CHAPTER – IV
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT

Education is a key tool for development and an invaluable means of addressing structural inequality and disadvantage. Providing free and quality education to children reflects the fact that every child is entitled to fundamental human rights and is to be treated with dignity. Primary education provides children with life skills that will enable them to prosper later in life. It equips children with the skills to maintain themselves as healthy productive and resourceful and socially active adults. Education also transmits more abstract qualities such as critical thinking, healthy living, resilience and self-confidence amongst the school going children.¹

Meaning of Educational Administration

Educational Administration means the capacity of an individual or organization to manage all the activities of that educational institute. It is also defined as, the activity of a government or state in the exercise of its powers and duties.

Educational administrators have educational backgrounds similar to school guidance counsellors, librarians, curriculum-co-ordinators, educational specialists and teachers.² Understanding the requirements
and expectations of various other educational jobs helps administrators lead others in an empathic capacity. Educational administrators usually have advanced degrees in teaching, administration or educational leadership. Most administrators have many years of experience as teachers, leaders and mentors. Additionally, many educational administrators are required to participate in ongoing training and professional development to learn new methods and policies of school leadership.

Educational administration refers to secretarial and authority roles in an institution or school, and educational management is a role in the management of grounds, security and repairs, etc.³

In the context of the present discussion, it is relevant to look at the administrative divisions under the following segments:

I. Directorate of Elementary Education

II. Directorate of School Education and

III. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

To begin with, the Virudhunagar district is headed by the District Collector and the district is divided into eight taluks for the purpose of revenue administration and headed by eight Tahsildars. Taluks consist of a group of revenue villages, co-ordinated by the Panchayat Unions (also called as Blocks) for the rural areas. Panchayat Unions consist of one or more Panchayat villages and rural habitations headed by a Union
Chairman with political leadership. In the case of urban areas, the
development administration is taken care of by urban Local Bodies,
either called Municipalities or Town Panchayats depending on the size of
the urban area.4

I. Directorate of Elementary Education

Against the above mentioned background, the administrative set
up under the Directorate of Elementary Education is such that all
primary and middle schools in Virudhunagar district fall under the
Director of Elementary education. There is a Chief Education Officer
(CEO), under whom 2 or 3 District Education Officers (DEO) function to
control schools that fall under this district. Inspectors who visit schools
take care of the teaching-learning aspects in the schools that fall under
their jurisdiction. Government teachers who hold the direct link between
the government and the children convert classroom policy into action.5

II. Directorate of School Education

Similar to the Directorate of Elementary Education, the
administration under the Directorate of School Education goes on from
the Director of School Education (DSE) on top to each Chief Education
Officer (CEO) posted in the districts, to the one or more District
Education Officers (DEOs) posted in every block of a district depending
on the size of the blocks, who then in turn directly deal with the primary
and middle schools in their district with the help of school inspectors,
head teachers and teachers.6
In each of these bureaucratic set-ups routed through the district, the District Collector holds a key position. The District Collector is the overall authority for all educational activities in the district. The CEOs and DEOs report to the District Collector and participate in the various review meetings conducted from time to time in the Collectorate. The Collector is a gateway for welfare from the State to the people at the grassroots, in terms of both introducing policy and implementing existing schemes, and can dynamically bring changes through innovative approaches.\(^7\)

**Organisational Structure of the Department of School Education**

The Department of School Education is headed by the Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu. The Secretary is the administrative head of the Department and principal adviser to the Minister (School Education) on all matters of policy and administration relating to this Department. He is assisted by an Additional Secretary, two Joint Secretaries, one Deputy Secretary and six Under Secretaries as shown in the organisational chart below.\(^8\)
Objectives of the Department of School Education

The basic objective of the Department of School Education is to formulate polices, laws, regulations and various programmes based on the needs of the society now and then, for achieving the following goals of the Government in the field of School Education in Tamil Nadu.⁹

- To provide elementary schools in hamlets where there are no schools
- To provide free and compulsory education for all children of age group 6-14.
- To eradicate dropouts.
- To improve the basic amenities in schools.
- To improve and enrich the syllabus.
- To improve the quality of education
- To eradicate illiteracy
- To distribute quality textbooks at fair price in time.
- To open village libraries where there is a population of 5000 and above.
- To give importance to vocational training schools.
- To encourage health education in schools.
- To involve the parents in the management of schools to a great extent.¹⁰
Vision of the Department of School Education

a. Elementary School

It is the aim of the Government to have one elementary school in each village where there is population of 300 and above and where there is no school within one km.\(^\text{11}\)

b. Middle School

It is the aim of the Government to have one middle school for every two elementary schools and where there is no middle school with three kms. The student’s strength in the fifth standard shall be at least 25.\(^\text{12}\)

c. High School

It is the aim of the Government to have one high school within five kms and where the strength of the eighth standard stood at 50 atleast. There should be at least 3 acres of land for girls’ schools or 5 acres of land for boys’ or Co-educational schools. Besides this, an endowment of Rupees.1 lakh is to be created by the local building committee.\(^\text{13}\)

Policies of the School Education Department

The School Education Department has formulated the following policies for ultimate implementation.

- Achieving enrolment of all school age children into schools.
- Retaining all the children enrolled, up to the completion of eighth standard in schools.
- Bringing dropouts to Nil percent.
- Focusing on quality of education.
- Ensuring essential minimum level of learning competencies to all children.
- Decentralisation of Educational management through effective community participation.
- Enabling all those who have successfully completed primary education to pursue Secondary and Higher Secondary Education.
- Help students studying in high and higher secondary schools to complete the secondary and higher secondary education within the stipulated time.
- Improving professional skills of teachers handling different subjects.
- Providing quality Elementary Education by empowering teachers through training by explorative, creative, interactive and technology based methods
- Achieving total literacy
- Reducing gender disparity in literacy through Special Literacy Programmes for women.
- To improve the basic amenities in schools
- To improve and enrich the syllabus
- To disseminate health education in schools
- To impart computer education to all students.\textsuperscript{14}
Duties of the School Education Department

The School Education Department was formed in 1997, after bifurcation from the Education, Science and Technology Department of Secretariat. According to the allocation of subjects as per the Business Rules, applicable to all the Departments of Secretariat, this Department has been allocated with the following items of work:\textsuperscript{15}

- Overall administration and control of the Heads of Departments functioning under the School Education department.
- Policy formulation,
- Finalisation of the annual budget relating to the schemes implemented by the heads of the Departments.
- Administrative sanctions for various projects and programmes
- Advice to other departments in education and training aspects.

