Chapter I
Introduction
Figure 1: Location Map of West Bengal, 2001
CHAPTER I
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Statement of the problem:
Article 45 of the Constitution of India provides for “free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14”. Unfortunately, even after the span of more than 58 years of Independence, the goal of achieving universal elementary education has remained elusive that presents one of the most deplorable features of India’s contemporary development experiences. A significantly large proportion of children in the age group 6-14 years continue to remain out of school. The Tapas Majumdar Committee Report (1999) estimated the size of out-of-school children in 2001 to be about 60-70 million. The world’s largest number of out-of-school children, lived in India, of which 60 percent are girls. The size of out-of-school children poses a serious challenge for the policy makers and the civil society.

There is a growing realization that highly centralized and bureaucratic state system is responsible for India’s failure in achieving the goal of universal elementary education. According to the Human Development Report 1993, wherever decentralization has taken place it has often been quite successful in ensuring better access to social and economic opportunities. In India there is now a greater thrust towards participatory decentralization but genuine decentralization of elementary education is yet to be achieved. According to the official position of the Government of West Bengal decentralization and human development are intertwined processes that reinforces each other. Decentralization has been a persistent theme in Indian context on rural development. The National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992) stressed the importance of decentralized planning and management of education at all levels by ensuring greater ‘community’ participation. With the recent policy shift towards decentralized educational planning and Constitutional status granted to the Panchayati Raj system (73rd Constitutional Amendment) opportunities to share the task of universalisation of primary education with the community participation has gained currency in academic and policy discourse. Panchayati Raj Institutions has also received considerable focus in the Central Advisory

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Board of Education (CABE) Committee Report. There is a strong case for enhanced role of Panchayats in the delivery of formal school system in the state.³

So far there has been a plethora of analytical work and literature on the nature of link ages between poverty and education, employment and education, child labour and education, but one area that remains unexplored is the role of Panchayati Raj Institution in the process of universalisation of elementary education.

This research is an attempt to fill this formidable gap in our knowledge. It seeks to examine as to how, other things remaining the same, education remain unfulfilled, how broad community based organizations and school systems could together create favorable conditions by bringing children within the ambit of formal education for enhanced and sustained schooling. Secondly, it examines the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the process of achieving universal elementary education in West Bengal.

A reason for concentrating in this state is that it is the state where Panchayati Raj Institution has taken root. Panchayati elections are held at regular intervals and played active role as instruments of rural development, employment generating anti poverty programmes and have achieved great success. But, in case of elementary education, West Bengal’s record is very poor and now it has been placed along with Andhra Pradesh and other BIMARU states. Also the number of children not attending school either due to non-enrolment or by reasons of drop out is alarmingly high in West Bengal (World Bank 1997).

This reflects the lack of priority assigned to this issue and points to the enormity of the task that lies ahead in terms of empowering and instrumental role of education. At the backdrop of various documents particularly 73rd amendment it is necessary to look at what empowerment has been given to such institutions, whether process and changes are institutionalized according to amendments over the period in West Bengal.

The whole conceptual framework for analyzing the education situation shows that school related factors and intervention provisions reveal inadequacies that contribute to the incidence of significant proportion of drop out and never enrolled children. Much of the studies, which have appeared so far from various developing countries, throw light on the ‘demand’ and ‘supply’ side factors being the reason for denial of the access to the education.⁴ Earlier analytical framework tends to give greater weightage to household

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characteristics where the household invariably makes the decision in school participation. Scholars used logit/probit models in identifying the factors related to economic constraints, household motivation and prevailing social relations. The problem with the earlier analytical framework is that demand and supply factors are difficult to disentangle. Until recently, the interaction between the socio-economic status of the house hold is crucial determinant of success at school. More specifically speaking school cannot be treated independent of its context and a through understanding of school-society relation is essential. An emerging trend is to enable community organizations and school to participate in matters related to education in more direct and immediate way so as to ensure every child goes to school. Therefore, lack of community participation, accountability of schoolteacher in the community and coordination among them are immediate causes of children not going to school. In such a situation, Panchayati Raj Institution is a viable solution. In the present structure attempt had been made to examine the interplay of Panchayati Raj Institutions in influencing the school related and socio-economic factors mediating through Village Education Committee in promoting enrolment of out of school children.

The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions has been studied in a triangular relationship where school, community and Panchayats are the focal points of the model (Figure I.1). Clear focus has been given on the household and community from where these children have its genesis, gap in school system, role of Panchayat and the pathways of interactions. In the conceptual frame work the response variable is the out-of-school children. A set of predictor variable influences the response variable directly or indirectly through intervening variables. The predictors variables are grouped into household variable, the school related variables and programmatic variables. The home related variables are the social, economic, demographic and other characteristics of the household. School related variables are physical infrastructures, human related dimensions, quality, type of institution etc. They influence the response the response variable directly as well as through intervening variables. Intervening variables include community participation (School Education Committees, Parent Teacher Committees and Mahila Mandals). Programmatic variables that influence the response variable through intervening variables are accessibility and availability of incentive schemes like mid day meal, free text book, teaching learning materials, teacher training etc. The success of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in promoting enrolment of out-of-school children depends on the effective methods of community participation, school inputs and the dynamics of linkages between them.
Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework for Analyzing education situation

