

Perception Study among Cluster Resource Persons

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.2 Objectives

1.3 Methodology

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Guidelines for CRPs roles and responsibilities

2.2 Involvement of Block Resource Coordinators

2.3 Assessment of CRP training needs

2.4 Tasks carried out during school visits

2.5 Time spent on various activities during monthly meetings

2.6 The work load of CRPs

2.7 How the CRPs can contribute to the LGP

2.8 Aspects on which CRPs need Assistance

2.9 Suggestions for changes in the roles

3. CONCLUSIONS

4. ANNEXURE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Learning Guarantee Programme of Azim Premji Foundation is now in its second year. This year, the Foundation has made specific efforts to involve the Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) in the programme. The efforts include

- briefing them in detail about the programme
- explaining to them the rationale and design of school wise feedback process adopted for the first year
- involving them in the feedback process for the participating schools in their cluster
- encouraging them to work with the schools to prepare for the next round of evaluation
- obtaining their views and inputs on the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP) process

As a part of the plan to work more closely with the CRPs, a need was felt to understand their perceptions and views on their role, expectations and limitations. This would help the Foundation in better integrating them in the programme. A quick study was carried out among the CRPs in the North East Karnataka region for the purpose. The details of the study are presented in the following pages.

1.2 Objectives

The aim of the study was to get an understanding of the perceptions, attitudes and expectations of the CRPs with respect to their work and responsibilities. The learning gained was to be used for developing processes to help in their greater involvement in the programme.

1.3 Methodology

A simple structured questionnaire based approach was used to collect the relevant data from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in a self completion format. A copy is provided in the annexure for reference.

The CRPs in the North East Karnataka region were invited in batches to a preview the advocacy film on the programme in early May, 2004. The questionnaire was given to them for completion before the film was screened, to avoid any bias. The respondents were requested not to identify themselves on the questionnaire in any way to ensure anonymity.

A total of 248 CRPs from the eight districts completed the questionnaire.

District	No of CRPs
Bagalkote	27
Bellary	40
Bidar	31
Bijapur	41
Gulbarga	45
Koppal	16
Raichur	28
Yadgir	20
TOTAL	248

The findings emerging from the study are summarised in the following pages.

2. FINDINGS

The findings are presented in the form of key aspects emerging from the study. The overall summary from all the respondents is discussed supported by district wise findings where ever needed.

2.1 Guidelines for CRPs roles and responsibilities

The Government of Karnataka has worked out detailed guidelines indicating the roles, responsibilities and tasks assigned to the CRPs. A question was asked to determine how many of the CRPs are aware of the guidelines as a prelude to understanding how they carry out their work. The findings present an interesting picture. More than half the CRPs (53.7%) have indicated that no such guidelines exist. This implies that they have not been thoroughly briefed and trained by the officials and is thus a cause for concern. The findings are largely similar across the districts with the exception of Bagalkote where almost 75% respondents have indicated that guidelines do exist.

Guidelines for CRPs Role Exist

District	No	Yes
Bellary	64.1%	35.9%
Koppal	37.5%	62.5%
Bagalkote	25.9%	74.1%
Gulbarga	78.6%	21.4%
Yadgir	65.0%	35.0%
Raichur	44.4%	55.6%
Bidar	53.3%	46.7%
Bijapur	43.9%	56.1%
Total	53.7%	46.3%

2.2 Involvement of Block Resource Coordinators(BRC)

The response to the involvement of BRCs in the monthly interaction meetings suggests that the BRCs, do in fact attend the interaction meetings regularly. About 80% of the respondents have indicated this. Here too, the findings are fairly uniform across all the districts. Bagalkote, as earlier leads on this indicator as well.

BRC Attendance at Monthly CRP Interactions

District	No	Yes
Bellary	10.3%	89.7%
Koppal	18.8%	81.3%
Bagalkote	3.7%	96.3%
Gulbarga	25.6%	74.4%
Yadgir	15.0%	85.0%
Raichur	42.9%	57.1%
Bidar	32.3%	67.7%
Bijapur	15.0%	85.0%
Total	20.5%	79.5%

2.3 Assessment of CRP training needs

An attempt was made to find out if the block administration was proactive in assessing the training requirements of the CRPs. Here too, about 80% of the respondents have indicated in the affirmative, suggesting that the administration does indeed take some steps in that direction. The findings across the districts are similar with Bagalkote leading, as in the other instance.