Monitoring Mechanism of the School Education Department

Each programme implemented by the department has an in built monitoring mechanism. Periodical meetings are conducted by the Secretary and Additional Secretary of the department to review the progress of the implementation of the Scheme. Sanction of amount for the schemes are done in consultation with the advisory department and the Finance Department and monitoring of the scheme is made regularly and depending on the necessity. Higher Officials from the Government
are deputed for verification/inspection of the schemes implemented by the Heads of Departments/Non-governmental Organisations, whenever considered necessary.\textsuperscript{16}

The Directorate of School Education covers High and Higher Secondary schools, but looks after all administrative matters related to all classes from 1 to 12, if these schools may be conducting from Class 1 onwards. The Directorate of Elementary Education and State Project Directorate, \textit{Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan} deal with Primary and Middle schools, reaching to children until class 8 with special focus on children aged 6-14. The Directorate of Matriculation Schools directs all Matric schools, i.e., up to class 10 levels, while the Directorate of Government Examination is concerned with board exams of class 10 and 12, covering all boards. The Teachers Recruitment Board and the Tamil Nadu Text-book Corporation provide teaching personnel and teaching material for the entire school education department.\textsuperscript{17} The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is wholly external to this system as it is centrally administered.

The following flow-chart attempts to show the way the Directorates are structured in the bureaucracy, such that government mechanisms for implementation and administrative control are available at State, District, and Block School levels:\textsuperscript{18}
Department of School Education and its Functions

The functions assigned to the School Education Department include overall control of the education department, policy formulation, and finalization of the annual budget relating to school education, administrative sanctions for various projects and programmes, and guidance to other departments in education and training aspects. The School Education Department coordinates the activities of the following ten Heads of Departments viz. Directorates, under its control with the following functions:
The persistent efforts of the Directorate of School Education and Directorate of Elementary Education with the constant support of the Government will certainly improve enrolment of students and reduce dropouts in all classes and enhance the achievement levels of the students, especially in 10th and 12th standards.20

In comparison with the Directorate of Elementary Education and Directorate of School Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has a less bureaucratic and more open scope for partnership activities with Non-Government Organisation (NGO). For this reason, some more discussion about SSA sounds relevant.21

III. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or Anaivarukkum Kalvi Thittam

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or ‘Anaivarukkum Kalvi Thittam’, is an attempt to improve the capabilities of all children through provision of community owned quality education in a mission mode. It is a programme designed to universalize elementary education within a time frame. Arduous efforts have been made in Universalization of Elementary Education in Tamil Nadu.22 As a result of the interventions, there has been considerable progress in ensuring access to primary education and increase in enrolment, retention, improvement in school attendance and generation of strong demand for education especially for girls. Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states in terms of achieving Universalization of
Primary Education due to its remarkable achievements in access, enrolment, attendance and completion.\textsuperscript{23}

SSA is extended through the eleventh plan and also up to the year 2009-2010 to continue the efforts to universalize elementary education within a definite time frame during this period, the SSA will concentrate on achieving the eleventh plan objectives through improving quality education, bridging the infrastructure gaps, attaining inclusive education and implementing innovative schemes for well rounded educational development of the children.\textsuperscript{24}

**Genesis of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**

Great efforts have been made in the last four decades for Universalization of Elementary Education and to fulfil the mandate of the Indian constitution. The ‘National Policy on Education’\textsuperscript{1968} and 1992 also gave top priority to the achievement of Universal Elementary Education. Many projects and programmes at the micro and macro levels have been undertaken in the past in this direction. Experiences have shown that as a result of all the past interventions, there has been considerable progress in ensuring access to primary education: there is increase in enrolment and retention, improvement in school attendance and generation of strong demand for education especially for girls and so on. However, pupil achievement levels have been generally low and there
are wide inter-state and inter-district differences in pupils’ attendance and achievement levels. SSA is an attempt to improve capabilities of all children through community owned quality education in a mission mode.25

**Aims and Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**

The broad aim of SSA is to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 by 2010 and to bridge social, regional and gender gaps with the active participation of the community in the management of schools. The following are the specific objectives of SSA:26

- To bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.
- To have universal retention by 2010.
- To focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis for life.
- To ensure 100% enrolment at primary and upper primary level and in specific to cover Out of School Children (OSC).
- To ensure no exclusionary practices are followed in all schools based on sex, caste, creed, gender and special needs.
- Special Training to children and continuous support to the children admitted in regular school to enable them to integrate with the class- socially, emotionally and academically.
To ensure the enrolment of children who are out of school, the urban deprived and children without adult protection.

To provide residential facilities to children in sparsely populated areas.

To provide transport and escort facilities to children in remote habitations

To lay emphasis on girls’ education, support measures like transport, escort facilities, guidance and counselling.

To provide Residential schools exclusively for girls and socially vulnerable groups.

To provide quality inclusive education to every child with special need irrespective of kind, category and degree of the disability.

To provide basic infrastructure for all primary and upper primary schools.

To provide value based training to the teachers for improving the quality.27

**Organizational Structure of SSA**

SSA is a centrally sponsored Scheme and this scheme is to be implemented in all the districts of the state of Tamil Nadu. SSA is an effort to universalize elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is in response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The SSA programme is also an attempt to
provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a Mission mode. The scheme is being implemented through the society namely “Tamil Nadu State Mission of Education for all” at the state level.\textsuperscript{28}

The Government started the Tamil Nadu mission of education for all in 2006-2007. For the physical and mental development of children, the SSA has been launched at \textit{Virudhunagar} District. To the attainment of the goals, the SSA has maintained cordial relationship between teachers and students at educational institutions. School children have benefited from Activity Based Learning (ABL) and Activity Learning Methodology (ALM).\textsuperscript{29}

The following flow chart clearly shows the organizational structure of SSA functioning in the district of \textit{Virudhunagar} in Tamil Nadu.
The following are the powers and duties of officers and employees of SSA’s office who are involved in the core activities.  

i. State Project Directorate

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a Government of India scheme is headed by the State Project Director in the State of Tamil Nadu in the cadre of an IAS officer. The State Project Director shall be the Principal Executive Officer of the Society and shall be responsible for proper administration of the affairs and funds of the society and implementation of various activities for the project in a mission made under the directions and guidance of the chairman of the executive committee.
Powers of the State Project Director

- To constitute steering group for each of the programme components and functional areas.
- To constitute a task force, comprising heads of the steering group which would function as a cohesive team for achievement of the objects of the project
- To prescribe the duties of all officers and staff of society
- To exercise such supervision and disciplinary control, as may be necessary
- To co-ordinate and exercise general supervision over the activities of the society including its Branches and units.
- To conduct meetings of the society and its executive committee and keep a record of proceedings of these meetings in accordance with those bye-laws, and
- To discharge such other functions as may be assigned to him by the Executive Committee in furtherance of the objects of the Society.\(^{32}\)

Functions of the State Project Directorate

- The State level planning and implementation committee will implement all the SSA programmes as per the time frame.
- Preparation of Annual and Perspective Plan: The implementation of programmes as per the annual work plan budget at all levels as per time schedule is one of its major responsibilities.
The committee shall co-ordinate with district collectors for the successful implementation of the programme.

