

What Manner of Teacher

Some Lessons from Madhya Pradesh

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Based on a case study of the 'Shiksha Karmi Scheme' of Madhya Pradesh which aimed to transform the school teacher, this paper argues that the transformation of the teacher may be much more an issue of his/her working conditions, i.e. motivation, skill development, school atmosphere, incentive system, supervision, etc. than recruitment policies. Despite transferring the administration of schools to the panchayats, the scheme has failed to generate in parents and the panchayats an active demand in terms of supervising and supporting the school, taking an interest in the teaching-learning process and thinking about educational issues. This relative passivity of parents and panchayats, despite decentralisation and community control of schools, do not augur significant change for the school system and the teacher as yet.

THIS paper traces and analyses a policy to transform the primary school teacher. It looks at the complex interplay of government policies, the political process, institutional structures and socio-economic context with the functioning of the primary school teacher. The central question addressed is what is the right answer, or the right sort of teacher in view of the nature of the community, the state and its institutions? It begins by describing the process of policy formulation and implementation at the state level. It then moves on to examine in detail what actually happened in 10 schools of Madhya Pradesh as a result of these activities.

An underlying premise in the discussion is that good teachers are not born but can be created or can be facilitated in creating themselves. In other words, the opportunities and signals provided by the system affect the teacher's performance. The question that arises is, how can a more effective teacher emerge? Further, what can the system do to encourage the process? The paper uses the Madhya Pradesh experience for some answers.

THE TROUBLES OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM

Between 1988 and 1993, recruitment of primary school teachers came to a stand still in Madhya Pradesh. The process invariably led disappointed candidates to seek legal redressal, and extensive litigation ultimately resulted in a complete halt of all such attempts. In the meanwhile, teachers continued to retire, creating vacancies which could not be filled up. In 1994 out of 1.77 lakh sanctioned posts of primary school teachers' more than 17,000 were vacant, a debilitating depletion of the already sparse staff available in government schools.

The problem was complex and had not one but several aspects. The difficulty began with the very conceptualisation of

a school in relation to the residential pattern of the population. Though primary schools have five grades, one teacher's post is sanctioned for every 40 students. Consequently, if a school caters to a large student population, i.e. in towns and large villages, it has five or more teachers who can teach one class at a time. But all over the sparsely populated tribal belt in the state, the villages are tiny and the number of students so few that an average school is sanctioned only two or three teachers, leading to what is known as 'multigrade teaching', i.e. a teacher teaching (or attempting to teach) more than one class at a time, a feat, even if possible can dilute significantly the quality of the teaching-learning process. By making multigrade teaching the norm in tiny schools, the tribal population of the state, which has the lowest literacy rate among all groups and lives in its tiny hamlets spread over forested areas is at a 'natural' disadvantage. Vacant posts in this context further cripple the school. If one out of two sanctioned posts is vacant, a single teacher manages five classes, a situation not conducive to academic quality.

Till 1993, primary school teachers were recruited for a particular district by the deputy director of education. Typically, when the deputy director advertised posts, there would be a barrage of applications. The most qualified candidates, who were usually selected, were invariably from cities. In many tribal districts the whole qualified bunch were outsiders from nearby towns. Once the teachers were appointed, they could be posted to any school in the district. Not surprisingly, teachers who belonged to cities would move heaven and earth to stay in urban centres and be miserable if they were posted in far flung rural areas. Born and bred in towns, they were dissatisfied with the limitations of rural life. They could not find suitable

houses to live in. A teacher with children who were going to high school dreaded posting in a village that had only a primary or middle school. Consequently, there was continuous pressure from the teachers to be posted in urban schools, to which the authorities often succumbed.

An outcome of this pressure was a system of 'attachment' which meant that a teacher could work in an urban school even if there were no vacancies. For example, suppose school A, an urban school, had five posts of teachers and school B, a school in a small tribal village, had two posts. One teacher from school B could simply be 'attached' to school A. This teacher would draw his salary from school B but work in school A. The net result was that school A would have an excess of teachers, while school B would have too few, a situation extremely unfair on the students of school B. Sometimes teachers posted in far flung areas were attached to more developed regions. This posting and attachment problem was a symptom of the basic difficulty of getting qualified personnel to work in less developed areas, where they are needed most.