- Promoting enrolment
  - Out-of-school children
    - Never enrolled Children
    - Drop outs

COMMUNITY BASED VARIABLES
- Social
- Economic
- Demographic
- Others

PROGRAMATIC VARIABLES
- Mid day meal schemes
- Free Text Books, Uniform etc. availability
- Training availability and accessibility

INTERVENCING VARIABLES
- Community participation
- Village Education Committees
- School Committees
- Mahila Mandals

SCHOOL RELATED CHARACTERISTICS
- Physical Infrastructure
- Teachers
- Type of Institution
- Curriculum, language etc
- PTA

PANACHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION
- Gram Sabha
- Gram Sansad
- Beneficiary Committee
This relationship between the Panchayat and education has rarely figured in the studies so far carried out by the researchers. This research is an attempt to explore and fill some gaps in this area of knowledge.

The study finds rationale in the above arguments in the backdrop of the present socio-economic conditions of the rural people in West Bengal and 73rd Constitutional Amendment, as to how decentralization has benefited them and the changes in terms of education has taken place so far.

Therefore, the significance of the study lies in the answer found out through empirical research to the question "what is the alternative to make the delivery system better, and what kind of intervention is necessary in order to make the education system more accountable and reachable to entire community"?

1.2. Definitions:

**Gross enrollment ratio**: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for boys and girls has been calculated using the total enrolment figures in classes 1 to 4 as on survey date along with the expected population in the primary school going age of 6-10.

**Net enrolment ratio**: NER may provide only partial information on the enrolment of the children in the age group 6-10 because some of the children in that age group may be currently enrolled in schools but not in classes 1-4.

**Age Specific attendance ratio** is defined as the percentage of children attending school in the age group 6-10/11-14/6-14 years.

**Drop outs**: Drop out ratio at the primary level is calculated as enrolment in class 1 four years ago minus enrolment in class 5 in the current year as percentage in enrolment in class 1 in the preceding fourth year.

**Never enrolled**: The children who have never enrolled in the age group 6-10 years or 11-14 years as percentage of total population in the corresponding age group.

**Community**: In human geography, an interacting group of people living in the same territory: town, suburb or neighborhood. Some social scientists have argued that rural communities are gemeinschaft communities. Some see communities as having shared modes of thought and expressions.

**Community Participation**: Community Participation is the process by which groups of community residents affect the planning, implementation, management, utilization or maintenance of a service, facility or activity. Paul proposed for four different levels of
intensity of participation- information sharing, consultation, decision making and initiating action.\textsuperscript{5}

**Resource mobilization:** Refers to the process of arranging for and inducing a broad range of possible contributions by the community residents such as labour, land use, materials, funds, knowledge and skills, including organizational and management skills.

**Empowerment:** Empowerment can be defined as seeking to increase the control of the community over resources and process affecting their lives.

**Institutions:** Technically it implies institutions like Village Education Committees (VEC), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), Mothers Teachers Associations (MTA), Mahila Mandal etc.

**Gram Sansad:** The concept of Gram Sansad incorporated by the West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1992 has been widely acclaimed by political observers as an epitome of participatory democracy. It consists of all the registered electors of a constituency- single member or double member- within area of Gram Panchayat.

**Gram Sabha:** The concept of Gram Sabha was introduced in the West Bengal Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1994. A Gram Sabha consists of registered electors of a Gram Panchayat area. So the jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha is the whole area of a Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad are effective forum for mobilization of masses for community activities and social audit.\textsuperscript{6}

**Out of school children:** Naik (1996) has tried to put forward the definition of ‘out-of-school’ children as those who are at present without any educational facilities but sharing nominal work in families.\textsuperscript{7} Children not in school include children who have dropped out from the school system as well as those who have never been enrolled in school. Children who are neither at school nor at work, form a subset of out-of-school children and are referred to as ‘nowhere children’.\textsuperscript{8}

**Work:** It is to be noted that Census does not include unpaid essentially home based household responsibilities in the definition of work. That this vast section of children are often involved in unpaid work like day to day household chores like collecting water and


fuel, caring for cattle, looking after younger siblings in family, work as family helpers in the field etc. has been highlighted by lot of studies in many countries of South Asia. However, many scholars recently have tried to distinguish between ‘child work’ and ‘child labour’ the later being described as more harmful aspects of child work. For our purpose we have grouped the activities under broad heads- outside home and inside home activities. Depending on the nature of work that is linked to income contribution, they are grouped as paid and unpaid activities.

1.3. Objectives:– The proposed study intends to achieve the following objectives.

1. To study 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 out-of-school children and sustaining them in schools.

2. To understand 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.

3. To examine the socio-economic, cultural, political structure in their historical context in rural areas and interplay of the Panchayat that has influenced children’s enrolment from school.

4. To identify the school related problems in both primary and upper primary levels that creates conditions for which children remain out of school and role of Panchayat in school.

5. To study the impact of incentive schemes, other programmes and Panchayat’s interventions in getting out-of-school children into schools.

These are the aims of the present study that will be kept in view during the course of conducting the study. Various questions come up in the process and they form the objectives of the study.

1.4. The research questions emerging in the proposed study are:

1. Who are the service providers and stakeholders in the organizational framework of community, Panchayat and school in promoting enrollment of out-of-school children?