Plan formulation in a decentralized manner starting from the grass-root level. Also preparation for State level intervention documents and strategies

Training the planning team in the planning process.

Collection and compilation of data and analyzing the data for planning evaluation and impact of the programmes.

Conduct of studies and Research Activities at the District and State Level. Encouraging Action Research among personnel.

Effective co-ordination of various departments like School Education, Elementary Education, Teacher Education Research & Training, Non-Formal Education which execute Programme activities and incentive schemes.

Review the activities of District and Sub-District Level structures and implementing agencies.

Rendering academic support to all lower level structures in achieving the goals of SSA.

Formation and convening of State Resource Groups and incorporating the suggestions in the plan activities.

Preparation of various modules and training materials.

Paying special attention to programmes for special focus groups.

Devising and encouraging innovative practices and strategies at all levels and programme components.

Organizing Teacher Training.
Monitor the physical and financial progress under SSA.

Functioning of Village Education committee (VEC) or Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs).

Progress of Civil Works

Progress of Capacity Building and various trainings

Interventions for special focus groups and achievement.\(^{33}\)

The State level planning and implementation committee would meet once in a month and analyze the progress of implementation. The reports of the District Committees and the monthly meetings of the District Committees would be discussed. The Chairperson of the committee will convene the meeting and maintain the minutes. He will also prepare a report on the activities of SSA for each quarter and place them before the State Mission Executive Committee for approval. He will arrange to send this report in the prescribed performance to Government of India.\(^{34}\)

**ii. District Programme Office**

The District Programme office is headed by district programme officer and he shall be appointed by the Executive Committee. He shall have the same powers and responsibilities in relation to the project at the district level as the State Programme Director has at the State Level. He shall set up Steering Groups for each programme component and functional area. The Head of the Steering Groups will together constitute the District Level Committee (District Task Force) which shall work as an organic team for furthering the project at the district level.\(^{35}\)
Functions of the District Programme Office

- The District level committees are responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring the SSA programme in the districts.
- Orienting the lower level structure/committees in micro planning, school/village mapping, plan formulation and target fixing.
- School / village level plans are to be consolidated at cluster level and block level and incorporated into the district plans – Annual and Perspective District Plans.
- Block and village specific goals and targets and area specific programmes and strategies to achieve the same have to be formulated and monitored.
- To review progress and status on enrolment of retention, dropout rates etc. Block wise.
- Implementing approved plan activities as per the calendar. Monitoring programme implementation through periodical reviews, visits to schools Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre (CRC).
- Maintaining and updating household data and school information for cent percent enrolment and compilation at the district level.
- Distribution of grants to various agencies and monitoring the proper and transparent utilisation of grants released and their effective utilisation.
To identify critical infrastructure requirements. Planning to bridge the same. Monitoring the progress and quality of Construction works undertaken in the districts.

Organizing awareness campaigns, district level functions. Monitoring the proper distribution of various incentives to children

Securing the co-ordination and co-operation of other agencies like, NGOs, self help groups, Government Departments etc., for enrolment, tackling drop outs, achievement levels and quality of education.

Supervising the training programmes at the district and blocks and assessing the impact of the training.

Conducting of research activities both formal and action research through SSA personnel and research scholars, in the districts.\(^{36}\)

The invitees to be specifically requested to attend the quarterly meetings the committee shall meet at least monthly.

iii. Block Resource Centre (BRC)

Block Resource Centre (BRC) has been established in all 385 rural blocks and in 16 Urban Municipal/ Corporation areas. The number of resource persons working in the BRCs is 1896 against the sanctioned strength of 1912. Out of which 11 BRCs have been established in Virudhnagar district.\(^{37}\)
Functions of the Block Resource Centre

- Block level plan formulation, implementation and monitoring of the programmes.
- Compilation of village level plans to arrive at block specific targets, strategies and programmes.
- Implementing approved plan activities as per the calendar.
- Maintaining and updating house hold data and school information for cent percent enrolment and completion by enrolment drives and special focus on low enrolment/high incidence of child labour areas.
- Distribution of grants to schools like material, school, teacher grants through VEC and monitoring their transparent and proper utilization of grants released to schools.
- Monitoring the progress and quality of Construction of works undertaken in the block.
- Organizing awareness campaigns block level functions.
- Monitoring the proper distribution of various incentives to children.
- Securing the Co-ordination and co-operation of other agencies like, NGOs, self help groups, Government Departments etc.
- Conducting periodical review meetings with other officials of the block to remove any bottle neck in the execution of the various programme inputs.
Supervising the training programmes at the blocks and assessing the impact of the training.

Operating Joint account of the Chairman and Member Secretary as necessitated. The Committee shall meet monthly.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{iv. Cluster Resource Centre (CRC)}

Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) has been established at the rate of one CRC per 10 to 15 schools. About 4088 CRCs are functioning with 4088 Resource Persons in the entire state. Out of which 134 CRCs are functioning with 134 resource persons in the study region concerned.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Functions of the Cluster Resource Centre}

- Monitoring programme implementation through periodical reviews, visits to schools.

- Enrolment and retention data school wise

- Review achievement levels school wise.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{v. Village Education Committee (VEC)}

There are 43,656 Village Education Committees (VECs). Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is functioning in schools in all the district of Tamil Nadu. Out of which 1399 VECs are functioning in the district of Virudhunagar alone. VECs function in Primary and Middle Schools and PTAs are in place in High and Higher Secondary Schools. In urban areas, the VECs are functioning. The Panchayat President is the Chairperson in rural areas and Ward Members/ Councillors Hold the position in
Municipal and Corporation limits. The Headmaster of the schools is the member-secretary. VECs are represented by a wide spectrum of the community with 20 members. The members include PTA president, Self Help Group members, Parents, Ward Member or Elected Representatives, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)/ICDS organizer, NGOS, Villages Administrative Officer (VAO), Health Worker, Women Ward Member, SC Ward Member, Parents of the disabled children and youth club members.\(^{41}\)

There is good representation from Scheduled Caste (SC) community in the Village Education Committee (VEC) in the Virudhunagar district. However in VECs, there is no Scheduled Tribes (ST) representation. This may be due to the fact that ST population is very little in this District.\(^{42}\)

**VEC Activities in Virudhunagar District**

The related Village Education Committee (VEC) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA) will be in charge of planning, implementation and monitoring of SSA activities at school level in Virudhunagar district.\(^{43}\)

**Table - IV-2**

**Constitution of Village Education Committee (VEC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panchayats President</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Chairman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President PTAs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Most Headmasters (in the Village)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Help Group Member (who is also Parent)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Member or Elected Representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCE / ICDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educationist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Representative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Administrative Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><em>(Out of which one SC/ST and one Woman)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** District Information System for Education (DISE)

**Functions of the VEC**

- Identifying the needs of the schools.