Notably, the logic underlying centralised recruitment to form a pool of employees who can be posted in several places is that better qualified personnel than would be available locally can be recruited. Moreover, it has often been argued that transfers ensure that employees do not develop 'vested' interests in a particular village/area. A common argument that locally recruited teachers would remain distracted from their teaching duties is prevalent. The typical vision was of a local village teacher who preferred tending to his land than teaching school.

When a less resourceful teacher was posted to a remote area, he or she could take advantage of its poor communication and lack of supervision. Many teachers

continued to stay in towns and ostensibly made daily trips to the school. But often the teacher would come late and leave early, or simply not turn up. A favourite ploy was to keep an undated application for leave at the school with a colleague, who would fill in the correct date if a supervisor happened to come by. If all the teachers of a school co-operated, they could reduce their working days sizeably. Yet another ploy was to 'sublet' the job, i.e., a teacher could employ someone else, most often a local resident, to do the teaching at half or less of his salary. In general, it could be argued that the urban educated teachers were drawing their salary from the money allotted to rural schools, but were rarely actually contributing significantly.

The supervision of schools too left much to be desired, specially in rural areas and tribal belts. Indeed, there are genuine obstacles in supervising poorly connected areas. Lack of transport and long travelling time make monitoring a tough proposition. However, there were also instances when the supervisors knew what was going on and were happy to accept a 'cut' from the teacher's paycheck for conniving.

A NEW TEACHER

From December 1993 onwards there was renewed focus on primary education in Madhya Pradesh. During this period the government began to provide midday meals as part of a centrally sponsored scheme.

Concurrently, there were major initiatives to improve educational facilities and bring about pedagogic reform. Schools were provided with new teaching aids, better textbooks and teachers were trained on an unprecedented scale. Simultaneously, the government decided to strengthen the three-tier panchayat system. In June 1994 panchayats at three levels, i.e., the zilla panchayat at the district level, the janpad panchayat at the block level and the gram panchayat at the village level came into being after elections. Consequently, many administrative powers devolved from the state government to the panchayats.

The impact of democratic decentralisation was tremendous on the school system, as the janpad and gram panchayats were given administrative control of primary schools. It was argued that the panchayats, because they were local elected bodies representing the people, would protect the community's interests and monitor the school system more effectively. Through the panchayat, the school would be controlled by the community and people would be able to participate in the process of educating their children. Decentralisation was also expected to make the system more efficient and reduce teacher vacancies. In the cities, the control of schools vested with the municipal bodies.

In this wider context of democratic decentralisation and new programmes for primary school education, there was a metamorphosis of 'the teacher' into the

'shiksha karmi'. In practical terms, radical changes came about in the working conditions and recruitment policy of teachers. The main features of the new policy (referred to as the 'shiksha karmi policy')¹ were:

The primary school teacher was placed firmly under the control of the panchayats. The janpad panchayat could transfer existing school teachers and would hire all new ones, and teachers became employees of the janpad panchayat, not the state government. The sarpanch of the gram panchayat would also verify the teacher's attendance.²

The scheme sought to replace all primary school teachers by 'shiksha karmis' over time. Shiksha karmis grade 1, 2 and 3 were appointed to replace the higher secondary, middle and primary school teachers respectively. Shiksha karmis would now be hired in place of all retiring teachers and the existing cadre of teachers was often referred to as a 'dying cadre'.

For the shiksha karmi grade 3, who replaced the 'assistant teacher' of the taught primary school, the gram panchayat would invite applications for existing vacancies by beating of drums, make a panel of suitable persons and recommend it to the janpad panchayat, which had the authority to issue appointment orders.

Unlike the erstwhile school teachers, shiksha karmis did not form a transferable pool, but were appointed to a particular school.

TABLE A. THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

(No of schools = 10)