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10 While Off family wage employment is categorized as the outside home paid activities, family enterprise is the unpaid activity and bidi binding, embroidery work etc are categorized as inside home paid activity. Day to day household chores such as caring for cattle, looking after younger siblings, washing utensils, clothes, cooking, cleaning, taking food to fields and factories, bring drinking water etc are categorized as the domestic duties.
2. What are the socio-economic, cultural, school related and political factors that are responsible for the differential patterns of children's enrolment in schools?

3. What specific steps have been taken by the Panchayat Raj Institution to enhance their institutional capacity, linkage with different actors and agencies?

4. What improvement has taken place in the provision and management of elementary education due to devolution of power and other programmatic changes?

5. What are the areas that need further improvement and see how the improvement can be brought about with help of community based organization, school committees and other participating agencies?

1.5. Data Base:

Data has been generated from various sources, which are both primary and secondary in nature. They include government documents, statistical abstracts as well as primary data collected from the field. Primary data has been collected with the help of structured administered questionnaire across a set of sample households in sample villages and at different levels of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Secondary data sources include the following:


3. The Calcutta Gazette: Vaishakha, Acts of West Bengal Law Department, Legislative Notification and Ordinances Promulgated by Government of West Bengal; West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Ordinance 1997


1.6. Study design: A case study of four villages from two districts of West Bengal has been undertaken for the purpose of our study.

Table I. 1: Development Indicators in West Bengal, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>%Literacy rates</th>
<th>Percent of gross irrigated Area/GCA*</th>
<th>Percent of villages connected by pucca road</th>
<th>Percent of households electrified</th>
<th>Percent of non agricultural workers</th>
<th>Composite index</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darjeeling</td>
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<td>3.40</td>
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<td>65.00</td>
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<td>56.00</td>
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<td>4.82</td>
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<td>23.05</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>8.29</td>
<td>32.78</td>
<td>40.63</td>
<td>45.60</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>20.22</td>
<td>30.98</td>
<td>32.98</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>5.21</td>
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<td>46.00</td>
<td>5.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birbhum</td>
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<td>Barddhaman</td>
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<td>47.17</td>
<td>22.70</td>
<td>26.07</td>
<td>37.70</td>
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<td>Nadia</td>
<td>61.82</td>
<td>17.19</td>
<td>35.18</td>
<td>20.29</td>
<td>46.20</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hugli</td>
<td>71.02</td>
<td>27.48</td>
<td>32.10</td>
<td>44.97</td>
<td>50.50</td>
<td>7.14</td>
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<td>Bankura</td>
<td>62.04</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>21.12</td>
<td>24.01</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puruliya</td>
<td>53.24</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>14.70</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<td>11.62</td>
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<td>Haora</td>
<td>72.81</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>54.17</td>
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<td>35.70</td>
<td>5.62</td>
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<td>N.24 Parganas</td>
<td>69.07</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>57.94</td>
<td>20.76</td>
<td>70.50</td>
<td>5.64</td>
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<td>S.24 Parganas</td>
<td>67.40</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>37.56</td>
<td>16.80</td>
<td>50.80</td>
<td>5.75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2001, West Bengal.
* Calculated from Statistical abstract, 1996
Based on the composite index (table 1.1) computed from the selected development indicators the districts of Hughli and Puruliya have been chosen. Hughli is the most developed district and Puruliya is the backward one.

1.7. Sample Design:

The multi stage and purposive stratified Random sampling has been used in the selection of the sample districts, blocks, villages and households. It has been done at various stages, using mostly secondary data first and primary information at the field whenever needed. Besides away from the urban influences, the selection of the villages takes into consideration of time and approachability. After computing the development index of the blocks in the two districts and also on the basis of literacy level, two blocks one developed and another undeveloped were selected.

It is revealed from table A 1 in Appendix that in Hughli district, Pandua block with literacy rate of 46.5 percent ranked 17 based on composite index. It is second from the bottom most position of the districts. Taking into consideration of approachability it has been selected as the relatively less developed block. Chinsurah Mogra with literacy rate of 57 percent ranked third from top most position has been selected as the developed block. As the top most and second ranking blocks are urban areas mostly, Chinsurah Mogra away from urban influence has been selected. Similarly, from the relatively less developed district of Puruliya (table A 2 in appendix), Puruliya block with literacy rate of 44 percent and ranking second has been selected as the developed block. Jhalda II with 32 percent literacy rate and ranking 18th has been selected as the less developed block for the purpose.  

Based on the level of literacy, female literacy and the change during 1991-2001, one village from each block was selected for the detailed survey.

The primary survey covers at least 400 households who have children in the age group 6-14 years, 100 from each of the four villages in two districts. A four stage stratified sampling process will be used to collect data. Two blocks- one developed and one less developed from each district have been selected on the basis of same criteria as mentioned above in case of selection of districts. At the next stage, one village from each selected block would be the sample village. Selection of the village takes into consideration households of 350-750, sufficient scheduled caste/ scheduled tribe population and literacy

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11 The indicators are percent of literates to the total population, percent of villages having pucca road, percent of irrigated area to total cultivated area, percent of villages having school, percent of workers in non agricultural activities etc.
rates. Villages under gram Panchayats will be listed. House listing has been done with the help of patwari and find their size of land, caste and social groups. Households have been 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 has been used to select 100 households having children in the school age since the focus is on elementary education. Households having children in the school age who are not going to school, households having children where some children attending school and some are not going to school has been interviewed. All primary and upper primary schools within the sample villages have been interviewed.

The argument behind this kind of selection is to examine the dynamics of the process embedded in the villages within the same district under the same governance.

This chapter will discuss the following:

1.8. Instruments for the study:

The following instruments were used to collect information from the field.

(i) Household Interview: The respondents were questioned on the basis of standardized questionnaire. There were three questionnaires—one for the gram Panchayat, one for schools and another will be at household level to generate data on household basis. The questionnaire at the household level included two schedules—parent schedules and child schedule. In the parent schedule, parent of children and in the child schedule, sample child was be the respondent.

(ii) School interview: In School schedule, information on schools was collected from district education offices. School schedule was designed where principal of the schools and other teachers was interviewed.

(iii) Interview of gram Panchayat: The questionnaire for gram Panchayat was canvassed at the village level. The respondents were usually the Sarpanch and other leaders from village constituency. 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. The primary information on aspects like progress of implementation of projects, funds, selection of beneficiaries etc. was be collected from the Panchayat (3 levels) members by using structured interviews and questionnaire. Sabhadhipati was
questioned about teacher selection, appointment, placement, transfer and relation with chairman of District Primary School Council (DPSC).

(iv). **Focused Group Discussions:** 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.

1.9. **Profile of Sample population in the Area.**

A total of 385 households with a population of 2053 were surveyed from the West Bengal state (table 1.2). 190 households from Hughli district and 195 households from Puruliya district were surveyed.

Table 1.2 : Distribution of sample households and population by social groups in sample villages, 2004:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Area/District</th>
<th>Sample households</th>
<th>Total Sample Population</th>
<th>Sample Pop (6-14 yrs)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Hindu Hhs %</th>
<th>Muslim Hhs %</th>
<th>SC/ST Hhs %</th>
<th>Non SC/ST Hhs %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total size of Sample</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>49.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed District</td>
<td>Hughli</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinsurah mogra</td>
<td>Debanand apur</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandua</td>
<td>Thaipara</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Developed district</td>
<td>Puruliya</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1119</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>Puruliya</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>227</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Uparbatari</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Household Survey 2004

Our sample children population in the age group 6-14 years is 768 that constitute 37 percent of total population in the region. 334 children were covered from Hughli district and 434 children were covered from Puruliya. 87.7 percent of the households were from Hindus and 12.2 percent belong to the Muslim community. As high as 50.9 percent of the households were from Scheduled caste/scheduled tribes and 49.09 percent were the non-scheduled caste/scheduled tribe households covered in our sample.

1.10. **Major attributes collected from primary survey for the study:** The major information collected from the primary survey are the socio-economic and demographic attributes (social composition, size of household, age sex structures, marital status, literacy and educational status, occupational status), land related queries (ownership, size of land owned, Agricultural production, Livestock activities etc). Regarding the role of Panchayat
Figure 2: Location Map of Sample Districts in West Bengal, 2001
the main queries were the networks, linkages, activities of the local bodies and their efficiency and effectiveness regarding education. This information has been collected from the field using the following instruments for the study:

1.11. Methodology: A plethora of varied methodologies have been used in the study. It involves the usage and computation of the various types of data (primary and secondary), and analyzing them quantitatively and qualitatively. In order to bring out the attributes located within our study, they are enumerated within the concerned chapters and sections. The most commonly used methods are enumerated here.

**Gross enrollment ratio:** GER = \( \frac{\text{Grade (I-IV/V) Enrolment/population in 6-9/10 age group}}{*100} \)

As the enrolment data are found to be inflated, the age specific attendance/non attendance rates are suitable indicators of the educational status. For this study, age specific attendance/non attendance rates has been calculated age groupwise and sexwise for all the villages and also pooled at the district level.

**Net enrolment ratio:**

\( \text{NER} = \frac{\text{Enrolment of 6-10 age group/population in 6-10 age group}}{*100} \)

**Age Specific attendance ratio** is defined as the percentage of children attending school in the age group 6-10/11-14/6-14 years.

**Drop outs:** Drop out ratio at the primary level is calculated as enrolment in class 1 four years ago minus enrolment in class 5 in the current year as percentage in enrolment in class 1 in the preceding fourth year.

**Never enrolled:** The children who have never enrolled in the age group 6-10 years or 11-14 years as percentage of total population in the corresponding age group.

**Pupil-teacher ratio** = total children in classes of primary school / total teachers in primary schools.

**Student classroom ratio** = Total enrolment in primary schools / Total classrooms in primary school.

**Percentage of female teachers** = \( \frac{\text{total female teachers}}{\text{total teachers}} \)\)*100

**Disparity Index** by sopher as modified by Kundu is used to compute sex disparities

\( \text{DI} = \frac{\log X2/X1 + \log(200-X1)/(200-X2)}{1} \)

Where \( X2 >= X1 \).
Exponential growth rate: It is the geometric growth, where each increment is twice the size of the last. Exponential growth rate is calculated by formula \( P(2001 \text{ or } Y) = P(1991 \text{ or } X)(1+R/100)^N \) where \( Y \) is the final year and \( X \) is the previous year.