- Conducting periodical meetings to ensure co-operation of the community, Community Mobilisation.

- Assisting the Headmaster in transparent utilisation of grants released to schools and maximum effective utilisation of the funds.

- To manage the Joint Account of the VEC for infrastructure improvement and teacher support scheme.(The Joint Account will be by Chairman and Member Secretary)

- Undertaking civil construction and maintenance works wherever assigned or needed.

- Enrolment of all school age children and cent percent completion of elementary education of all children.

- Conducting campaigns and meals for universalisation of elementary education.

- Monitoring the Academic Performance of children, Enrolment,
Achievement levels, Attendance and Quality of education.

- Organising functions and celebrations – Half yearly School Public events which showcase the skills of the students.
- Effective co-ordination of the community with implementing agencies. Public School Data on School Notice Board and the progress made quarterly.
- To involve in teacher training.  

**Project Management Structure of SSA**

The SSA programme implementation is carried out through Project Management Structures viz., Village Education Committees or Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Cluster Resource Centres (CRC), Block Resource Centres (BRC), District Project Officers (DPO) and State Project Office (SPO) with integrating Education Department structure at field level. District-wise number of VECs/PTAs, CRCs, BRCs, in the state furnished below.
## Table - IV-3

**District-Wise No of VECs/PTAs, CRCs and BRCs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>VECs</th>
<th>CRCs</th>
<th>BRCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>2123</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cuddalore</td>
<td>1613</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dharmapuri</td>
<td>1299</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dindigul</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Erode</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kancheepuram</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kanyakumari</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Krishnagri</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>1465</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nagapattinam</td>
<td>1183</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Namakkal</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Perambalur</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Pudukkottai</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>1266</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Salem</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Sivangai</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Theni</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>The Nilgiris</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Thiruchirapalli</td>
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<td>183</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Thirunelveli</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Thiruvallur</td>
<td>1569</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Thiruvannamalai</td>
<td>2033</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Thiruvarur</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Thoothukudi</td>
<td>1525</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Vellore</td>
<td>2466</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Villupuram</td>
<td>2318</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virudhunagar</strong></td>
<td><strong>1399</strong></td>
<td><strong>134</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TAMIL NADU</strong></td>
<td><strong>43656</strong></td>
<td><strong>4088</strong></td>
<td><strong>385</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** District Information System for Education (DISE)
Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in Virudhunagar District

Since 1990s, India has been moving to decentralize governance of education through a constitutional amendment that authorizes states to establish a tiered governance structure to implement central and state education policies and schemes. Through this process village, block and district-level bodies were created and empowered. The aim of this decentralized planning and management of education is to ensure local participation and involvement in the education process. The formation of PTA in schools and VEC at the local level are efforts directed towards bringing about changes at the school level through local efforts.\(^46\)

Objectives of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

The specific objectives of the Parent Teacher Association are as follows:

- To develop good relationship and better co-operation between the parents and the teachers;
- To guide the students for their improvements in social, economic, cultural and educational activities;
- To develop leadership among students;
- To give necessary assistance to the parents and teachers to publish literary magazines, organizing cultural, library meetings etc.\(^47\)
The objective of forming Parent Teacher Association in schools is to enroll all the school going children in the nearby schools, prevent dropouts and help schools to enhance the quality of teaching and learning process. Question banks, Booklets and Model Question papers for Standard X and XII are printed and distributed by the State Parent Teacher Association. All the High and Higher Secondary Schools which show 100% pass percentage in March / April Government Examinations have been given certificates by the State Parent Teacher Association. The functioning of PTA is watched at district level.\(^{48}\)

**Activities of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

In *Virudhunagar* district, there was an example of innovative methods of overcoming a lack of material resources. These generally relied upon bridging partnerships between schools and community or parents. PTA, VEC and wealthy individuals all were found to have been involved in upgrading the physical infrastructure of the schools. This is discussed further in the Community and Parent Participation in *Virudhunagar* district section below.\(^{49}\)
Community and Parent Participation in Virudhunagar District

Community involvement in the school management and functioning in obtaining material improvements saw many examples that highlighted the potential of community and parent participation. For instance, the PTA of *Virudhunagar* Panchayat Primary Education School, *Vadamalapuram* demanded a computer lab. They themselves took charge of mobilizing the funds. In addition, the PTA provided the school with screens to divide multi-grade classrooms, as well as tables and chairs for teachers at *Vellur* Panchayat Primary Education School in *Virudhunagar*. The Panchayat provided two teachers, constructed separate latrines for girls and boys, and drinking water for the school.\(^{50}\)

### Table.IV-4

**Parent Teacher Association in Virudhunagar District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education District</th>
<th>No of Schools</th>
<th>Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>HSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruppukkottai</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Virudhunagar</em></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Department of School Education, District Profile Virudhunagar district.*

The PTA donated a clock and flowers to the school, and remains involved in the functioning of the school. In addition, the PTA visits the school often and remains in contact with the teachers and their needs. Such community support in a school with only 2 teachers is important.
However, community and parent support cannot be the end solution. School records from Moolipatti showed that roughly 50% of the school, one teacher was absent – meaning that all five standards were taught by a single teacher. This occurred despite the strong links with the community. Community and parent involvement is therefore not synonymous with accountability and monitoring. Linkages between systems of monitoring and accountability, and community participation need to be made.51

**Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**

A Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a formal organization that consists of parents, teachers and school staff. The organization’s goals may vary from organization to organization, but essentially the goals include volunteerism of parents, encouragement of teachers and students, community involvement, and welfare of students and families. It is similar to a PTA or Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA).52

**Board of Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**

A Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) generally consists of a board. The members may include a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. They may also include various specialty positions, such as hospitality or programs. The board typically governs the PTO by creating and voting on meeting dates, general meeting programs, etc.53
Activities of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