School No	Nature of area and location	Population	Percentage		Institutions in the Village
			of SC	of ST	
(For villages only)					
1	2	3	4	5	6
I	A small village in two parts. The school is located in a part inhabited by tribals. 22 km from the state capital, travel by kaccha road of 3.5 km needed to reach village.	1084	8.1	64.0	The village is a panchayat head quarter but has no middle or higher secondary school.
II	A small village 10 km from a predominantly tribal district. Need quarter 1.5 km kaccha road has to be travelled to reach the village.	478	10.3	24.0	It has no middle school, and the panchayat head quarter is 4 km away.
III	A small village 12 km from a predominantly tribal district. headquarter. 1 km kaccha road has to be travelled to reach the village.	671	29.7		It has no middle school, but is a panchayat head quarter.
IV	A small village 15 km from a big city, connected by pucca road.	841	39.5	10.5	The village is not a panchayat head quarter and does not have a middle or higher secondary school.
V	A village 23 km from a major city connected by pucca road.	2689	13.2		It is a panchayat head quarter and has a middle and higher secondary schools.
VI	A village 27 km from a major city, connected by pucca road.	1007	44.3		It is a panchayat head quarter and has a middle school.
VII	District head quarter of a primarily tribal district, school located in an area inhabited by Muslims who clean the area.	NA*	NA	NA	All the institutions of a district town, including middle and higher secondary schools.
VIII	Semi-urban area, 14 km from a major city, on a state highway.	NA	NA		It is a panchayat head quarter and has a middle and higher secondary school.
IX	A major city of the state.	NA	NA		All institutions that exist in major cities.
X	A major city of the state.	NA	NA	NA	Has all the institute of a major city.

Note * Not applicable

The shiksha karmis did not enjoy security of tenure but were hired for 10 months at a time. The appointment was purely temporary and services could be terminated at any time without previous notice and without assigning any reasons.

Instead of a full salary the shiksha karmis grade 3 were paid a 'stipend' of Rs 500 per month. An extra Rs 100 was given to persons who had a degree in teacher training, such as BEd or DEd (usually referred to as 'trained teachers'). Shiksha karmis were envisaged not as employees in the usual sense but as local persons committed to the education of the children of the community, replacing the disinterested urban biased teacher.

Academic inputs such as teacher training, making curriculum and prescribing books were not transferred to the janpad panchayats. Moreover, though the janpad panchayat appointed the shiksha karmis, the state government laid down the qualifications and criteria for recruitment. The basic qualification for a primary school shiksha karmi was to have studied up to higher secondary. The state government also fixed the shiksha karmis' stipend for which it would transfer the necessary funds to the panchayats, which had no financial resources of their own. It was also envisaged that shiksha karmis who performed well could be made regular or permanent employees after a period of five years. However, the qualifications and proce-

dures for regular appointments were, not articulated.

THE PROGNOSIS

As soon as the recruitment of shiksha karmis began in July 1994, several disappointed candidates instituted legal cases, challenging the whole policy. While the petitioners raised a host of objections, the most important was that the new recruitment policy violated the fundamental rights enunciated in Article 16 of the Constitution. Article 16 elucidates the principle of equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to office under the state, and lays down that no citizen can be ineligible for office under the state on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent or *place of birth* (italics added).

Now the shiksha karmi recruitment procedure stipulated that the gram panchayat would invite applications from prospective candidates by beating of drums within the panchayat area, process the applications received and forward a panel of most eligible names to the janpad panchayat, which would make appointments on the basis of these recommendations. Since the 'advertisement' was limited to beating of drums within the gram panchayat area, the argument was that candidates born in some areas, i.e. local persons were favoured, and this violated the fundamental rights.

Not only did the government find itself burdened with litigation yet again, but severe administrative problems began to crop up too. Many gram panchayats had so many conflicts over the appointments that they could not send the list of eligible candidates for months to the janpad panchayats. Consequently, teachers' posts remained vacant as earlier, defeating a major purpose of the policy. Moreover, there were a plethora of complaints about nepotism and unfair practice by the gram panchayats, some of which were genuine. The gram panchayats also lacked knowledge of rules and procedures to screen applications.

As the legal battle continued, yet another cloud appeared on the horizon. The shiksha karmis formed a union and began agitating for better service conditions. Their main demand was a permanent or 'regular' job, followed by wages equal to those of teachers. They held demonstrations, meetings and took mass leave. Above all they wanted to be 'regular'. Once secure, they would then be able to agitate more effectively for other benefits.

Additionally, as the shiksha karmi policy of the state began to be known nationally, it came under severe criticism. The critics argued that the shiksha karmis' salary was so meager adequately qualified teachers would not be available. Moreover, the shiksha karmis were temporary employees, and could not be trained systematically.

