This study has tried to ascertain the reasons a little more deeply. The largest single reason cited by the parents was the cost of text books/ tuition/and uniform for which households were unable to afford, resulting in withdrawing children from the school. In all the villages parents had to incur substantial expenditure on education of children such as tuition fees, admission fees, examination fees, uniform, books and private tuition. Private tuition even in less developed villages constituted a major portion of the total expenditure on education at all levels. This points to the fact that primary education is not free even in the government schools. Maltreatment in the hands of high caste children and
punishments by the teachers emerged as another major cause cited frequently by the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes parents. This was the reason for which child did not want to go to school and lost interest in studies. Assisting parents in fields or household business, and discontinuation of scholarship stopped were other reasons for boys not attending school. For girls availability of the schooling facility in the neighbourhood and household chores emerged as the main reasons for older age group girls'. In the entire region, supply side factors emerged as the dominant reason with little variation between the districts. It points to the supply side constraints and discrimination at the village level for both Puruliya and Hughli.

7. There was differential learning environment at home as revealed by parents perception, motivation, expectation and involvement in children's education. While the villages of Hughli had higher expectation, motivation and involvement of children in studies, these aspects were found to be severely lacking in Puruliya district due to rampant illiteracy, poverty and other support factors.

8. Whether work as a factor influenced enrolment in school was also examined. The study revealed inter district, inter village variation in terms of children's engagement in work activities. In remote and relatively backward village of Uparbatari in Puruliya district, higher proportion of older age group children (particularly the non attending and never enrolled) were engaged in paid activities. The percentage of older age girls was high (43 percent) compared to boys (8 percent). The proportion of girls doing domestic chore was found more compared to boys and lesser percentage among them were observed to be engaged in paid jobs in Hughli district.

9. Time spent in various activities was examined through time budget analysis. It was observed that actual work hours were short for the lower age group of children and for children attending school in Hughli. Also the lower age group children working and not attending school had much free time. For the older age group of children, the total work hours stood for
longer hours in Puruliya. In the relatively developed village of Debanandapur in Hughli children were found to spent more hours in studies. On the other hand, in the remote village of Uparbatari in Puruliya older age group children were found to work for longer hours. The fact that substantial number of children were attending school and also particularly in household duties and unpaid activities involves flexible school timings, which could enable greater attendance among children.

10. The dynamics of the linkages between Panchayat mediating through Village Education Committee and households shows that the percentage of children attending school increased with the Village Education Committee member’s visit to the households of out-of-school children. In Hughli the relationship was found to be statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance. On the other hand, in Puruliya the relationship was not statistically significant. Among the households having out-of-school children and where Village Education Committee did not visit, the percentage of the schedule caste/scheduled tribes and intermediate castes was high. These households remained at the margin of the social structure in Puruliya. These also had a high proportion of those belonging to the low income groups. Again the parents of the high caste households (47 percent) having children attending school approached the Village Education Committee more often with specific school related problems. Conversely, the percent of scheduled caste/scheduled tribes was higher (45 percent) from the household having out-of-school children who did not approach to Village Education Committee. However, in Hughli the Village Education Committee did not resort to selective visits of the households and thus has resulted into greater school participation over time.

11. The villages with the upper primary schools reported high attendance than the villages without upper primary schools. This gap was again very large between the villages of the Puruliya district. What emerged here was that the villages having upper primary schools within walking distance had less percent of never enrolled and non-attending children in the higher age
group compared to the villages without upper primary schools. The lack of supply side factors affected the attendance status of children emerges clearly. Ensuring supply side factors would help reduce the incidence of non-attendance and never enrolled children in the less developed areas.

12. Primary schools of West Bengal were found to have poor infrastructural facilities in terms of drinking water, urinals, separate urinal for girls etc. The upper primary schools in relatively better-off village of Debanandapur in Hughli and the Charra in Puruliya fared well in terms of infrastructure and teaching-learning facilities. Student-classroom ratio was favourable and the number of classrooms were high in upper primary schools of Hughli district. Primary schools of Puruliya had overcrowded classrooms and lacked even basic infrastructural inputs. This reflects the inadequacies in the supply side factors as well as poor quality of schooling in the relatively backward areas.

13. The remote village of Uparbatari in the relatively less developed district Puruliya experienced poor availability of teachers for decades altogether. The primary schools of all villages had considerable gap between the number of teachers in place against the number of sanctioned post. Focused group discussion of the teachers revealed that vacancies were not filled due to delay on the part of appointing authorities.

14. At the state, district and village level teachers in position did not correspond to the norms pertaining to teacher-pupil ratio. Teacher-pupil ratio was highly unfavorable in primary schools (63) of Puruliya. By any criteria a class with more than 40 children cannot be managed effectively by a single teacher. On the other hand, in Hughli district pupil teacher ratio was observed to be favourable.