PTOs encourage parent, teacher and community involvement by providing programs that facilitate so. These activities may include bicycle safety, drug awareness, and energy conservation, reading programs, science programs, maths programs and pedestrian safety.\(^{54}\)

The PTO sponsors assistance to teachers in classroom setting, holds fund-raisers for supplemental educational materials and experiences, supports school and family social interaction, and provides a non-biased forum for sharing information on issues that impact our children. It is our belief that the team effort of a parent teacher organization offers the best possible learning environment for our children.\(^{55}\)

Parent Teacher Organization Vs Parent Teacher Association

A Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very similar to a Parent Teacher Association (PTA). One of the most notable differences is that a PTA is supported by a state and thus funds are also sent to these offices to help sustain the PTA programme. A PTO is local and does not pay dues or other fees to a national umbrella organization.\(^{56}\)

Profile of the Primary Education System in Virudhunagar District

The following table provides a snapshot of the primary education system in Virudhunagar district.
Table: IV-5

Profile of the Primary Education System in Virudhunagar District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Virudhunagar District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>School Age population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1.98 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1.91 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.89 lakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Total no. of primary Schools</td>
<td>1073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>School supervision and Inspection</td>
<td>By periodical visits and annual inspections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State level – SPO(DPEP) &amp; DEE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District level – DEEO(DPC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Block level – BRC &amp; AEEOs (4+2 officers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>District officers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>District Elementary Education Officer</td>
<td>(DPEP) District Programme Coordinator Virudhunagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Principal, DIET</td>
<td>Kariyapatti via Jokilpatti, Virudhunagar district</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Information System for Education (DISE)

The functioning of government primary schools at the district level comes under the purview of the District Collectorate and is managed and administered by the District Education Office. This is overseen directly by the District Elementary Education Officer (DEEO) with the assistance of District Assistant Education officers (DAEO) and District Additional
Assistant Education Officers (DAAEO) who report directly to the DEEO. Each AEO and AAEO has responsibility of about 50-60 schools. The typical primary school has 5 grades (or classes or standards), - 1 through 5 - and has a head master/mistress (HM) at the helm. The HM is usually the senior teacher with at least 10 years teaching experience, which may or may not be in primary classes. They usually have teaching responsibility, as well. HMs usually does not receive any special training specifically for the post of HM. The minimum educational qualifications for primary school teachers are secondary school (12 years) plus 2 years of teacher training. All teachers satisfied these minimum requirements; some teachers in the district even had bachelor’s degrees (in education and other subjects). HMs of school in a ‘block” attend a meeting every month (or every two months) which is also attended by the AEO and AEEO for the area. These meetings are the forums for the district administration to inform or train HMs on any new decisions, schemes, government initiatives and policies affecting education at the district level.\textsuperscript{57}

Teachers belonging to schools in a geographically proximate area also meet every month (on a Saturday, usually the 3rd) to discuss teaching methods, share teaching experiences, hold model classes or be trained by ‘block resource persons’. The DAEOs and DAAEOs are senior HMs who have a Bachelor degree in Education and are usually from the
same district. They are the district officers responsible for school supervision and inspection. The District Elementary Education Officer relies on his AEOs and AAEOs to provide him with a picture of the functioning of schools in his district. In addition to basic supervisory duties, they are also an important piece in the teacher-training infrastructure. These district officers make decisions on which teachers are invited to participate in teacher training programs. They also select teachers who will be trained as ‘block resource persons’ and in turn train other teachers in their geographical area. They are thus the link between the school and the government administration on one hand, and between the teachers and district teacher training institutes on the other. In addition, they are the also in charge of disbursing salaries to teachers and HMs, and annual funds earmarked for schools (such as an annual sum for TLM, or annual maintenance funds). Lastly, he/she also has the authority to approve medical and other types of leave, which require prior permission, for teachers and HMs.

**Administration and School Management in Virudhunagar District**

According to our model of effective schools, one of the important pieces is the context within which primary schools function. This piece is the administrative machinery of the schools, blocks and districts within which the schools operate. The responsibilities of this machinery fall under the broad categories of School management and District
governance which includes (but is not limited to) the important functions of capacity building i.e. training of teachers, Head Masters and other actors in the district education system such as the education officers and school supervision and inspection.60

Working Pattern of a School

Generally the academic year of the educational institution starts with first day of June of the year and ends with the 15th day of April of the following year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: IV-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Pattern of a School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Working Days for a year</th>
<th>Working Hours Per Day</th>
<th>Workload of a Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and Middle Schools</td>
<td>220 days</td>
<td>9.30 am to 4.30 pm</td>
<td>20 Periods /Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High and Higher Secondary Schools</td>
<td>200 days</td>
<td>Urban 8.30 am to 5.00 pm</td>
<td>15 Periods /Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rural 9.00 am to 5.30 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Information System for Education (DISE)

Head Master’s Role in School Management

In most of the areas covered by this study, small schools were the norms, with the Head Master having teaching responsibility as well (usually as class teacher of the higher grades in the schools).61

The Head Master’s role in school management is limited to that of performing routine day-to-day administrative functioning and routine maintenance of the school. This includes conducting the school assembly
and keeping track of teacher attendance. In addition, there are some non-routine responsibilities such as attending Head Master meetings at the block level, PTA meetings and VEC meetings. Routine tasks performed on an annual basis include drawing up the timetable, establishing some school policies and determining school expenditures.\textsuperscript{62}

**Powers of Head of an Institution**

- Supervising the teachers
- Maintaining attendance of teachers and records
- Reviewing the notes of lessons
- Sanctioning of leave to teachers
- Preparation of statement for claiming pay for teachers
- Conducting District Level examination.\textsuperscript{63}

(Quarterly-September, Half Yearly-December, Annual- March/April)

**Head Master’s Tasks**

Despite limited responsibility, the Head Master’s tasks are multifaceted and complex. In addition to teaching, day-to-day running of the school, which involves administrative and record-keeping tasks and maintaining the facilities, they are responsible for liaising with the community and parents. It would appear that with all the teaching responsibility they shoulder, they would be hard-pressed to find the time to perform any additional duties effectively. Also worth noting is that for all the organizational management they have to do, they receive no
special training for the role of Head Master. They are selected from the ranks of teachers on the basis of seniority (any teacher with 10 years teaching experience can apply for a promotion). There is no pre-service training before they take up this post and no in-service training catering specifically to Head Master’s that we were made aware of.  