TABLE B A PROFILE OF THE SCHOOLS

(No of schools = 10)

School No	Total No of Children Enrolled	Percentage Girls	Percentage of Students in		Percentage of Children Present on Day of Survey	No of Teachers' Post		Student-Teacher Ratio (actual)	Date of Last Inspection (as on March 1998)	Inspected by	Inspection of
			Class I	Class V		Sanctioned	Vacancies				
I	59	27.1	22.0	6.8	62.7	2	-	1.30	January 98	Master trainer	Discussion with children. Attendance register
II	74	40.5	17.6	14.9	68.9	3	-	1.25	Dec 97	Master trainer	Midday meal
III	67	32.8	16.4	10.4	67.1	2	-	1.22	Nov 97	BEO	Midday meal and teacher attendance
IV	119	47.1	19.3	6.7	45.3	8	1	1.17	Dec 97	ADIS	Classes, registers
V	200	Girls' school	25.5	13.5	50.0	3	1	1.100	Oct 97	ADIS	Teachers' and students' attendance registers
VI	99	Boys' school	39.4	10.1	44.4	6	2	1.25	Jan 98	Sarpanch	General inspection, checked teachers' attendance register
VII	149	53.7	14.7	13.4	87.6	4	1	1.50	Dec 97	ADIS	Academic issues
VIII	305	40.6	29.2	19.7	58.0	6	-	1.51	Oct 97	Assistant director and deputy director of education	Attendance register and discipline
IX	81	53.0	23.4	22.2	79.0	5	3	1.41	July 97	ADIS	Attendance register
X	440	60.0	24.5	14.1	11.1	12	-	1.37	July 97*	Person from govt college	Academic issues

Notes * Appears to have been a study, mistaken for an inspection by the teacher
ADIS assistant deputy inspector schools
BEO block education officer
Master Trainer: A 'resource teacher' i.e. a good primary school teacher

TABLE C: THE TEACHER AND THE SHIKSHA KARMIS
(Based on responses given by teachers/ shiksha karmis)

(Total No of teachers = 10, Total No of shiksha karmis = 10)

	No of Teachers	No of Shiksha Karmis		No of Teachers	No of Shiksha Karmis		No of Teachers	No of Shiksha Karmis
Personal Background			IV Service Conditions			V Situation at Work		
Male	5	8	a News of vacancy for appointment through			a Work division No of		
Female	5	2	Newspapers	7	5	class taken at one time		
School No	V, VI, VII, VIII, X	V, X	Sarpanch/janpad	0	3	only one class	3	3
SC	1	0	Employment exchange	1	0	two classes	4	1
ST	0	2	Other sources	2	2	three or more classes	1	3
Age less than 25	0	7	b Posting			Subject teacher	1	3
Age more than 40	6	0	i Living in place of posting	3	7	Not clear	1	1
Married	10	4	School no	VI IX, X	I, V, VI, VII VIII, IX, X	b Work done other than teaching and teacher training in last three months		
Up to 3 children	7	4				• None	4	7
More than 3 children	3	0	ii Those living in place of posting			• 1-5 days	0	3
Belongs to			• Staying with family	NA	4	• 6-15 days	1	0
1 Urban area [This does not include 3 teachers and 3 shiksha karmis posted in urban areas]	4	0	• Own house	NA	3	• 16-30 days	1	0
School No	II III IV, V		• Advantages reported		2	• More than 30 days	4	1
2 Village other than that of posting	3	4	Economically beneficial	NA	2	c Rewards and punishment		
School No	II, VI	II, III, IV, VII	Save time	NA	2	Received formal reward	0	0
3 Village of posting	0	3	Psychologically satisfying	NA	3	Received formal punishment	0	0
School No	-	I, V, VI	Better performance at work	NA		Received encouragement/reprimand from school principal	0	2
II Economic Situation			• Disadvantages reported		1	Received encouragement/reprimand from public representatives	0	1
a Income other than salary			Not enough contact outside	1	6	d In-service teacher training		
Total no with extra income	5	2	iii Those living outside place of posting	7	3	Trained in the last year	7	9
Owning land	0	0	• Living within 20 km	6	3	ii Comments on in-service training		
Husband's income	4	1	• Living farther than 20km	1	-	• Negative response	2	0
Shop/house	1	1	• Time taken in travel (One round trip)	1	1	• Positive response	5	9
b Perceived adequacy of income from job			Less than 1 hr			• Don't need more training	3	1
i Sufficient	5	0	1-3 hrs			• Need more training	3	7
ii Insufficient	5	10	• Advantages reported	5	2	e Response to new books		
III Qualifications			Economic	2	3	Negative	4	2
a Education level			Family	6	2	Positive	5	8
i Studied up to 11th or 12th	5	2	Being in urban environment	1	1	Not clear	1	0
School no	I, II III, V VI	I, VI	Disadvantages reported			f Teacher's working for mid-day meal		
ii BA/BSc/BCom	3	5	Problem/time in commuting	8	3	Where meal is not cooked	6	7
School no	IV, VII IX	II, III, IV V IX	Expense in commuting	5		Where meal is cooked	3	2
iii MA/MSc/MCom	2	3	Mode of transport	5		Total	9	9
School no	VIII, X	VII, VIII, X	Bus/auto	4	1			
iv Trained as teacher	7	4	Bicycle	1	2			
School no	II, III, IV V, VIII, IX, X	VII, VIII, X	Includes walking	2	-			
b Activity before appointment as teacher/shiksha karmis			c Opinion on the appropriate salary of shiksha karmis					
Studying	6	5	Equal to teachers	6	6	VI The Teacher and the Community		
House wife	2	1	Central pay scales	1	1	a Schools under panchayats/ local bodies		
Some educational profession	1	1	Some other criteria	2	3	Positive development	1	5
Profession other than education	1	3	Present salary to continue till regularisation	1	0	Negative development	7	3
c Desired profession			d Opinion of shiksha karmis			Does not make any difference	1	1
School teacher	6	6	i Action taken by shiksha karmis to change service conditions			b Impact of having schools under the panchayats		
College teacher	2	1	• Done nothing		4	Undue interference has increased	4	1
Some other profession unconcerned	2	2	• Signed memorandum		1	Dignity of teacher is lowered	3	1
d Reasons for becoming a teacher			• Participated in demonstration		4	Panchayat members misbehave with teachers	0	5
Interested in education/teaching	6	6	• Contributed financially to 'shiksha karmi sangh'		2	School runs smoothly The teacher is punctual, etc	1	3
No other option/incidental	4	4	• Joined sangh		1	Problems are sorted out at the local level	1	1
e Important personal concern			• Taken mass casual leave		1	Favouritism by panchayat members	1	0
Career advancement/ studying	3	5	ii If conditions do not change		5	Department has become inactive	1	0
Family/economic and (ii)	6	4	• Will continue to work as shiksha karmis		3			
None	0	1	• Will continue to work and protest		1			
	1	0	• Not clear		1			
			• Will leave		1			