15. In Puruliya district the proportion of the trained and experienced teachers was very low. Most of the teachers working here were found to be commuting from outside the village. This indicates that the relatively less developed parts were unfavourably placed in matters of teachers appointments and placements, which violated the principle of equity in
administration. In contrast Hughli district had better qualified, high percent of experienced and trained teachers at the primary schools.

16. There was inter district and inter village variation in the provision of the incentive schemes. Inspite of the provision that all children in the primary schools should be provided free books, 65.38 percent of students had received only half of the text- books corresponding to their grade in Puruliya. In the Hughli district the situation was better as 93 percent of children got all free textbooks. Though free uniforms were provided to the girls and scholarship to the children from the disadvantaged groups, since 2001 these have not provided in any district. Provision of mid -day meal was started in the village schools of Hughli in 2003 and recently in 2004 in Puruliya district.

17. In Puruliya 54.6 percent children were not covered under this scheme during the survey. On the other hand the coverage in Hughli was 100 percent. Focussed group discussion with teachers. Village Education Committee members, panchayat functionaries and households confirmed the fact that incentives did not reach the backward areas in time due to delay in supply of foodgrains. The relative deprivation of Puruliya could be attributed to general political economy of regional development processes.

18. There was inter district variation in the functioning of schools. There was difference in the regularity of attendance of student and teachers between the districts. While Hughli had higher percentage of attendance of students and teachers, Puruliya had low percent of attendance of students and teachers. Actual teaching time was observed to be far less in Puruliya as revealed by the responses from parents regarding activities of teachers and students, receiving and checking homework etc. In Puruliya district teachers spent less time in teaching compared to Hughli district. While in the relatively advanced village Denanadapur of Hughli teachers used maps, globe, charts, pocket books, take care of children individually,
19. Bringing schools closer to communities is enshrined in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001). One important component of interaction of between the community and the school was carried out through Parents- Teachers Association. Such interaction was found to be more functional in the Hughli district as compared to Puruliya. This was evident from the fact that higher percent of parents participated in the meetings in Hughli frequently (once in two months) and discussed about the problem of their children. A positive outcome of both way interaction between parents and teachers in Hughli was that it led to improve learning environment both at home and school and severe reduction in children at school. Such interactions were less functional in Puruliya.

20. The infrastructural problems at school were complex. Problems as viewed by the parents in Puruliya were lack of sitting facilities in classroom, no toilet facilities, distance of upper primary school, lack of scholarships, uniforms and text books. Lack of teaching activities and discrimination practices were other problems emerged from the group discussion of parents. The problems viewed by the teachers in Puruliya were absence of drinking water facilities, toilet facilities, classroom space, lack of teaching aids, space for cooking food etc. In Hughli the problems were more or less the same but far less severe. Routinely collection of text books by the teachers, high non teaching work load poor relationship with Sub inspector of schools were other constraints viewed by the teachers both in Hughli and Puruliya. Problem faced by bureaucracy were inadequate staff in the block office, increased workload, administrative responsibilities of schools, inspection of too many schools under their jurisdiction, etc. Shortage of clerical staff in the less developed block was reported as the reason in the delay of work relating to the administration of primary schools and teachers in both the district. While poor transportation was
mentioned as the major constraint in the remote and backward village of Puruliya.

21. A critical review of the West Bengal Primary Education Acts and the State Panchayat Acts revealed that although the Acts were amended from time to time but those did not involve major policy changes. There was provision for ‘Shiksha, Sanskriti and Kriya’ Sthayee samitis to look after the educational development and grants. Karmadhyakshas were given administrative and financial powers. But there was no clearly defined horizontal relationship in the decentralized structure between the school departments and Karmadhyaksha. This has weakened the process of reciprocal accountability on the part of the bureaucracy.

22. A cursory look at the provisions of the State Panchayati Raj Acts with regard to primary education shows that Panchayats were given the responsibilities of construction and maintenance works, control and management of primary schools, creation of public awareness, conduct of enrolment drives, implement schemes like mid-day meals etc. In West Bengal, Gram Panchayats had been providing land for construction of primary school buildings. Panchayat Samiti had been given power to make grants—in-aid to schools, within the block. They were entrusted greater responsibility in establishing and administering informal education centers called Sishu Shiksha Kendras, an alternative form of education for children who did not attend schools.

23. At ground level, Panchayat members and Village Education Committee actively participated in Sarba Siksha Abhiyan program in the villages of Hughli in 2003. They participated in the literacy program, visited every house, identified the out-of-school children, issued green card took greater role in awareness and pursued parents to send children to schools. They created demand for more Sishu Shiksha Kendras, ensured higher enrolment of out of school children in those centers in both the villages of Hughli district. On these counts the situation in Puruliya was not very encouraging. It was learnt and confirmed by the teachers, panchayat and block level functionaries that
the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan could not be meaningfully launched in the district of Puruliya due to political turmoil.