Other statistical techniques that has been used are:

Composite index of development indicators has been developed by using Prof. Amitabh Kundu’s composite index. The district and blocks are then ranked on the basis of composite index. The sample district and blocks are selected on the basis of composite index, literacy rate and rank.

The data collected through qualitative survey are analyzed using various statistical methods. Bivariate analysis was done. Cross tabulation tables between the children’s schooling status and other socio-economic variables has been done. This gives a fair idea of the relationships between the predictor and outcome variables. Cross tabulation with associated with associated Chi-Square tests examines the relations between the categorical variables like households having children attending school, non attending school 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. In chi-square test the observed numbers in each of the cells of the contingency table are compared with the expected numbers. The larger the differences between the two values, the larger the value of the chi-square and less likely the differences is due to the chance. The probabilities of getting thses distribution by sampling variation is the significant level of the result (Campbell et al.1999)

Focus Group Discussions: In focus group discussion the inquiry has been 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

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forthcoming, whether were forthcoming and how they feel integrated in the process. It was enquired about their feeling of the implementation of the various development projects and their participation. Group discussion of teachers, Village education committee members and Panchayat members were carried out in each village school and gram Panchayat. 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? The discussion was recorded in the electronic device and analyzed later in detail and prepared questionnaire to generate data. Focus group discussion permitted exploration of the familiarity; feel of things, ways of how people interact, their attitude and opinions in particular aspect. An advantage over individual interviews is that it helps to assess the broad functioning in order to further strengthen those aspects.

Temporal trends and spatial distribution of the various aspects of education and their interregional variations has been represented in the geographical manner using choropleth maps. Also Bar graphs and line diagrams have been used to illustrate the various results. Mapping has been done with the help of GIS (Erdas Imagine for geo referencing and Arc View GIS for digitizing and presentation).

There has been reorganization of the districts. The table I 3 shows that the reorganization of the districts of the original districts in the state in the different census year. For ease of comparability (1978 and 2001 data) the districts have been clubbed together to make the adjustment in the data collection.

Table 1. 3. Table showing reorganization of the districts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts reorganised</th>
<th>Districts according to 1971</th>
<th>Districts according to 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dinajpur</td>
<td>West Dinajpur</td>
<td>North Dinajpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Dinajpur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 parganas</td>
<td>24 parganas</td>
<td>North 24 parganas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South 24 parganas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medinipur</td>
<td>Medinipur</td>
<td>East Medinipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>West Medinipur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I.12. General profile of Sample Areas

1.12. (i). Puruliya District
Physical: The district of Puruliya is a part of Barddhaman Division of the state of West Bengal (Map 1.1). It is situated at the western Sector of the state, in a hilly area, in a quite different landscape. The district in character is quite different from the other districts of the state. Since November 1956, Puruliya has been formed as a new district in the political map of West Bengal. Since then, there has been no change in the jurisdiction or the physical boundary of the district. The name of the district has been originated from the name of its principal town and District Headquaters town Puruliya. The district of Puruliya is located at 22°42'23" east longitude and 85°88'52" north latitude. The districts is bounded by the state of Bihar in three directions and by Barddhaman and Bankura districts on the east. Puruliya is predominantly a rocky region. The land of district is divided into four parts: 1. The western portion is formed with low plateau, which is locally known as (D) highland. 2. The eastern portion is plain land with stone chips, locally known as ‘Tar’ land. 3. The north portion and south is full of hills and villages. In the Jhalda area of the district, there are hills.

Economic: Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. About 40 percent of the land area is used for agricultural purpose. Agricultural productivity is low. The rate of production is low due to less irrigation facility in the dry areas. Puruliya possess a large quantity of cattle population. Large number of cattle and bullocks are available in the houses. In Puruliya some large tanks and ponds fishes of various qualities are also cultivated. There is vast scope for inland fisheries. Among industries, lac industry is the most important. In Jhalda, there is shellac factory, as because brood lac and stick lacs in raw form are available in this police station area. Both Puruliya and Jhalda are the important commercial centers of the district. The transport system is not good.

Socio-cultural: The social and cultural traits of any district depend on the social and cultural behaviour of the people and their attitude towards life. The social activities and the customs of the people of the district are quite different from the social system of the people of the other districts. In this district, many section of the backward communities belonging to the castes of Kurmi Mahato, Bagdi, Bauri, Dom, and the tribes like Santal, Bhumji, Kol, Bhuiya, Lohar, Kora, Munda and Mal Pahari can be found. The bulk of the people belonging to the caste of Kurmi Mahato who dominate the social affairs of the district. In the district of Puruliya, in the last decade, the role of leadership pattern has
undergone a change. The power and prestige in the district now depends on the following factors. 1. Personal character 2. Political control and 3. Economic power. The position of the women in the society has been improved. There has been now a trend for literacy.

Sample villages: Charra and Uparbatari

Land relation in Puruliya was very different from that of Hughli. Land here is full of hills and hillocks in Puruliya. There are three types of land known by local names- Badh, Bohal and Kanali. Because of its climatic condition (too hot in summer and too cold in winter), both the sample villages of Uparbatari and Charra had vast stretches of land under monocropping due to acute shortage of irrigation facilities (baring few dried up bandhs). Though there are few tube wells because of high altitude, rocky terrain and low water level water gets dried up. Villagers therefore have to bring water from long distance and stand in queue. Food habit is very different in Purulia due to environmental and poor economic condition. Because of too heat in summer people eats rice, suji boiled with water. Economic condition is very poor. They adopted traditional methods of cultivation. First crop here is Aman rice. In Badh type of land, if there is no rain it gets destroyed, in Bohal type which has water facilities crops are grown well. This type of land comprises only 10 percent of agricultural land. Kanali type is semi type between the two and comprises 10-15 percent of total agricultural land. Though there are 15 bandhs in Charra and 12 bandhs in Uparbatari village, water dried up in summer. There are three ponds in Charra, whereas there is none in the village of Uparbatari.

The developed village of Charra in the Puruliya district has better-developed education and health facilities and other developed indicators with three primary schools and a high school in the village and two anganwadis. While Uparbatari in the Jhalda block is the least developed of all the villages. The virtual non-availability of middle and secondary schools within easy reach in the less developed villages of Uparbatari and Thaipara villages is a constraint to access of education. Households have differential access to drinking water. People collect drinking water from four hand pumps situated in different areas. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes have mud built huts mostly clustered around two ponds in the village and are situated separately from the other caste households. The Charra village was the largest with 751 households and a population of 4750.

Land reforms is not successful in Purulia, Big landlords were less. Only 0.25 percent of land has been vested. In Uparbatari according to 2005 survey no land has been vested in this village till date. The lac industry has been closed due to increase of electronic industries that have impact on economic condition. Bidi binding has therefore
increased. Agent goes to the village and supply leaves and materials. Girls/women bind bidi to earn money. Therefore schooling has been stopped. It is a big problem for education development. There are altogether 12 bandh in Uparbatari of which repair work of 3 bandh was going on as part of Food For work Program, where village people got work.

(ii) Hughli District:
Hughli is located in the Presidency division of the State of West Bengal with its headquaters located at the Hughli town. The portugease, the Dutch, the French, the English came to this district for business purpose and establish "Kuthis". Hughli is a small district near the city of Calcutta. The river Bhagirathi or Hughli flows by the side of the district and the rives Damodar flows in the middle of the district dividing it into two separate zones. The district is prosperous and traditionally developed in nature. After 13th century the northern part of the district had passed into the hands of Muslim Conquerers. Since then, Hughli became the royal port of Bengal. For administrative purpose in 1765 the district of Burdwan was divided in to two parts, the northern division being called Burdwan and the southern division Hughli. It was an important administrative centre.

Physical: Hughli district consists of the Gangetic plain, is fertile and better irrigated and has relatively high agricultural productivity compared to Puruliya.. Land in and around Hughli district is highly fertile. The northern portion of the district is developed and mainly urban and the southern portion of the district is less developed and mainly rural. It lies between the latitudes 22°39'32" and 23°01'20" in the northern hemisphere and 88°30'15" east to 87°30'20" east longitude. The district has two natural divisions- the upland and the plain. It is bounded on the north by Burdwan and Bankura districts, in the south by Haora and Medinipur districts, in the West by Medinipur and Bankura districts and in the east by river Hughli. There are 21 police stations and 18 Community Development Blocks. There are rivers like Saraswati, Rupnarayan, Behula, Mundeswari, Anader and Kunti.

The density of population is very high due to nearer to the Calcutta city and location of large scale industrial establishment. As mentioned earlier, Hughli, which is one of the most advanced in terms of literacy (62.3 percent in 1991 and 67.72 percent in 2001). It was the center cultural of Bengal, eminent peoples like Ramkrishnadev, Sarat Chandra, Keshab Sen and Rishi Aurabinda were born in this district.

Land use and Land use pattern: There are 314.48 thousand hectares of land in the district. In this district only 0.1 percent is forest areas, 21.9 percent of the land area not
available for cultivation, 4.58 percent other cultivated land, 0.87 percent current fallows and 72.54 percent net area sown.

Tenancy: After the Establishment of the Estate Acquisition Act, the tenancy system of the district has undergone some changes. The State is now owner of all land of the district. The tenant of the land pays rent to the State Government for use of land.

Agriculture: Paddy is the main agricultural crop in this district. Varieties of vegetables and sugarcane are also being produced in the district. Potato is the main vegetable product in the Winter season. Bananas are also produced in large quantity in the Chandannagar subdivisions of the district.

Industry: The large scale district of the district is remarkable throughout India. The eastern portion of the district is industrially developed. The industrial products like Jute, chemical, steel, rubber etc are produced in the district. It is famous for cottage industries. The cotton fabrics of Dhaniaakhali, Rajbalhat, chicken work of the district are famous.

Transport: The district has 5 routes of the Eastern Railway. It is also well connected by metalled roads. The national highways and the State highways are passing through the district. The Grand Trunk Road passes through the district. Besides bus routes and water transport are developed.

Social and cultural developments:
The percentage of literacy has been very high in the district in the last decade. Large number of the Primary schools and Adult education Centres have been established in the district as a part of eradication of illiteracy from the district.

Areas of Interest:
Pandua: The town is 42 miles from Haora by rail or by road. The remains of the old days to be seen here are a tower, two mosques and a tomb.

Chinsurah: This place is located at a distance of 25 miles from Calcutta. It was a Dutch stronghold.

Hughli: It is located at a distance of 26 miles from Calcutta, a historic place adjacent to Chinsurah. Hughli college is famous.