over a long period. This criticism came largely from urban professionals and is discussed later in this paper in light of the emerging evidence. It may be noted however, that the professionally secure, well paid teacher had failed to deliver.

In response to these hurdles and pressures the state government began to modify its policies. One change that came about within the first year was that the gram panchayats ceased to have any significant role in the recruitment of shiksha karmis and janpad panchayats became the pivotal agencies. An advertisement in the newspapers to invite applications became mandatory along with notices in gram panchayat offices as well as beating of drums. The gram panchayats ceased to make a panel of eligible names but simply forward all applications to the janpad panchayat, which made the selection. Additionally, along with the criteria laid down by the government, the janpad panchayats could lay down conditions for recruitment that were "beneficial for universalisation of education".

At a later date the state government stipulated that preference would be given to persons trained as teachers, i.e. those with BEd and DEd degrees. But by this time many untrained shiksha karmis had already been recruited. In April 1997 the government gave in partially to the pressure from shiksha karmis and doubled their honorarium. However, the shiksha karmis were far from satisfied and continued to agitate. Above all, they wanted to be 'regular' employees and have security of tenure. A major change that came about was that the shiksha karmis' demands now became a *tour de force* for further policy formulation.

In 1998, after a protracted legal battle, new rules that modified the service conditions of shiksha karmis considerably came into existence. The new appointment procedure gave 65 per cent weightage to marks obtained in the higher secondary examination, 25 per cent to teaching experience in rural school and 15 per cent marks were reserved for an oral test in which communication skills in the local dialect and knowledge of the local environment counted. If, as per this procedure, the marks of two candidates were equal, the trained candidate and the candidate who had worked in the janpad school would be given preference. Significantly, after working in a particular school for three years, if found satisfactory, shiksha karmis could become 'regular' employees of the panchayat. However, while shiksha karmi would cease to be a temporary teacher hired for 10 months at

a time, he had to prove his worth for three years before this could happen. Also, he remained an employee of the janpad panchayat and was appointed for a particular school rather than a transferable pool. The new pay scales of the shiksha karmis were considerably lower than those of assistant teachers, but much higher than their earlier emoluments.

These developments highlight the dynamics of bringing about change. The school system was first crippled by the clout of urban qualified people. When the state tried to bring about a more rural-friendly teacher, it attracted legal action and the wrath of national experts. Simultaneously, a certain perception of what is 'due' to government servants, i.e.

security of tenure and comfortable salaries had built up in the last 50 years, the force of which was considerable. Briefly, structures, processes and perceptions based on centralised governance were already in place. It was not easy to counter them and many measures proposed in the original policy were ultimately withdrawn. However, some 'stuck'.

In the four years that the government formulated, altered and improved upon its policy, the janpad panchayats and urban local bodies recruited shiksha karmis every year, transforming the nature of the teacher in the state. By January 1998 the panchayats had hired more than 50,000 shiksha karmis. However, this process was far from smooth. All through this period, there was a barrage

TABLE D. VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES
(No. of village representatives interviewed = 20)

	No of Village Representatives
Difference between Teacher/Shiksha Karmis	
Don't know	5
There is no difference	4
Shiksha karmis are paid less/are temporary	4
Shiksha karmis lack training and experience which teachers have	3
Shiksha karmis work better	2
Shiksha karmis are local so come to school everyday	2
Change Needed in Salary of Shiksha Karmis	
Don't know	6
Should be more than at present	6
Should be the same as teacher	5
No change is needed	3
Advantage of Having the School under the Panchayat	
Is an advantage	9
Is a disadvantage	3
Doesn't make a difference	3
Don't know	2
Changes Needed in Education	
No comment	8
Better teaching is needed	5
Teacher should not do non-teaching work	1
More teachers are needed	2
Some change is needed	1
Regular teachers should be appointed	1
There should be no interference in schools	1
More teaching aids are needed	1
Advantage of Having Shiksha Karmis	
Is advantageous	10
Is disadvantageous	1
Doesn't make a difference	-
Don't know	6
(i) and (ii)	3
Advantage/Disadvantages of Having Shiksha Karmis Instead of Teachers	
Shiksha Karmis work better	6
Advantage of a local teacher	4
Government gets a cheaper teacher	4
Quality of teaching suffers, shiksha karmi is untrained and inexperienced	2
Appointments are made on	1
Shiksha karmi can be removed if doesn't work	1
What Has the Panchayat Done for the School	
	No of Schools
Construction work	5
Buying furniture, etc	2
Repair	1
Nothing	2

TABLE E THE PARENTS

(No of Parents interviewed = 45)

	No of Parents
Difference between Teacher and Shiksha Karmis	
Don't know	24
No difference	1
Difference in pay	5
Shiksha karmis come to school regularly	4
Shiksha karmis are temporary	4
Shiksha karmis are more enthusiastic	1
Shiksha karmis are panchayat employees, teachers are government employees	3
Shiksha karmis are not trained, teachers are trained	8
Advantages/Disadvantages of Having a Shiksha Karmi	
Don't know	26
It is advantageous	17
It is disadvantageous	1
(I) and (II)	1
Doesn't make a difference	0
Nature of Advantage/Disadvantage as Viewed by Parent	
Saves government money	1
Children come to school more regularly	5
Local teacher works better, understands language	8
More teachers are now available so studies are better	2
Shiksha karmis are more regular and hardworking	1
An unemployed person has got a job	1
Shiksha karmis are not trained	2
Changes Needed in Salary of Shiksha Karmis	
Don't know	26
Should be as much as teacher	1
Should be more than at present	18
School under Panchayat Control	
Don't know	26
Is an advantage	10
Is a disadvantage	7
(i) and (ii)	2
Nature of Advantage/Disadvantage of Having School under Panchayat	
School is regular The sarpanch keeps an eye on the teacher	9
Villagers/panchayat become careless don't look after school	6
Public representatives misbehave with teachers and there is interference unnecessary	3
Schools have become worse	1
Villagers can look after the school	1
Change Needed in the Education System	
No comment	24
More teaching or better teaching is needed	11
English should be taught in primary school	2
Teachers should have more rights	1
Backward castes should be given books from book banks	1
Some change is needed but don't know what	1
There should be adequate place for kids to sit	1
Drinking water should be available	1
Teachers should come to school regularly	1
Improvement in infrastructure is needed.	1
If children are absent they should be called to school	1