24. In Hugli, panchayats could utilise larger proportion of grants received in construction and renovation of furniture and for continuing education centers for out-of-school children, and running of the day care centers/ Anganwadi center, bringing electricity to the school, repair of defunct hand pumps etc. The Panchayats had been actively participating in midday meals program by collecting foodgrains regularly from the block office, supplying them to schools and supervising them at the time of providing meals everyday. Gram Panchayat forwarded the problem of shortage of teachers to Zilla parishad for necessary action.

25: Panchayat’s participation in school through Village Education Committee in provision of the infrastructure and mid day meals had increased the percentage of attending children in Hugli district. In Puruliya, the role of panchayat was limited to the infrastructural development of toilets and drinking water facilities only.

26. Hughli, Panchayats had ensured organic link between school and community through institution of Village Education Committees. It has certainly improved local participation in schools. The constitution of the Village Education Committee includes the Panchayat Standing Committee on education, the Chairman of the Panchayat, one member of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, representative of the parent-Teacher’s Association, the Anganwadi worker, a person interested in education from the local community. The Headmaster of the school is the member secretary of the Committee. This structure was found to exist in the developed villages of Hughli district but did not exist in the Puruliya district.

27. Central Advisory Board of Education suggested a number of functions for the VECs. In West Bengal, the village education committees had functions of such as maintaining children’s register, identifying out-of-school children, issuing green card, organizing regular meetings, monitoring of school grant, organizing folk media campaign, collecting money and materials for building
construction, toilets etc. However in West Bengal the overseeing power of the upper primary schools were not imparted to village education committee.

28. The study found striking differences in the functioning of the VECs between the two districts. In Hughli VEC started working since 2002. While in Puruliya it started late in 2003 but proved a non starter in Uparbatari. In Hughli, the VECs played key roles in identifying out-of-school children by undertaking door to door survey, provided them with money and books thereby creating demand in the communities. The impact of these initiatives was observed to have been favourable for the disadvantaged groups.

29. Panchayats of Hughli participated in community mobilization in two ways-informal ways of reaching community through environment building and organizing annual functions and formal ways through institutionalizing Village Education Committee. Mobilization on the part of Panchayat and Village Education Committee in the villages created positive environment for educational process to take place in the villages. Their effort led to increase of children’s attendance to 80 percent in the village schools of the Hughli and improved the literacy level. They were successful in bringing children particularly from the low castes and intermediate caste and sustaining them in village schools. On the contrary, such mobilization efforts remained weak in the Puruliya district.

30. In Hughli community participation was more pronounced that brought radical changes in the Sishu Shiksha Kendra programme. It was launched in 1997 for the purpose of facilitating the process of universal enrolment of children. The importance of institutional features of Sishu Shiksha Kendra programme lies in terms of decentralization of the management system, control of the local communities and the local government institutions over the schools and the accountability of the teachers.

31. Panchayat played the role of a facilitator by bringing the educational administration, policy makers, service providers and the primary stake holders (the guardians of students or learners together. The teachers were directly accountable to the guardians who exercised their control either as members of
the VECs committee or as members of the gram sansad, who monitored the functioning of the centres.

32. Democratic grass root participation of the civil society was ensured subsequent to the 73rd Amendment to Constitution in 1993, with the introduction of the institutions such as gram sabha, gram sansad and beneficiary committee in West Bengal. However there were variations observed between Hughli and Puruliya in terms of people’s participation. In Hughli the process of democratic participation was found to have percolated down, gram sansad and gram sabha meetings were yet to become the people’s forum of discussion and decision making in the less developed villages of Puruliya. The third forum of people’s participation – beneficiary committee was not constituted till the date of survey in any of the villages of Puruliya. It can be argued that democratic decentralization is at best partial in certain parts of the state.

33. Focussed group discussions revealed that the demands of the low caste groups were not met in the gram sabha meetings. The common people were generally left out of the Panchayat process. They did not feel integrated and remained at the periphery of the village politics.

34. There were differences in the social composition, educational levels and occupational background of gram Panchayat members in the two districts. The study found that these factors had influenced the functioning of the Panchayats. In Puruliya the members who got elected hailed from economically well-off sections though they had attended lower level of education, holding larger extent of land and lived in better houses. There was evidence of ‘elite capture’ on the Panchayat in the Puruliya. Therefore the disadvantage groups were neglected and their demands were not met. On the other hand gram Panchayat in Hughli had more broad based representation, had well educated persons and were found functioning fairly well.