The Head Masters typically exercise little authority in the decision-making process of education at the block or district level. They have little say in the allocation of resources of even their own school. They do not participate in decisions that affect their ability to improve student achievement. Curricula are designed at the state level, often with little attention to the diversity of the schools; textbooks and teaching guides are provided by the state; teachers’ appointments, transfers and training schedules are all governed by the district-level authorities. Even teacher leaves are approved by Assistant Education Officer (AEO) and not by Head Master. Teachers are appointed, assigned, and promoted at the district level, leaving Head Masters little control over the selection and discipline of their teachers. All this seems to have undermined the role of Head Master completely. He/she is in reality little more than a member of the teaching staff of the school with some minor additional administrative responsibility.
It is certainly worth noting that in the schools that situated in Virudhunagar district, a few Head Masters’ who are dynamic, resourceful and exhibited some leadership qualities seemed. Such schools, without exception, had a perceptibly superior look and feel than those that lacked effective leaders.66

School Governance in Virudhunagar District

The district elementary education office is located at Virudhunagar and it is headed by the District Elementary Education Officer (DEEO) who reports to the Director of Elementary Education at the Directorate of Elementary Education situated in the State capital. The function of the DEEO is to maintain administrative control over elementary education in Virudhunagar district. This is achieved through the staff of Assistant Educations Officers (AEOs) and Additional Assistant Education Officers (AAEOs) that reports to the DEEO. In addition, the Virudhunagar district is divided into blocks each of which has a Block Resource Centre (BRC) which is manned by a BRC Supervisor and BRC personnel. Until recently, the BRC structure was a characteristic of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), but with the introduction of the SSA scheme, BRCs now exist in all districts of Tamil Nadu including Virudhunagar district. The BRC in Virudhunagar, which has been a DPEP since 1996, has been charged with the task of institutional capacity building. At the village-level where the school actually resides is the VEC.
Finally, at the helm of the school is the principal or HM (for Headmaster or Headmistress) who, along with the school teaching staff is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the school.\(^\text{67}\)

**Role of DIET in Virudhunagar District**

In addition to the school governance structure in the district described above, there are support services provided at the district-level by the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) which are equipped to provide various types to academic and management support. This includes, pre-service and in-service teacher training and training programmes for education officers. The DIETs are also responsible for working with the district education office to provide educational management and planning the training structure in Tamil Nadu which follows a ‘cascade’ approach whereby, DIET teachers are trained at the State capital by the Directorate of Teacher Education and Training (DTERT). They, in turn, train BRC personnel. Finally, the BRCs provide academic guidance, counselling and training to teachers. The hope is that the BRCs provide training that is tailored to and relevant in the local context of the schools within the block.\(^\text{68}\)

It is clear from all the aforesaid recommendations that the role of the district training institutions is emerging as a crucial element in capacity building of the education system at the district, block school
and village level. In the light of the fact that not all the districts even have a well-staffed functional DIET (as in Virudhunagar), serious attention needs to be paid to this aspect. For decentralization to be effective there has to be resource mobilization at the grassroots level. But the majority of the rural communities are currently and simply not equipped to handle such responsibilities.\textsuperscript{69}

The current infrastructure of the DIETs is clearly not equipped to handle this mammoth task of capacity building at a grassroots level. In addition to the strong training structures recommended above for DEEOs, AEOs, HMs and teachers, the DIETs simply have to be made more robust to perform all these tasks effectively.\textsuperscript{70}

**Educational System in Virudhunagar District**

As mentioned earlier, the District Assistant Education Officers (DAEOs) and Additional Assistant Education Officers (AAEOs) perform the main supervisory function in the district educational system. They are the inspection officers as well as the academic resource persons who provide pedagogic support to teachers and set up training schedules for teachers. The job description of the Assistant Education Officer (AEO) and AAEO is thus a very demanding one, combining both administrative and academic tasks. Each AEO/AAEO handles about 50 to 60 schools (the number is sometimes even higher than that) and about 200 teachers.\textsuperscript{71} A list of some of the main functions follows:
I. **Administrative Functions of the DAEOs and AAEOs:**

- To disseminate information on new policies and government initiatives
- To disburse salaries of teachers and HMs
- To inspect and administer all matters related to teacher employment which include (but are not limited to) religious/medical/other types of leave; transfer and promotion proposals; maintain a seniority list of teachers; life insurance, provident fund and pension related retirement issues
- Disburse government-allocated funds to schools (for TLM, annual maintenance and such) and maintain accounts for the same
- Oversee distribution of free textbooks, teaching guides, free uniforms and any other resources provided to the schools by the government
- Maintain list of teacher vacancies in the schools in his/her jurisdiction
- Liaise with the VEC to keep them in the loop of the district education administration.  

II. **Academic Functions of the DAEOs and AAEOs**

- To supervise and inspect all schools in their jurisdiction. This function includes making at least 3-4 school visits, one of which is a day-long thorough school inspection while the other 2-3 are unscheduled surprise visits to monitor the functioning of the school.
- Prepare a written report of each school visit that is maintained by the school. Each report typically contains information of pupil attendance at the time of visit, some broad observations of the visit and any pressing matter that was discussed with the HM. It may be worth noting that there is no copy of this report maintained at any district office.

- Prepare a log of his/her monthly activities and send to DEO.

- Complete exhaustive report of school annual inspection and send to DEO.

- Bring to DEO’s attention any pressing matters emerging out of a regular school visit. Note that matters such as teacher vacancies, infrastructure issues such as no toilets, and inadequate space for learners in classrooms are considered routine and not urgent enough to be reported outside of the annual inspection report.

- Collect and compile school-level data on indicators such as enrolment, completion rate, drop-out rate and repetition rate; all data is collected on the basis of gender and social class (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/ Backward Class/ Most Backward Class).

- Evaluate teachers and make suggestions on teaching practices.

- Liaise with the DIETs to send teachers on appropriate training programmes.