Bandel: It is located at a distance of 29 miles from Calcutta. One of the oldest Portuguese church is situated here and a good picnic spot.

Sample Villages: Debanandapur and Thaipara.
Out of the selected four villages, Debanandapur village is most developed village with post office, rural electrification and well-developed communications. It has been seat of learning for a long time. Debandapur was found to be multicropped. On the contrary, agricultural
land is less in Debanandapur, mainly found in the surrounding village near Saraswati river bordering the block of Polba Dadpur where mainly rice, potatoes, peas etc are cultivated. The main crop here is fruits that have huge market, main crops being mango and banana. Land in and around Debanandapur was highly fertile. Debanandapur is full of numerous ponds.

Thaipara with literacy rate of 31.46 percent according to 1991 census was selected as the less developed one in the developed district. So far as 1991 census is concerned, the literacy rate of Thaipara village was only 31.46 percent and 54.2 as per 2001 census literacy rate being lowest among all the villages under the Saraitinna Gram Panchayat. Based on socio-economic characteristics from census data, the villages have been taken for the purpose of micro-level study. The village has high proportion of Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribe population, Muslim population and is lagging far behind so far as literacy is concerned. Thaipara is the village in the Saraitinna Gram panchayat in the CD Block Pandua of Hugli, situated at a distance of approximately 5 Kms from the Pandua railway station. It is not good in terms of infrastructure. Communication network is poor in the village, typical of West Bengal villages. Approach to the village from the railway station is pucca road for 1 km followed by kaccha road. Bus stop is far away, more than 5 Kms. The village had no institution other than the primary school and two anganwadis. Though the village has a primary school within the village, upper primary school is at a distance of more than 3 km. The village has less urban impact as there is very small thriving semi urban area near the railway station where the market is located. The village is endowed with one primary school within the village, one primary health center at a distance of 5 km, means of potable drinking water is hand pump, post and telegraph at a distance of 5 km, Monday's weekly ‘haat’ and market open for 5 days in a week. Electricity is used for domestic purpose and agricultural purpose. 100 percent area is irrigated by source, source being mini tube well. While Debanandapur village was the smallest with a households of 351 and a population of 1733. The salient socio-economic characteristics of the selected villages in terms of population, social composition, literacy and schooling as they emerge from the census of households are presented in table1. The sex ratio is found to be higher in the village. This may be due to the fact that the male members, particularly 15+ boys were working for the wage employment outside the village. The percentage of the non working population (approximately 63 percent) according to the census is higher.

Cultivation followed by agricultural labour is the major household occupation of the village of Thaipara. Land in and around was not very fertile though doubled crop (rice and
potato) because of better access to water with ponds and access to mini irrigation facilities such as shallow tube wells.

1.13. An introduction to the characteristic of Sample population in the sample villages:

Our survey shows that the social composition of the study village is varied. In Thaipara, other caste households form 31 percent of the total households surveyed, intermediate caste constitute 20 percent, and scheduled caste comprise 34 percent and scheduled tribe account 15 percent of the households. Families are mostly nuclear (79 percent compared to 21 percent of the joint families). The village had a few middle and rich Muslim peasant households, few rich Hindu families and the rest belonged to the marginal peasants and landless agricultural workers. Hindus form the entire sample in Charra. While SC, ST caste households constitute larger proportion of the sample households (nearly 50 percent) in Charra, Thaipara and Debanandapur, intermediate caste are by far numerous groups in Uparbatari.

The landownership pattern shows a high proportion (57 percent) of the households are landless in Thaipara. More than 20 percent of the households own land less than 2.5 acres of land in the village. While all the social groups show economic differentiation, landless is higher among the backward groups (60 percent of the intermediate households are landless). A few of the rich upper castes Muslim households (nearly 5 percent) owned land above 30 bighas. In Debanandapur, 35 percent of the households have land. 22 percent have less than 2.5 acres of land. Landlessness is high among ST population. While in Charra 36 percent of the households have land, in Uparbatari 45 percent have land.

The occupation distribution of the households is different among the social groups. Rearing of livestock (particularly goats), poultry farming, dairying etc are important activities mostly among the Muslim families. Salaried and professional workers are few in number. These varieties of activities are grouped into mainly four categories of farm and non-farm sector. Nearly 80 percent (23 out of 31 households) of the other caste families were self-cultivating peasant households many of whom also employ wageworkers during the sowing and harvesting period. While 30 percent of the OBC households have land and are self-cultivating households, 30 percent are nonagricultural labourer and another 30 percent are the self-employed in the nonfarm sector. Most of the Scheduled caste households (61.76 percent) are landless agricultural labourer and only 17.64 percent are self-cultivating marginal peasants. Though only around 30 percent of the households is listed as being primarily dependent on wage labour in non farm sector, it appears to serve as
secondary activity for of households. Therefore a total of 28 percent households are self cultivating peasants, 32 percent are agricultural labourers, 16 percent households are self employed in nonfarm sector and another 24 percent are engaged in the wage paid employment in non-farm sector in our sample.

1.14. Limitations of the study:
The study faced many limitations.

1. The selection of Remote Villages: Certain level of biasness is involved in the selection of remote villages because of approachability, time and resources constraint.

2. There are lot of hindrances from the block education offices in some areas who refused to co-operate and provide any information, particularly the Chinsurah- Mogra block in Hughli. Therefore all the information about the inspection from the sub inspector cannot be provided in order to cross check the teachers’ response about inspection.