35. The study found higher share of disbursed funds spent in capacity building in Hughli compared to Puruliya. Also expenditure on education from gram panchayat’s own fund was found to be nil in Puruliya and considerable in
Hughli in 2003-2004. The teachers and village education committee members were better trained in Hughli and this had impact on the development of education in the villages.

36 In order to enhance the capacity, Circle Level Resource Centre (CLRC) was instituted in Hughli which institutionalized the resource support to the existing system. It ensured building up capacity of teachers and the Village education Committee, provided resource support to the schools, conducted evaluation, monitoring and supervision, organized mobilization drives for the community and helped strengthening the planning and management process at the schools. About 69 percent of the teachers in Hughli received this training. In Hughli, Village Education Committee was given training on enrolment drives and role of community for improvement of primary education. Teachers were provided training in identifying the difficult areas in classroom transactions, errors in teaching mathematics and how to overcome them. Capacity building of the teachers, community and Panchayat had enhanced the degree of participation of community, school and Panchayat. It strengthened the linkages between them, ensured enrolment and sustained children to schools. These efforts were severely lacking in villages of Puruliya where the Village Education Committee was nonstater, resulted in the high incidence of out of school children.

37. The study found factional politics working at the village level for decades, particularly in Puruliya. Rift occurred in the Village Education Committee on party lines on issues regarding school development etc. that has adversely affected the working of the committee. In Thaipara also such evidences were noted. All the party meetings and functions were reported to take place in the school. Even the key of the schoolrooms remained with the party members in these villages. Thus the government school being under the control of the party with varying interests and perspectives has severely affected the process of development of school education in these villages.

38. In Hughli and Puruliya all the teachers were found to be politically active. The proportion of the primary teachers who joined CPI(M) teachers association
varied from village to village between 70 percent in Charra to 100 percent in Uparbatari and Thaipara. Nearly half of the teachers were found to have turned into full time party workers. Group discussion of the parents revealed that teachers lost their credibility as teachers as well as village leaders.

39. The study found that the functioning of local institutions were grossly affected due to factional politics. Interested political groups had taken people for granted. Lack of supportive coordination between Village Education Committee and educational bureaucracy.

Suggestions

1. In terms of the socio-economic related factors, the Village Education Committee can meet the demands of the poor by assuring and supplying the children with incentives. Demands should be raised in the gram sansad meetings. Village Education Committee could help facilitating in raising such demands.

2. People may lack the expertise needed for planning and implementation. Village Education Committee should be trained so that they provide technical expertise for planning and help facilitate the process for participatory governance.

3. Given the supply side constraints the question is what the Village Education Committee can do to equip schools with the minimum facilities. The Village Education Committees which have now been instituted in the villages should also be given the responsibility to take care of book distribution, rather than teachers, supervision of mid day meals and regular attendance of children as observed in Hughli.

4. Village Education Committee and other representatives of the community should carry out Habitation planning exercises and make comprehensive plan on their own for their localities related to access, enrolment, retention, quality improvement and also for bridging the gender and social category gaps. Village mapping is a good exercise that should adopted to fill the gaps and inadequacies could be meet being helped by the VEC.
5. Village Education Committee can influence the cultural factors through Mass media (Meena video shows) and May o- Mela programmes thus increasing awareness about issues of girl child, education, health by living and motivating women to take appropriate steps in these direction

6. There should be horizontal accountability between the District Primary School Council and Sub Inspectors with the Karmadhyaksha of Sthayee samitis at the district level and Panchayat samiti.

The role of Panchayati Raj Institutions has increased. Our study finds the pathways of interactions and ways involved in promoting enrolment and sustaining children in schools. Understanding the nature of relationships between these institutions and education bureaucracy will bring more coordination. The recent Panchayati Raj legislation offers new opportunities for extending these experiments also in West Bengal. The experiences gained in the Hughli district can be replicated in Puruliya in order to promote enrolment and sustaining children in school. Decentralisation of education decision making and implementing through Village Education Committee and Panchayati Raj Institutions should be adopted keeping school at the center stage of this social-economic and cultural life of village community in order to ensure universalisation of elementary education.

Therefore, there is a need to address the above problems and focus on policy implications for ensuring enrolment and sustaining children in schools. As the situations have now changed on the light of 73rd Constitutional Amendment a rethinking at the planning level is a necessity. Many ignored dimensions should be examined and incorporated in the planning process in the context of West Bengal, especially those pertaining to the educational development for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes pockets of West Bengal. Every child of the household should be ensured the benefits of elementary education. The opportunity of income through Food for Work programme should be strengthened where the panchayats has a vital role of intervention for long time. Democratic decentralisation has percolated downward in the Hughli district where the panchayats have been taking meaningful steps through the Village Education
Committees. Therefore, it would made Panchayati Raj Institutions of decentralized participatory democracy functional in other areas of the state provided it is matched by political will.