

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Education
Paper Name	Educational Administration, Management & Leadership in School Education
Module Name/ Title	Resource Centers at Block and Cluster Levels: Structure and Appraisal
Module Id	e-PG-EDN_13.21
Pre-requisites	Knowledge about SSA and DPEP
Objectives	<p>After going through this content the learner will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain the concept of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource centres in India. ● Discuss the role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under District Primary Education Programme. ● Understand the role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. ● Know about the role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under Right to Education ● Describe the significance of Resource Centres in India. ● Enumerate the structure of Resource Centres in India. ● Appraise the role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres in India.
Keywords	Block Resource Centres, Cluster Resource Centres

2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
Principal Investigator	Prof. P.K. Sahoo	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.
Co-Principal Investigator	Prof. Rajaram S. Sharma	Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT, New Delhi
Co-Principal Investigator	Prof. Dhananjay Yadav	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.
Paper Coordinators	Prof. Vidya Agarwal	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.

	Dr. J.S. Dhillon	Principal, Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar
Content Writer/Author (CW)	Dr. Gurmanjit Kaur	Khalsa College of Education, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar
Content Reviewer (CR)	Dr. Satnam Kaur	Khalsa College of Education, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar
Language Editor (LE)	Dr. Aerum Khan, Dr. Geeta Sharma	Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT

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1. Introduction

Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen years is a constitutional commitment in India. The Government of India initiated a number of programmes to attain the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), among which the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2001, is the most recent one. It aimed at achieving universal elementary education of good quality by 2010. SSA has been striving for this, for last 10 years with mixed results. Along with the ongoing systemic initiatives it has undertaken various additional measures like:

- > Lok Jumbish Programme

- Shiksha Karmi Project
- Bihar Education Project
- Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Programme
- Uttar Pradesh Education for All
- District Primary Education Program etc.

In the 10th year of SSA intervention in such a large scale venture covering the entire nation for Universalisation of Elementary Education, has now become main vehicle to implement Right to Education (RTE). The district and block level educational inspectorates and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) cannot attend pedagogical issues due to reasons like:

- distance from the schools
- limitations in terms of human resource
- nature of duty
- lack of training in various components
- academic character
- high number of the schools under coverage areas
- And many other responsibilities allotted to them.

In a decentralized and community carried programme like SSA, schools need to be supported from the nearest possible resource centers on a continuous and sustainable basis. The creation of the Block and Cluster Resource Centers on a large scale throughout the country represents an ambitious effort to provide academic structures that support and improve the quality of elementary education in schools. They were initially set up under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) which was implemented in a phased manner in selected districts of the country, and later expanded through SSA. They were seen as providing an alternative to the inspection system by shifting emphasis from inspection to resource support, in-service training of teachers, mentoring, onsite support and training follow up. In the context of the wide disparities in the current educational system, this commitment requires the Block Resource Centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) to actively promote and support a process of school quality improvement.

Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen years is a constitutional commitment in India. The Government of India initiated a number of programmes to attain the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), among which the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2001, is the most recent one. It aimed at achieving universal elementary education of satisfactory quality by 2010 System (EMIS) for the elementary level of education. SSA has been striving for this for last 10 years with mixed results. Along with the ongoing systemic initiatives it has undertaken various additional measures in the form of Lok Jumbish Programme, Shiksha Karmi Project, Bihar Education Project, Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Programme, Uttar Pradesh Education for All, District Primary Education Program etc. to achieve the goals of UPE and UEE at a fast pace. In the 10th year of SSA intervention in such a large scale venture covering the entire nation for Universalisation of Elementary Education and it has now become main vehicle to implement Right to Education (RTE). The district and block level educational