- Keep track of different training programmers that every teacher in their jurisdiction has attended.
The present study clearly indicates that the AEOs and AAEOs constitute the most vital link in the district education administration structure. They are the go-between personnel used by the government and decision-makers at the higher levels of education administration to disseminate information and details of implementation of education policies to schools and local communities. Equally important is their role in the current accountability structure, as they are the key information sources that provide the district administration about the actual goings-on in the classrooms, schools and communities across the district. They form the link between the VEC, schools and district education office.\textsuperscript{73}

**Duties of Assistant Education Officers (AEOs)**

The workload of the Assistant Education Officers (AEOs) and Additional Assistant Education Officers (AAEOs) (collectively referred to as AEOs) is clearly very high. Neglect on any of the various fronts that these officers’ function can seriously compromise the district administration of the education system. Despite all the importance of this position, these officers receive no pre-service training before taking up this post. They receive little or no formal in-service training. The only training they get is on-the-job. They attend meetings with the DEO on a regular basis. During some of these meetings, they are given informal ‘training’ on handling of some administrative matters. All the AEOs we met expressed a desire to be trained on education administration.
In view of such a heavy workload, AEOs simply cannot be expected to do a good job of academic supervision, which is an important piece of the teacher training and support system. Apart from that, the system by which DIETs inform the AEOs of upcoming trainings is faulty. Trainings are not scheduled well ahead of time and oftentimes, AEOs are aware of a training just before and sometimes after a training has taken place. This results in lost training opportunities for teachers in the jurisdiction of the AEO. The mechanism by which AEOs select teachers for a particular training could also be improved. More often than not, teachers who are selected by AEOs to be resource persons for the block are selected on the basis of their educational qualifications and rather than their teaching performance.74

In addition, though the AEOs occupy an important place in the administration, they are virtually powerless to approve any direct action. Though they handle all administrative duties pertaining to teachers, they have no authority to hire and fire teachers. Any disciplinary action they wish to take against a teacher for non-performance is forwarded to the DEEO who is the ultimate authority on elementary education in the district. The most they can do is issue warnings, which are innocuous and have little effect on teachers and school management. Any disciplinary actions they recommend against teachers (for non-performance) are almost always overturned due to the affiliations
between strong teachers unions and political forces in the state. This injects a deep sense of hopelessness and lack of ambition among these officers. For any issues pertaining to improvement of the physical infrastructure, they have to make recommendation to the Panchayats Unions and District Collectorate, in addition to the DEEO. They have no power to approve any such work. All the AEOs we met expressed this sense of powerlessness. This powerlessness has a ripple effect to the lower levels as well. Schools HMs and teachers often stated that they did not think it worth mentioning their problems to the inspection officers because they did not think anything would come of it. This, in effect, undermines the authority of these inspection officers over the schools and teachers they supervise. Lastly, the mechanism by which these officers are recruited seriously compromises the accountability of teachers and schools that the AEOs and AAEOs are responsible for.\(^75\)

Since these officers are senior HMs usually from the same area, they often have prior associations with the teachers, HMs and schools in their jurisdiction. This collegiality with the very same people they are expected to supervise and hold accountable, weakens the system of accountability for which they are responsible. Accountability The upshot of the current district administration and school management set-up with its weak system of school supervision described above is that there is little or no accountability in the system – at the level of teachers,
schools, blocks and districts. With no formal monitoring and evaluation of levels of student learning, there is no way to know how well or poorly the system of education is accomplishing its ultimate goal – that of teaching a child how to read, write and contribute meaningfully to society. The lack of accountability is a feature stressed by every state and district level official who was interviewed. Unfortunately, almost no one had any suggestions of how the problem could be addressed. One unanimous opinion expressed by most education officials as a major factor contributing to the (poor) quality of primary education was the ‘poor quality’ of teachers who suffered from apathy towards their profession and an overall lack of commitment.76

The following section will take a closer look at the teacher’s issues in Virudhunagar district.

**Teachers’ Issues in Virudhunagar District**

As in most states and most countries, teachers’ salaries constitute the largest share of the education budget in Tamil Nadu. (Some officials put the figure at 95% - but no exact numbers were made available for this study). Salaries, often considered an important source of incentive, do not appear to be a strong motivator of performance in India. Poor performance of teachers would thus contribute to a major lack of efficiency in the system. Teachers are paid according to standard government salary scales.77
All teachers in the study region expressed satisfaction with his salary and other employment benefits. A 3\textsuperscript{rd} standard teacher in a poor village in Virudhunagar district earned a gross income of about Rs. 9000 per month, and by his own admission, many of the students coming to his class, had family income of about Rs. 500 per month. By several accounts, teachers in rural and semi-urban area schools are often the richest in the community. In Virudhunagar district teachers are purportedly running side businesses as money lenders. Like all government servants, teachers are entitled to many different types of vacation in addition to all national holidays, summer and winter vacations, and even some local holidays. Teacher absenteeism within this system of approved vacations is rampant. Almost every master teacher attendance register revealed some teacher or other in every school absent on casual or medical leave every single day. Several teachers, including HMs, avail of the provision of medical leave which can run into weeks at a time by their own admission. It is not hard to get a medical certificate which is mandatory for medical leave to be approved. In terms of capacity building of teachers - over the last decade the system of in-service training has been considerably strengthened.\textsuperscript{78}

With the formation of DIETs and BRCs there is formal system of teacher training in place. Although not all teachers are given equal amount of training, most teachers feel that they get an adequate amount
of training, if not too much. The only subject they feel they need more training is in teaching of English, but the problems there go beyond training and lie almost solely in a lack of fluency in the language.

One other issue that surfaced was teacher placement and transfer. According to AEOs, any request for a transfer by a teacher must be approved. (Provided there is a vacancy in the receiving school). This obviously results a high rate of transfer out of schools in remote areas and unavailability of teachers willing to serve in already underserved areas thus underscoring the issue of inequitable distribution of resources. The entire system of teacher accountability seems to have been further weakened by the presence of strong teachers unions, which enjoy political clout. Several officials at the state, district and block level reveal that the teachers in Tamil Nadu are an empowered lot, which is backed by strong teachers union. This has resulted in the district officials feeling completely powerless to take any strong action against teachers for absenteeism, unprofessional behaviour or just plain non-performance of their basic teaching duties. Members of the BRCs and DIETs complained that they could not take action against teachers who would not attend even mandatory training programmes.79

**Provision of Teachers in Schools**

The most critical input into the classroom is the teacher. 80% of the classrooms in Virudhunagar district have students of more than one
grade. Teachers face large pupil teacher ratios (in some classes, teachers were responsible for nearly 80 students). In spite of recent district level reforms that have improved the appointing process and made recruitment and selection of teachers more merit-based, vacancies are a large problem, particularly in rural areas that are far from larger towns. A common complaint made was that once a rural post is filled, the teacher often requests a transfer to a larger town or a place closer to his/her home. Most of the AEOs agreed with this fact, and said that they usually grant transfers when the requested position opens, even if a teacher has served in one post for less than six months. Rural schools are most disadvantaged as a result of this process, as those posts are more difficult to fill and keep filled for a longer period of time.80