Regular Assessment of CRP Training Needs

District	No	Yes
Bellary	5.3%	94.7%
Koppal	14.3%	85.7%
Bagalkote	4.0%	96.0%
Gulbarga	34.9%	65.1%
Yadgir	30.0%	70.0%
Raichur	19.2%	80.8%
Bidar	38.7%	61.3%
Bijapur	12.2%	87.8%
Total	20.2%	79.8%

2.4 Tasks carried out during school visits

Feedback was sought on three specific tasks that the CRPs are supposed to perform while on their visits to the schools. A summary is given below.

Tasks Performed by the CRPs

Tasks	No	Yes
Test children on learning competencies	4.15%	95.9%
Observe class room processes and determine training needs of teachers other than those indicated by the HT	13.7%	86.3%
Make annual plan to be submitted to the BRC	28.5%	71.5%

As can be expected, a bulk of the CRPs claim to be performing these key tasks. While the quality and the integrity of the responses is open to question, the priority of the three is worth noting. The annual plan emerges at the bottom of the pile.

2.5 Time spent on various activities during monthly meetings

The CRPs are expected to carry out various tasks during their monthly visits to the schools. An attempt was made to determine the relative time allocation by the CRPs to them. While many respondents did not seem to differentiate amount of time spent on the different activities, some of them did allocate priorities. These are summarised below for the total sample of respondents in the order of extent of time spent.

Relative time Spent on Different Activities during Monthly Meetings

Activity	Relative ranking based on time spent
Feedback and discussion on class room practices	I (78.6%)
Preparing TLM for the next month lesson plan	II (62.5%)
Help teachers prepare next month's lesson plan	III (58.5%)
Discuss continuous evaluation process	IV (58.5%)
Organise training for teachers on various subjects	V (42.7%)
Discuss administrative issues and problems	VI (34.7%)

This looks somewhat surprising as it was expected that the CRPs end up spending too much time on administrative tasks and less on others. Also worth noting is the response to 'continuous evaluation process' which is perhaps not being practiced at all.

2.6. The work load of CRPs

The CRPs were queried on the number of schools they were expected to cover in a month and the number they could actually cover well, in their opinion. The key aspects emerging are

- There is a wide variation in the schools allotted to different CRPs. The range varies from as low as 8 to as high as 49.
- The average number of schools per CRP works out to about 19 with a modal value of 16
- Over 90% of the CRPs accept that they can not visit all the schools allotted to them during the month.
- The average number of schools indicated by them as being comfortable load which can allow them to perform all their designated tasks is 13 (modal value of 15).

As can be seen, the load on the CRPs is much more than what they can comfortably handle. They would certainly need help in managing their time more efficiently.

2.7 How the CRPs can contribute to the LGP

The CRPs were asked to react to six possible areas in which they could be interested in contributing to the programme. They were asked to prioritize these roles in order of interest to them. The findings are summarised for all respondents below, again in order of priority.

Aspects on which the CRPS can Contribute to LGP	
Aspect	Proportion of responses
Work with SDMC members to ensure improved enrolment and attendance	89.5%
Disseminating best practices to all schools	85.5%
Work with parents and village community to get their involvement in the program	84.3%
Development of question papers to test the children	63.7%
Evaluating schools on the criteria of the program	63.3%
Training of evaluators	37.9%

The preferences indicated make very interesting reading. As can be seen, there is some extent of 'bunching' of responses. The first three tasks are clearly preferred by most of the CRPs. Thereafter, there is a sharp drop in the remaining three tasks with the last task clearly being preferred by just over a third of the CRPs. The preference is clearly thus in favour of tasks which involve working with the community and the school teachers rather than get involved in the nitty- gritty of the evaluation process itself. This is perhaps a positive feedback from the perspective of the Foundation as mobilizing the community is an important task which has not featured on the list of the Foundation.

2.8 Aspects on which CRPs need Assistance

The CRPs were asked to identify two aspects out of a list of six on which they would like to have help in order to make them more effective as also contribute better to the LGP.

Assistance Needed by CRPs

Aspect	Proportion of responses
Methods for motivating the teachers	48.8%
Better processes and methods to evaluate learning outcomes of children	44.4%
Training in improved class room practices and transactions	37.1%
Developing better TLM	30.2%
Assessing infrastructure needs	14.9%
Improved administrative procedures	11.3%

The preferences are clearly identified. The CRPs need assistance in the first four areas indicated above.