inspectorates and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) cannot attend pedagogical issues due to their distance from the schools, limitation in term of human resource, nature of duty, lack of training in various components, academic character , high number of the schools under coverage areas, and many other responsibilities allotted to them. In a decentralized and community carried programme like SSA schools need to be supported from the closest possible resource centers on a continuous and sustainable basis. The creation of the Block and Cluster Resource Centers on a large scale throughout the country represents an ambitious effort to provide academic structures that support and improve the quality of elementary education in schools. They were initially set up under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) which was implemented in a phased manner in selected districts of the country, and later expanded through SSA. They were seen as providing an alternative to the inspection system by shifting emphasis from inspection to resource support, in-service training of teachers, mentoring, onsite support and training follow up. In the context of the wide disparities in the current educational system, this commitment requires the Block Resource Centers (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) to actively promote and support a process of school quality improvement.

2. Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Explain the concept of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres in India.
2. Discuss the Role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under District Primary Education Programme.
3. Understand the Role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
4. Know about the Role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres under Right To Education
5. Describe the Significance of Resource Centres in India.
6. Enumerate the Structure of Resource Centres in India.
7. Appraise the Role of Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres in India.

3. Block Resource Centers



Primarily, BRCs seek to be resource centres for giving all kinds of onsite academic support to the teachers of elementary level. They are required to function as a venue for teacher training, material development, community mobilization, action research works and organization of different activities or competitions among teachers and students. All sorts of data on Primary Education should be available in BRC. BRC must be involved in planning, implementing and monitoring District Primary Education Programme and SSA activities. One full time Block Resource Center Co-ordinator (BRCC) of level III cadre of elementary level is selected, trained and engaged in each BRC and is to be assisted by Additional Block Resource Centre Coordinators.

4. Cluster Resource Centers

Cluster resource centers have been set up at the sub block levels. However 77% of the block resource centers and 45% of the cluster resource centers were located more than 3 kilometers from the schools. CRC is required to do the same activity at the cluster level as BRC at the block level. The Cluster Resource Center Co-ordinator (CRCCs) will be accountable to the Head Masters of the said school who have been declared as Panchayat Education Officers for rural areas and Cluster Education officers for urban areas. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan have the most number of CRCs located at far distances from the schools.

5. CRCs and BRCs under DPEP

During the DPEP period, the BRCs and CRCs functioned mainly to deliver training to re-orient pedagogic practices of primary school teachers, to make them more sensitive to children from excluded groups and to make learning more enjoyable and interesting. Blocks served to provide trainings, drawing on a pool of Block Resource Persons (BRPs) and additional Master Resource Persons (MRPs). Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) primarily conducted school visits and monthly meetings of teachers. Both CRPs and BRPs also met another important requirement of the DPEP which was to collect field data to monitor fund utilization as well as to provide statistics on various aspects of the school system and the system of in-services training. Most of this data requirement arose out of the needs of the centrally sponsored and externally funded character of the programmes, requiring huge amounts of data to be collated on a quarterly and annual basis.

6. CRCs and BRCs under SSA

SSA has widened the scope of school reform efforts. The scale is now country wide and the range of activities are all encompassing. The systems are now aligned with existing institutions and structures of the states. The BRC and CRC are now more a part of large SSA system and state institutions. Their purposes, focus and activities are now expected to flow

out of state education department considerations. The contexts and the situations of state intervention, monitoring and vigilance now exhibit un-precedented diversity. The efforts for annual planning and review that need to take place block wise and district wise, consolidated at the state and approved at the national level is a huge task. It includes both infrastructural requirements, educational quality – curriculum and pedagogy, and equity concerns with an emphasis on enrolling and retaining children in school. The concerns for educational quality have widened. The need for data has also grown with the addition of District Information System for Education (DISE) and quality monitoring efforts.

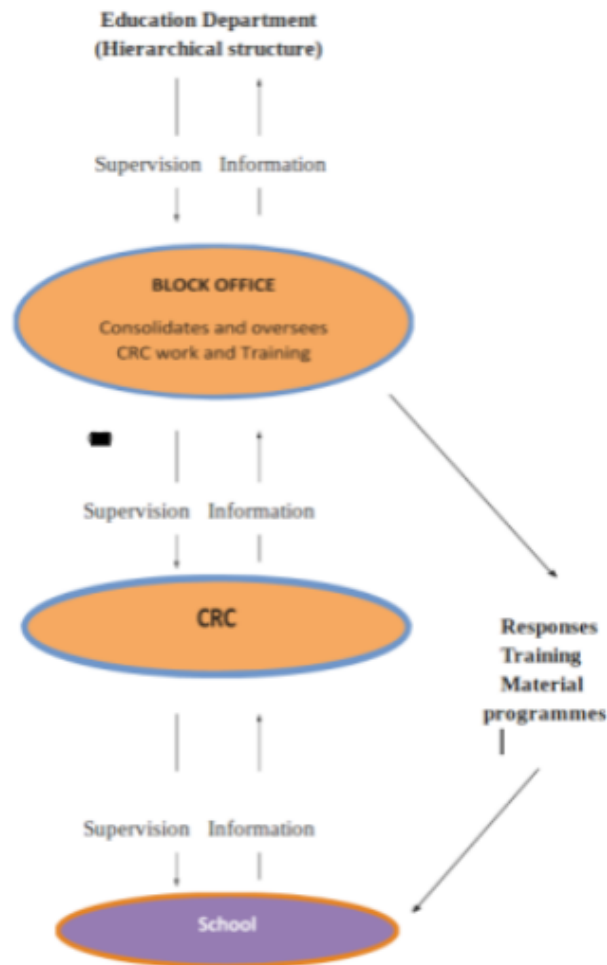
In this scenario, many states are confronted with the need to revisit their vision for the Cluster Resource Person (CRPs) and Block Resource Person (BRPs). The Central government has also taken on board the need to streamline these institutions from the point of view of actions and data flows. There have also been a few non-government interventions which have worked to strengthen and focus the academic work of these institutions.

7. CRCs and BRCs under RTE

The context of RTE brings a new reason to focus on and make these institutions workable and viable. RTE commits the Indian State to provide quality in education processes and outcomes, for every child. RTE also commits the State to regulate and monitor schools. RTE requires us to continue the process of school improvement and transformation which has been set on course by SSA. It also requires the state to deepen this process and make it widespread. There is an emphasis on the role that will be played by local education authorities in the implementation and oversight of the RTE. The increase in enrolment and completion of elementary school will also bring with it the enlargement of secondary school. The institutions of BRC and CRC which till now have had at best an elementary school focus although in fact this has remained a primary school focus could include secondary schools into their ambit.

8. Structure of Block Resource Centers and Cluster Resource Centers

It could be understood through a Hierarchical structure.



Education department is on the top in the hierarchy

- Education Department supervises the Block Office and in reverse Block Office provides information regarding quality improvement in schools.
- It consolidates and oversees CRCs work and training section. It is requisite to role as a venue for teacher training, material development, community mobilization, action research works and organization of different activities or competitions among teachers and students.
- Block Office supervises the Cluster Resource center and in reverse CRC provides information regarding quality improvement in schools.
- Cluster Resource Person can be thought of as the person who maintains relationships with a group of schools and facilitates a process of engagement with schools-teachers-parents-children, in particular through the activities of monitoring, supervision, mentoring and data collection. These are activities where the state reaches and maintains regular contact with the school or field.
- Both CRCs and BRCs focus on school improvement primarily through enhancing school identity and academic functionality. CRP may meet once in a while for a talk or a workshop. But regular planning and review will take place at the school level.

8.1 Present status of BRCs and CRCs

At present 6,472 BRCs and 69,268 CRCs are operational in the country. In each block there are several CRCs and each CRC covers a small number of schools within easy reach. BRCs are headed by Block Resource Centre Co-coordinators and CRCs by Cluster Resource Centre Co-coordinators. The BRC Co-coordinator is academic co coordinator or facilitator at block level who is responsible for in-service training of teachers and providing guidance to the CRC Co-coordinators. They also organize training programmes for members of Village Education Committees (VEC) and School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs). BRC coordinators also collect material from the District Project Office for distribution among the teachers, School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC) etc., through CRCs. They provide continuous support to teachers while monitoring and implementation of pedagogical and other interventions at school level. The tasks of CRC coordinators include providing constant support to the teachers, monitoring their performance, identifying their needs both in formal schools and alternative education centers and cooperating with the SDMCs, the community and Non- Government Organizations (NGOs) working in the area of education. Monthly meetings at cluster level are held and periodic visits to schools are made by CRC Coordinators to monitor teachers' performance and to provide them on-site support.

In nutshell, role of BRC/CRC is a mixed set of academic, supervisory, managerial, networking and creative activities. It goes beyond routine monitoring and supervision work as it encompasses providing support to schools and teachers through teacher training and teacher mentoring. It is for their professional growth, strengthening community school linkage, providing resource support and carrying out action research. In addition administrators in the system depend on them for multifarious administrative activities as they are easily available work force.

9. Appraisal of BRCs/URCs and CRCs

BRCs and CRCs have been conceptualized under SSA based on their good performance initiatives such as DPEP, Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi, etc. Presently, nearly all BRCs and about 95% CRCs are operational in the country. However, much of their potential as academic resource centers are yet to be realized and their role and functions are to be academically channelized. BRCs and CRCs need to function as resource centers near the schools to study the problems and issues related to quality through effective use of District Information System for Education (DISE), household survey, Quality Monitoring Tools etc.

9.1 Main Aspect of Appraisal

(i) Training of teachers

BRCs and CRCs have major responsibility of training teachers so that they are able to perform their duties more effectively. Teachers attend an average one training programme in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and 2 to 3 training programs in other states. The average duration of programmes is 5 to 8 days, except in Madhya Pradesh, where it is for 14 days. Also the training at CRC is possibly excluded as it

is in the form of a meeting in which teachers participate officially and it is regarded as a part of training.

(ii) On-Site Academic Support to schools

Providing on-site academic support to schools is one of the major responsibilities of BRCs and CRCs. It is apparent that head teachers in majority of states need better support in academic activities such as:

- in dealing with hard topics in learning in different subjects and classes
- providing demonstration lessons at school level
- Competency based testing, remedial teaching
- providing help in preparation of lessons
- And use of Teaching Learning Material (TLMs).

They also need improvement in such areas as timely distribution of TLM/books, school and teachers grants, formation of TLM bank and supply of more TLM. Further, they want better strategies from BRC/CRC in improving retention of students.

(iii) Perception of VEC Members about the Contribution of BRCs and CRCs

Village Education Committee (VEC) appears to be the weakest link in the organizational structure of SSA in all the states covered in this study. Though the programme goals of SSA assume that establishment of a healthy and proactive relationship of its functionaries with the community is a critical element in effective and meaningful accomplishment of its goals and objectives, it is disheartening to note that such a situation does not exist in most of the states. The link between BRC / CRC and VEC is also weak which is perhaps due to the following reasons:

- Infrequent visits of the personnel from BRCs, CRCs & VECs
- Physical distancing of BRC/CRC personnel with community members
- VEC members do not have any real locus stand in involving themselves in the decision making for school activities.

However, it must be mentioned that in spite of such situation being common in most states, VECs in some states appear to be quite vibrant and participate actively in the school activities. A case is that of Kerala where VECs along with Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the grassroots level contribute significantly to development of schools. Further, the PRIs at the Panchayat level being powerful, it was reported that these bodies become political pressure groups and exert considerable pressure on the Education department on various issues related to school development and SSA activities. In contrast, we find in Uttar Pradesh that none of the VEC office bearers belonging to sample schools had received any training and obviously their role in school activities was minimal. Similarly data obtained from Orissa and West Bengal highlight the need for training of VEC members in maintenance of records and accounts.

9.2 Positive Features and Strengths of BRCs and CRCs

In a few states, the BRCs and CRCs were reported to have some positive features worth emulation by other states. The research teams for the different states gave their observation

on the basis of discussion with concerned officers of the state and their own assessment of shortcomings and strengths of BRCs/CRCs.

Some important Positive features and strengths of BRCs and CRCs in different states are like this:

In Assam there is

- Good coordination between the officials of BRC and CRC
- Better balance between work load pertaining to Academic and Administrative work
- Effective short term training programmes organized by DIET
- BRC / CRC have motivated VECs to get involved in school affairs

In Himachal Pradesh there is

- Good functional linkage and coordination between BRC and CRC with other stakeholders

In Karnataka also

- There is vibrant functional link between DIET and BRC s/CRCs
- Academic inputs and guidance by Personal Reliability Programme (PRPs) to teachers satisfactory
- Support to CRCCs by BRC is satisfactory

In Orissa there is

- Emphasis on quality issues in academic activities
- Positive impact of training of BRCC/CRCC on monitoring and academic support provided by them

In Uttar Pradesh there is

- Block Resource Persons are mostly young and well-qualified
- Good coordination between BRCC, National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) and DIET

Similarly in West Bengal there is

- Most of the CRCCs appreciate the content of the training programme

(Source – Report by Research, Evaluation and Studies Unit Technical Support Group EDCIL (India) Limited 2010)

There was a recent consensus among the respondents that increasing the frequency of visits to schools would result in better monitoring of activities of the schools. Apparently it is an important measure for improving the effectiveness of BRCs and CRCs. Most of the BRCCs, BRPs and CRCCs are experienced teachers; still their role requires additional knowledge & skills and greater conceptual clarity. They need support in building their capacity to discharge their duties effectively.

10. Recommendations

Some recommendations regarding the functioning of these centres, which are being made on the basis of the findings of the studies:

- First of all Common nomenclatures and uniform organizational structure should be adopted by all the states for BRCs, CRCs and BRPs.
- Secondly, a separate cadre for BRCCs, CRCCs and BRPs should be established and recruitment rules should be framed for BRCCs, BRPs and CRCCs in all the states.

- Adequate incentives should be put in place for these functionaries to make the posts attractive.
- Job charts of all BRC/CRC functionaries should be prepared which should be common across states and these should be given to the incumbents during induction training. Such training should be mandatory for all the incumbents.
- Since BRCCs and CRCCs have the main responsibility for providing academic support, all efforts must be made to facilitate discharge of their academic duties with less involvement in administrative tasks.
- As a norm for staffing of BRCs it is recommended that the BRP-school ratio should be 1:15 for Lower Primary Schools and 1:10 for Upper Primary Schools.
- A major issue to be addressed is that of capacity building of functionaries in the academic support structures. Such capacity building has to be undertaken in areas like improving their knowledge and skills.

Summary

We can summarise the above discussion by saying that the development of the Cluster and Block Resource Centre itself has come up as an important focus issue. We have found that as there are virtually no examples of what such block and cluster centre could do, and achieve, and the role that it could play in addressing school issues and providing resources to teachers, there is limited scope to develop the functions and role of the BRC and the CRC itself. It is also found that it is essential to consider the development of the cluster to support and enhance trainings provided at the block. The block and cluster resource centers are institutions that were created by the DPEP to address in local ways the training needs of teachers, school support and school community inter linkages, at the block and cluster level. These institutions are also to provide local level details for the purpose of academic planning and management of quality in the schools. Following the pattern in most of the country, the resource persons in these institutions are appointed from teachers (primary/elementary school and a few from high school). Working along with the DIET these institutions are expected to play a leading role in school quality monitoring and improvement.