3. There are difficulties to compare a few field results with other studies due to nature of data and methodology involved.

4. The research would have been better if we could take more number of the villages in order to see the functions of the Panchayats. These would give more regional comparisons. Here only villages with at least one school were chosen. If village without any school was chosen then the dynamics of out of school children could be apparent. But taken into consideration our main objective to look at the role of Panchyat, the dimension of linkage between school and Panchayat could not be captured. The research would also be better if we had taken less number of households.

5. The other limitation has been the lack of school enrolment data at upper primary level for consecutive eight years due to the fact that the school authorities did not provide these data. The records are either absent or are poorly recorded. Therefore, no trend analysis of drop out from class I to VIII could be done in the study areas. Only drop out at primary and upper primary schools were calculated for four consecutive years.

6. Many of the secondary data for the concerned indicators and years rendered non comparable for inaccessibility and discontinuity of certain kinds of data collection. Data particularly the year wise and class wise drop out rates etc for the rural areas in particular are difficult to procure as there is no proper maintainence of records in the state of West Bengal. Secondly, the institutions are government owned or controlled, therefore the data are mostly provided
7. A major problem was also in the form of election at the state level that was held in may 2003. This was the period when my fieldwork was in progress and the study was hampered. The government official at all levels were busy with election duties, thereafter school teachers were found busy with voting list etc for which my work was repeatedly hampered. The areas in Puruliya that I visited were also frequented by the dacoits, looted off my belongings on my way to Village. Lastly, though the terms has been used in the geography and relate to regional inequalities, there exist very few work that provide a holistic view of the dynamics of the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in promoting enrolment in a space that has been rarely ventured by other research work.

1.15. Organization of the study:
The entire thesis is divided into 8 chapters. The introductory chapter deals with the broad outline of the subject as well as the aims and objectives of the research. It sets out the various chapters and their contents so as to get easily an idea of the whole research. Besides it also set out the broad argument that helps structure the thesis.

The second chapter deals with an overview of literature. The main objective is to look at the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in giving impetus in terms of education. It examines the issues of socio-economic, cultural and political factors in the process of decentralized governance. Besides the school related factors and role of Panchayat has been dealt with. It brings into focus the influence of political process on education and the government policies. Finally it tries to identify the gaps emerging from the literature.

The third chapter presents the spatial and temporal profile of the elementary education situation in West Bengal vis-a-vis India. Besides looking at the progress, it tries to examine the current situation of enrolment, attendance and out of school children, their spatial and temporal variation in West Bengal. There it attempts to understand why universalisation has not been achieved and what are the challenges ahead in elementary education in West Bengal.

The following chapters of fourth and fifth ones extensively deal with the data available in the field in the sample villages using statistical formulation in order to bring forth the varied nature of the process. The fourth chapter examines the dynamics of school attendance. The pattern of the children’s schooling are examined by variations particularly the socio-cultural and economic factors. The reasons for out of school children emerged from field studies bring forth important dimensions of the lack of supply side factors.
The fifth chapter focuses on the dynamics of the school and its context in the sample villages keeping school at the center stage. It examined how the school related factors influence children's schooling status and varies between the villages and districts. It points to the lack of delivery of the supply side factors and inadequacies that contribute to the incidence of out-of-school children.

The sixth chapter is more of theoretical nature that are implicit in the study. It particularly examines the legal and the structural changes of the education system, and Panchayati Raj Institutions etc. and their linkages in West Bengal. Particularly at the backdrop of the 73 rd amendment, it examines whether the provisions espoused by the Amendment has been put in place in West Bengal, what empowerment has been given to local institutions in terms of education and whether the process and changes has been institutionalized. Exploring this dynamics, it discusses the discourse of the role of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of universalisation of elementary education and what has happened over the period. It discusses the constitution of Village Education Committee, their role and constraints therein.

The seventh chapter then goes on to explore the mobilization and intervention on the part of panchayat and Village Education Committee in the sample villages. Besides looking at the various linkages (both backward and forward linkages) of the dynamics of the education and the Panchayati Raj Institution, the strength and the weakness of the ties are examined in the study villages. A comparative analysis has been attempted so as to see whether village communities have any differential rates of linkages /participation in the different villages and how their impacts vary across districts. The role of Panchayat in school has been examined to look how they promote enrolment and sustaining them in schools. It tends to understand why institutions are not functioning looking at the issues of empowerment, disbursement of funds, capacity building, party politics etc. Addressing the gap areas, it has tried to suggest policy perspectives. An alternative model has been suggested that would ensure participatory governance in order to bring universalisation of elementary education.

The last chapter is a summary of conclusions wherein the main ideas contained within the chapters are dealt with. Attempt has been made here to regroup the earlier arguments, propositions and discuss if they have been validated with the study. The differential political situation of the two districts has different influence on the process. The aim would be to strengthen the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions for though the political process cannot be reversed, some amelioration could take place. Thus some ideas detailing
how best to develop and be the step forward in the future has been presented so the rest of the areas can keep pace. The indication is towards democratic decentralization model where school at the center stage is the long-term solution. The results show the important role communities and Panchayat Raj Institutions to promote enrolment. It deals with how the Panchayat Raj Institutions help the onward set of the process.