PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN GRAM PANCHAYAT ADMINISTRATION IN KARNATAKA: A STUDY OF BAILHONGAL TALUK

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

executive summary

Submitted
To
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K.L.E. Society’s
LINGARAJ COLLEGE, BELAGAVI
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The introduction of Panchayati Raj system signified the beginning of a new era of participatory development and laid the foundation of ‘democratic decentralization’ to:

- promote people’s participation in rural development programmes;
- provide an institutional framework for popular administration;
- act as a medium of social and political change;
- facilitate local mobilization; and
- prepare and assist in the implementation of development plans.

The Gram Panchayat plays a significant role in the democratic decentralization process, as it is the institution at the bottom level of the system; drawing villagers closer to participate in decision-making instances. The path of decentralization has been successful in some parts of the country; but disparities are present in certain regions/districts in terms of effectiveness of implementation, functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and self-generated development initiatives.

In the light of above, a detailed study/survey on understanding capacities of gram-panchayats in the Belgaum Districts for development initiatives was undertaken by me, with a grant support from the UGC.

For this an exhaustive survey was undertaken at gram-panchayat level, during this period, in the districts of 5 identified Panchayats of Bailhongal Taluka. The primary focus of the study was to understand the capacities of gram-panchayats for development initiatives and help design/develop training needs for building capacity of elected members of gram-panchayats; a tool towards good governance and local level development.

As a part of the study, a Gram Panchayat level survey was undertaken in total 5 Gram-Panchayats (GPs), Belgaum districts of Bailhongal Taluka.

Surveyed Belgaum District Bailhongal Taluka Gram Panchayats

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<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Taluka</th>
<th>Panchayats</th>
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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Belgaum</td>
<td>Bailhongal</td>
<td>Govanakop</td>
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<td>02</td>
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Main findings/conclusions from the study, coupled with the learning from a SWOT analysis, include:

(i) Panchayat members do not take self-initiatives on generating development programs, nor are they aware on the village development process and local resource mobilization, taxation, etc.

(ii) The needs of villagers are not assessed for development initiatives, it is as per GP Chairman choice which suits his needs or as pressured by the dominant caste groups.

(iii) The structure created for people’s participation is adequate, but the processes are not adhered to as required, and hence needs supervision to ensure proper utilization of institutional tools.

(iv) Most of the time the meeting agenda is not discussed and passed from the gram sabha by a handful of dominant people in GPs. This procedure is followed quite frequently by the Chairman/Secretary.

(v) Representation of women, backward castes like SC/ST is only on paper. Dominance of various caste groups, unsocial elements and factional fights hinders the functioning of the gram-panchayats for rural development.

(vi) Greater inclusion of common people in decision-making processes is needed; making use of already existing Gram Sabha; seeking to increase participation of minorities (women and backward castes).

(vii) Policy level changes are required to: a) properly assess the developmental needs of community/panchayat-stakeholders and improve the allocation and utilization of funds; b) increase administrative control in order to have an effective system of accountability of elected representatives.

(viii) Majority of GP members reported that they did not receive training, and if some Chairman did receive training, it was inadequate as it was only for a day.
Avg. Budget allocation per GP shows that there is disparity in the distribution of funds per GP from village to village.

Weak leaders, delay in funding process, lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities of the elected representatives, overindulging officials, excessive political interference, lack of training, poverty, illiteracy and negligible participation of women are the main issues which needs immediate attention in order to empower the Gram panchayats in the Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka. Thus, the panchayats in the Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka of these have great room for improvement and require capacity building.

A SWOT analysis was also undertaken to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for effective functioning of Gram Panchayat in Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka. This helped in designing the training guidelines/framework for capacity building of gram-panchayats.

Taking into consideration the learnings and insights gained from the GP level survey, secondary research and the SWOT Analysis; a Training Guidelines/Framework for capacity building of gram-panchayat stakeholders is suggested in this report, based on three approaches - (i) Bottom-up approach, to build the Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge of GP members; (ii) Partnership/Handholding approach, to strengthen the relationships between organizations working at the GP level; and (iii) Community Organizing approach, to draw community members into a greater participation in the development of their villages.