2.9 Suggestions for changes in the roles

The CRPs were also asked to specify two areas where they would like to see changes in their role which would help them to perform their tasks better. The summarised findings are given below.

Required Changes in the Role of CRPs

Required Changes	Proportion of CRPs
Reduce the Administrative work	51.2%
Need More Training on academics aspects	27.0%
Provide More time for supervision	25.8%
Need more authority for better Performance	17.7%
Need more facilities for better functioning	16.9%
Need greater cooperation from community and teachers	8.1%
Need rewards and encouragement for better performance	8.1%
Need greater clarity on job specifications	5.2%
Need latest information about systems	4.0%
There should be continuous monitoring by higher officials	3.2%
Need regular feedback to improve	2.8%

As can be seen here, administrative load is clearly a problem area, unlike in the earlier response.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The data collected from the CRPs provides some clear directions for action. The key aspects are :

1. The responses across the districts on most of the questions follow a similar pattern. In other words, the data from the respondents is fairly consistent in terms of geographic variable. The only district which stands out in terms of a more positive response is Bagalkote, with perhaps Gulbarga being at the other extreme.
2. The lack of role clarity comes through fairly clearly. This is an aspect which would need to be addressed, perhaps jointly with the Government block level functionaries.
3. The CRPs are keen to participate in the LGP and have clearly indicated areas where they would like to contribute. These relate to working with the community and the parents. This is a good aspect as the Foundation can leverage on this for the better performance of the participating schools.
4. The assistance and more specifically, the training needs of the CRPs are also clearly articulated. How these can be provided needs to be explored.

ANNEXURE

Cluster Resource Persons Questionnaire

Namaskara! You, as the Cluster Resource Persons are the most important link between the administration and the schools. Hence, your views are extremely important in improving the education system. This is a simple questionnaire designed to collect your feedback. Your answers can be helpful in all of us achieving greater success in our efforts. Please give us honest answers. You do not have to identify yourself on this paper in any way. Your answers will be put together and analysed as a group. So please do not hesitate to give your genuine feedback.

Name of your block : Name of your district

1. Do simple guidelines exist for CRPs to understand their role and responsibilities? **NO** **YES**
2. Does the BRP attend the CRP monthly interaction meetings regularly? **NO** **YES**
3. Does the block academic structure regularly assess training needs for CRPs? **NO** **YES**
4. Do you test children on learning competencies during your school visits? **NO** **YES**
5. Do you observe classroom processes and assess training needs of teachers other than those mentioned by the Head Teacher? **NO** **YES**
6. Do you as a CRP make an annual plan of action and submit it to the BRC? **NO** **YES**
7. What are the ways in which you can contribute to the Learning Guarantee Programme in your area?
 - a. Disseminating and guidance on best practices to all schools **NO** **YES**
 - b. Evaluation of schools on criteria of the programme **NO** **YES**
 - c. Training of evaluators **NO** **YES**
 - d. Development of question papers for testing children **NO** **YES**
 - e. Work with SDMC members to ensure improved enrollment and attendance **NO** **YES**
 - f. Work with parents and village community to get their cooperation and involvement in the programme. **NO** **YES**
8. Here is a list of activities that may be carried out during the monthly interaction meetings. You may be spending differing amounts of time on these activities. Could you please rank these activities in terms of the amount of time you typically spend on each? Please mark 1 against the activity that you spend the most time on, 2 against the activity that you spend the next most time on and so on for all 6 activities.

Rank

 - a. Feedback and discussion on classroom practices
 - b. Help teachers prepare next months lesson plan
 - c. Discuss administrative issues and problems, new rules etc
 - d. Prepare TLM for the next months lesson plan
 - e. Organise training for teachers on various subjects
 - f. Discuss continuous evaluation process
9. You may need assistance in some areas that can help you to become more efficient and effective and also make your schools Learning Guarantee Schools. Of the following, please identify two areas where you feel that help would be of maximum help. Please put ticks only against two areas most essential to you.
 - a. Training in improved classroom practices and transactions
 - b. Observing and assessing infrastructure needs
 - c. Better processes and methods for evaluating learning outcomes of children
 - d. Developing better TLM
 - e. Administrative procedures
 - f. Methods for motivating teachers
10. How many schools in your area are you responsible for ?
11. How many schools can you visit in a month and do all tasks assigned to you ?
12. What are the two changes in the role of the CRPs would enable schools to perform better?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK