



Micro-Planning Advancement of Primary Education

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The concept of micro-planning was developed to bring planning efforts to district or block level for a balanced growth of all regions and all sections of population. Micro-planning came as a real breakthrough in the area of planning by offering a scientific local plan at the micro level. Taking into account the geographical scope of micro-planning within which various development programme can be effectively organised and implemented, "micro-regions" were identified as suitable units for the formulation of area development plans because they were found sufficiently close to grass-roots and afford opportunities for direct and active people's participation and implementation of the plan.

Micro-level planning is considered as a method to bring about integrated area development in the countryside. It is, however, not limited to any particular settlement. Micro-planning takes a whole hierarchy of central places and its hinterlands as its focus. The emphasis in micro-planning is a planning from the lowest level upward to a clearly defined area or region. In many cases, this region may be co-verminous with the district. In doing this, the needs of the local areas as well as the purpose of regional development are served. The location of specific socio-economic activities and their interlink ages over a regional development are served. The location of specific socio-economic activities and their interlink ages over a region are major concerns of micro-planning.

The national plans while providing a broad framework of development, strategically, micro-planning helps fix priorities for different regions depending on their specific need. It has been realised that without micro-level planning, no national plan can be properly implemented. At the same time, without national priorities, no micro-planning is possible. Therefore, for all practical purposes, both the 'macro' and 'micro' methods of planning are complementary to each other, and their combined use is essential in bringing about an overall socio-economic development of the country. Or, to put it in another way, to make any development planning effective, there is a need to follow a two-pronged approach working simultaneously and in a coordinated way from the grass roots level up, and the national level down.

Micro-planning, in its true perspective, attempts to address the emerging socio-economic problems at various territorial levels. It offers a planning within a spatial framework so that all kinds of resources and endowments may be utilised fully and the fruits of development could be equally shared socially. At some point, micro-planning is often made synonymous with 'regional' and 'area' planning. From policy considerations, micro-planning provides a realistic approach for the socio-economic development particular for a country like India where regional disparities and imbalances are acute and problems of poverty and unemployment are alarming with specific features in the rural areas. It emphasises spatial process of development within the broad framework of the national plan giving due consideration to the spatial problems, resources and needs at the grass-root level.

The strategy of micro-planning is applied in various areas of social concern. As education is an important component of human development as well micro-planning is used for advancement of primary education in India. Education is in the concurrent list, both the central and the state government can make laws on education. Both the central and state governments have been expanding the provision of primary formal and non-formal education to realise the goal of **Univ-erilisation of Elementary Education (UEE)** since independence. There are several strategies formulated at the state, district, even at the village level to attain the objective of UEE. The challenge now is to sustain and deepen current reforms in education and encourage local planning and management of strategies for expanding and improv-

ing primary education.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 and its policy of action (1992) envisaged the formulation of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education. It emphasised on micro-planning as a process of designing a family-wise and child-wise plan of action by which every child regularly attends school continues his or her education at the place suitable to him/her and completes at least eight years of schooling (Government of India 2005). The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide for decentralisation of the activities and facilitate transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the **Panchayati Raj** institution. This institutions have widely been used by a woman. Scheduled Castes and Tribes, minorities, parents and educational functionaries for the implementation of the UEE programme at the grass-roots. As the **Panchayati Raj** institutions have also been delegated with responsibilities to location and relocation of existing primary and upper schools on the basis of micro-planning and school mapping, these have emerged as effective tools for decentralised school management at the village level.

Since the Eighth Plan period the District Primary Education Programme has shifted the planning mechanism from the state to the district level, and '**Lok Jumbish**' has gone one step further by assigning decision making process to a Block level committee. At the village level, a Village Education Committee has the main responsibility for community of school buildings and improvement of pedagogical curriculum. A brief account of these community based programmes follows:

(i) Community Mobilisation and Participation

At the grassroots, educational innovations are based on the strong foundation of community support and participation. When educational progress is discussed and analysed at different levels within the project, "People's acceptance and participation" is used as an indicator. Mobilising the village community to take responsibility to ensure quality education for every child, is the core strategy of both '**Lok Jumbish**' (LJ) and **ShikshaKarmi Project (SKP)** in their efforts to universalise primary education and deliver quality education.

(ii) Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)

The SKP constituted VECs in 2000 villages also aims to promote community role of the VEC is to mobilise resources for maintenance, repair and construction of school infrastructure, determine the school calendar and school timings in consultation with the local community and **Shiksha Karmis** (educational workers). The **Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)** is being implemented since 1987, with assistance from the **Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA)**. The project aims at universalisation and qualitative improvement of primary education in the remote and socio-economically backward villages of Rajasthan, with primary focus on girls. Since teacher absenteeism has been found to be a major obstacle in achieving the objective of **UEE**, the project uses the novel approach of substituting teacher in dysfunctional schools with local youth known as **Shiksha Karmis** who are provided with rigorous training and supervisory support. An important feature of this innovative project is the mobilisation and participation of the community in improving the functioning of primary schools.

Lok Jumbish (LJ) project works to empower the locally elected people, especially the female representatives at village level, who are often active as members of the LJ core teams or woman's groups. The **Village Education Committees (VECs)**, are carefully formed and are trained to handle the **LJ** programme. **LokJumbish (LJ)** made an indelible impression in the primary education landscape of Rajast-

han. The coverage of the project has extended to 75 blocks, covering a population of approximately 12 million. Significantly, it has also achieved a major breakthrough in welding together government agencies, teachers, NGOs, elected representatives and the people into an interactive group effort to promote universalisation of primary education.

The seven guiding principles of **Lok Jumbish** are :

- A process rather than product approach;
- Partnership;
- Decentralised functioning;
- Participatory learning;
- Integration with the mainstream education system;
- Flexibility of management; and
- Creating multiple levels of leadership committed to quality and mission mode.

Special focus has been given to environment building in all training programmes under **L.J.** This helps in the development of an understanding about issues involved in people's mobilisation, use of different media forms and clarity about the messages to be given to the people.

To conclude, in a country like India with its heterogeneous composition of people and regions, the wide local variations in the levels of development calls for a different approach in which the plan is based on local resources potential and is sensitive to local needs. For this purpose micro-level regional and spatial planning could be proper instruments for promoting 'area-specific' development within the overall framework of the national plan. It could expedite rural transformation from the deplorable state of stagnation, poverty, unemployment and inequality to the progress, prosperity, self-employment and equity.

References:

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