**Training Programme for Teachers**

In-service training programmes for teachers under the aegis of SSA are programmed in collaboration with the Directorate of Teacher Education, Research and Training (DTERT). The training programmes are structured to enable the teachers not only to strengthen their teaching skills but also to update the knowledge in their respective subjects. The DTERT also coordinates with SSA to strengthen the classroom process, augment child friendly teaching methodologies and bring out the inherent talents of students in primary and upper primary schools. The field level programmes of the DTERT are organized through
the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) which are involved in training of elementary teachers as well as monitoring and action research of the SSA programme.\textsuperscript{81}

**Learning Inputs in Schools**

*Virudhunagar* district had many of the required classroom learning inputs. Nearly every child had a complete set of textbooks, as well as a slate. The only exception to this was *Amathur* Panchayat Union Middle School in *Virudhunagar*, in which only 50% students had textbooks. The students and teacher explained by saying that the rest of their books had fallen apart or got lost. However, many important inputs were not adequately provided.\textsuperscript{82}

**Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) in Schools**

Directorate Teacher Education Research Training (DTERT) has emphasized the importance of using additional Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) other than textbooks in recent years. Teaching learning aids are extremely important in the learning process, as they supplement children’s knowledge and recognition of content covered in the textbook curriculum. Most of the classrooms had TLM to some capacity on the walls, though many of them were placed higher than the students’ eye levels (so they were not able to really see the materials).
In addition, most of the teachers were not using any TLM and almost all teachers would take teaching learning aids out of locked cupboards. It did not appear that TLMs are used much in every day instruction. Teachers supposedly receive Rs. 500 per year to spend on making and buying materials that aid the instructional process. However, several of the teachers mentioned that they either have not received the Rs. 500 for this year, or it is often not enough. There were two main ways of dealing with this situation: either teachers spent their own money on buying materials for TLMs, or they did not and subsequently their classes did not have that resource. Other teaching learning aids, such as audio cassette players were found even in large rural classrooms that did not have electricity – warranting a questioning of their pertinence.83

Physical Infrastructure of Schools in Virudhunagar District

Physical infrastructure includes adequate buildings with classrooms that allow instruction to take place without disruption and have enough space for the learners to participate in activities, clean and well-swept floors, well-ventilated spaces besides, latrines for girls and boys, drinking water and enough physical space for learners to engage in physical activity on campus grounds.
Material Resources of Schools and Classrooms in Virudhunagar district are briefly mentioned below.\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{\textit{i. Material Resources of Schools and Class Rooms}}

There are two basic categories of material inputs that add to the quality of the primary schooling experience in Virudhunagar district i.e. physical infrastructure and classroom learning inputs. This study looked at both aspects of a school’s material resources. Virudhunagar district has made considerable inroads in addressing infrastructural inputs over the last several years and the effect can be seen. A recent Survey found that lack of access to schooling is no longer cited as a significant factor in explaining non-enrolment and non-attendance.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in Virudhunagar district has greatly improved children’s access to schooling by these investments. However, this study shows that there are still unmet needs that do impact attendance, enrolment and completion rates.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{\textit{ii. Status of Schools in Buildings}}

There is no significant discrepancy regarding school facilities such as classroom and status of buildings. It is heartening to note that all the buildings in Virudhunagar district have pucca buildings for the schools. In order to empower the Headmasters to identify the various strategies...
and interventions to enhance the pass percentage of students studying in the Government High and the Higher Secondary Schools in the Board Examinations, training programmes were organized at the District Level and Regional Level for 113 Headmasters.\(^6\)

iii. Space and Ventilation in Schools

Certain schools in Virudhunagar district are cramped and ill-suited for instruction while the district administration has made inroads in improving the physical infrastructure of their primary schools, much more is needed. Few classrooms in the schools were held outside due to lack of space. Indeed, in Virudhunagar district Panchayats Union Middle School in Amathur, 3 classes were held outside, because of lack of space in the buildings – while the school had recently found the funds to build a computer lab. While having a computer lab is laudable, the most impressive element of that example is the fact that resources were successfully mobilized.

Most of the classrooms had extremely poor ventilation, walls mired with dirt, and lacked enough seating space for students to be able to move around and complete activities. One school that had a cost-effective design that also allowed for good ventilation was a Vadmalapuram in Virudhunagar district. However, almost every other school in the district had cramped conditions that made learning difficult. Classrooms in
certain schools were also not cleaned and in few schools students were asked to sweep the floors with their hands.\(^{87}\)

Most schools in Virudhunagar district as many as 80% are multi-grade classrooms. This not only encompasses schools where one teacher is responsible for more than one class, but also where more than one teacher must teach in the same classroom. At least half of the classrooms hosted more than one class. Around 60% of such classrooms had small wooden panels to ‘divide’ the classes. However, they often were ineffective as the noise from the other classes caused disturbance to the learners. Teaching under such conditions is nearly impossible. Teachers must compete not only with disturbance caused by their own students, but also by activities going on in other classes.\(^{88}\)

iv. Toilet Facilities in Schools

Separate toilet facilities for girls and boys are extremely important factors in the enrolment and attendance in primary schooling. Of the nearly 20 schools in Kariyapatti taluk, only two had latrines for students. One of these schools had separate latrines for girls and boys, whereas the other had a single latrine that was in poor condition, without a door or water. Thirteen of the schools in Rajapalayam taluk lacked latrines for students. This lack of toilets has severe ramifications for the learning process. Teachers often mentioned that the reason for discrepancies between recorded class attendance and actual observed attendance was
because several students had to go to the village or home to access a toilet. In addition, parents are more likely to send their daughters to school when there are separate facilities for girls and boys. So, lack of latrines in schools causes attendance problems in Virudhunagar district.  

v. Drinking Water Facilities in Schools

Only a few schools in Virudhunagar district had drinking water available on school grounds. It was often, just as in the case of latrines, cited as a reason for children leaving school in the middle of the day. Adequate drinking water facilities are crucial as they impact enrolment, in addition to the aforesaid effect on attendance. The heat in cramped village schools is extreme, especially with the lack of ventilation. Water is necessary for children to be able to concentrate and learn at their best ability in the study region.  

vi. Use of Blackboards in Schools

Every classroom had a blackboard. When teachers needed additional space than that provided by the blackboard, they used several innovative methods to make some. For instance, several teachers painted black paint on the walls of the classrooms and would use that as a blackboard. Another example is that teachers would use wooden classroom dividers as a space to write multiplication tables on if needed.
Upgradation of Physical Infrastructure in Schools

In Virudhunagar district, there was an example of innovative methods of overcoming a lack of material resources. These generally relied on bridging partnerships between schools and the community or parents. The PTA and VEC wealthy individuals all were found to have been involved in upgrading the physical infrastructure of the schools.\(^\text{92}\)
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