The study report consists of five parts: the contains of I : Introduction, II : Profile of Bailhongal Taluk, III : Political Participation in Local Administration, IV : Impact of Political Participation on Panchayat Administration and Development: A Case Study of Selected Five GPs, V : Conclusion and Policy Prescription.

The summary findings in respect of capacities in gram-panchayats and the SWOT Analysis, and the Part-II highlights the approaches and training guidelines/framework required for capacity building of the stakeholders of gram panchayat, in these Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka.

The nature substance and thrust of officials and non-officials relationship, in the context of Panchayat, has been discussed and analysed in earlier sections of this report. Our
task now will be to make certain policy prescriptions which may significantly contribute towards improving the functioning of the Panchayat. These suggestions are being made with the belief that government policy makers, in league with non-officials, may implement them in an expeditious manner to achieve the long-term objectives of the Panchayat in particular and Panchayat Raj Institutions in general.

1) Government officials must develop a sense of commitment to the cause of upliftment of the rural population. This calls for a great deal of tolerance, patience and understanding of rural problems in terms of public interest.

2) Public officials have a great responsibility to ensure discipline formally and informally. By discipline we mean the ability to function according to rules, regulations and procedures which can go a long way toward proper utilization of scare resources for the benefit of the people.

3) Government officials must have a good mental deposition towards the rural population may should not assume an air of superiority in their dealings with rural people. If they maintain cordial relations the objective of an action motivated and problem solving approach can be put into practice without delay.

4) Areas of Maladjustment or tension between officials and non-officials are to be identified that the intra-group and inter-group levels. This may be due to sharp differences in local politics leadership owing to caste, sect or other extraneous factors or these tensions may be due to the practice of posting of development officers on deputation to of local self government Institutions who have dual royalty. To remove tensions between officials and non-officials at the intra and inter-group levels, the officials should not function in a bureaucratic, indifferent and superficial manner elected members and officials should develop a mentality and tradition of mutual trust and respect while catering to popular aspirations.

5) The elected representatives should give greater importance to matters relating to policy, planning, production, and public participation at the ground level rather then interfering with routine administrative matter should be left to officials, who have the necessary expertise to operate effectively a catalytic agents for implementing socio-economic
welfare measures. The present system is new and the civil service will take time to develop sound traditions. It is question of mental adjustment to tasks a democratic spirit has to be developed among the officials while the non-officials should be made aware of the intricacies of functioning of Bureaucracy and development administration. This necessarily demands adjustment on the part of both officials and non-officials which can be ensured only in a gradual manner.

6) The government must take punitive steps against those elected representatives who take decision contrary to establish procedures, rules and regulations. Sometimes elected representatives may take wrong decisions, because of ignorance or lack of training in the legal matters. As such, job training course could be based on problem solving techniques and illustrated by simple case studies. The government also should devise ways and means to check undue pressure brought by non-official and political parties through provisions in the act.

Effective working of Panchayat system requires effective control and supervision of development bureaucracy by the political leaders, but the problem of his type of provisions and control by popular representatives, which has become a critical problem. The problem lies in lack of proper commitment and orientation. The officials and non-officials may not have fully appreciated each others rule thereby creating frequent deadlock and crises in development administrations. The lack of culture of political and proper appreciation of the Panchayat system at the lower levels by the officials has resulted in this type of feelings & actions such feelings and actions can be effectively avoided by organising workshops, and short term training courses. In this connection, training assumes an important role for orienting and making them committed to the development function.

This study report, on survey findings and training guidelines for capacity building of Gram Panchayats in Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka, is being presented to the UGC. Based on the study report, the government can plan its support towards implementation of the capacity building measures/training guidelines in the gram-panchayats of Belgaum district Bailhongal Taluka. Additionally, the GP level data compiled for 5 GPs shall be useful to the Government of Karnataka.