of complaints that the janpad panchayats were manipulating rules to recruit favoured persons. As has been mentioned, the janpad panchayats could stipulate some recruitment conditions of their own and many chose to give preference to local persons, causing much heartburn among better qualified candidates. A major bone of contention was the teacher training degree. While government norms since 1995 had specified that untrained persons be hired only if trained teachers were not available, preference to local people often meant that an untrained teacher got preference over a trained teacher. Moreover, there were allegations of false residence certificates

issued by sarpanches and also that while some residence certificates given by the sarpanches had been accepted by the janpad panchayats, others had not. It was not uncommon for the district panchayats to cancel the recruitments made by janpad panchayats and repeat the process.

The benefit of hindsight makes it clear that the original policy of hiring shiksha karmis for 10 months at a time every year was unimplementable. Most of the year went by in completing the appointment procedure, in spite of decentralising the process and posts remained vacant in the meanwhile. In general, hire and fire policies, and short-term appointments,

bring their own problems. They increase the administrative workload tremendously as recruitment procedures have to be followed often. This holds true for decentralised systems too. Given the present demand for jobs, no recruitment process by public authorities can be smooth. Consequently, recruiting often is difficult, time consuming and risky. Moreover, if a majority of the employees in a system are of a 'permanent' nature, temporary recruitment leads to intense dissatisfaction and protest. The same holds true for any other deterioration of service conditions such as salary.

Along with the frictions and turmoils of the recruitment process, many problems that had plagued the system earlier began to appear. There was information about shiksha karmis subletting their jobs. Some shiksha karmis recruited for remote villages had been 'attached' at the block level offices. Most important, janpad panchayats did not appear to give priority to monitoring and improving the schools. There were complaints that gram sarpanches did not bother about teacher absenteeism and even gave false certificates of attendance.

That many of the earlier problems should recur indicates that changing administrative agencies does not address fundamental problems. The same can reappear in different circumstances, and given that such changes can cause much confusion, the advantages need to be weighed carefully.

TALES FROM TEN SCHOOLS

The outcome of the shiksha karmi policy in Madhya Pradesh was investigated intensively in January 1998 in a case study 10 schools of the state to see how the intentions and concerns that the policy and its opponents addressed actually played out on the ground. At this point in time, the final shiksha karmi policy, which allowed for the services of shiksha karmis to be made 'regular', had just been formulated, but not yet implemented. The temporary shiksha karmi had been in existence for four years.

The schools The varying contexts of the 10 sample schools are highlighted in Table A. (Hereafter schools are referred to by the roman numbers indicated in column 1 of the table). Briefly, schools I, II and III are located in villages connected by 'kachcha' (or fair weather) roads. School I belongs to a small village with a mainly tribal population. Schools IV, V and VI are in villages connected by 'pucca' (or all weather) roads. School VII is located in the district headquarter of a tribal district. School VIII is located in a semi-urban area.

near the state capital, schools IX and X are located in large cities.

Some crucial characteristics of the schools, which form the context the teacher works in, reacts to, copes with and perhaps tries to change are indicated in Table B. Eight of these schools are co-educational and more boys than girls are registered in five. The percentage of girls enrolled is lowest in school I which is inhabited by tribals and connected by a 'kachcha' road. All three schools with more girls than boys are urban. It is likely that while in rural areas girls may not be sent to school at all, in urban areas many boys are sent to private fee charging schools and girls to the local government schools. The tendency to care less about girls' education can appear in different forms in different locales.

Student attendance in these schools is thin, dropping as low as 11 per cent in one school on the day of the survey. Six to 22 per cent students in all 10 schools and 6-14 per cent in rural schools study in grade 5. If all students were finishing school, enrolment in grade 5 would be around 20 per cent of the total. A smaller percentage indicates inflated enrolment in grade 1 and/or students dropping out. Four of the 10 schools report teacher vacancies and the student teacher ratio is erratic. School V, a girls' school has the highest pupil teacher ratio, 100:1.

These schools are inspected sporadically, and by and large, the teacher is on his own. In this sample, only in one case did the inspection include any academic discussion, and in only one case did a public representative inspect a school. If this situation is contrasted with the bitter battle over the recruitment of shiksha karmis, it would appear that jobs are important, not schools or education!

The changing teacher In each of these schools, one assistant teacher (hereafter 'teacher') and one shiksha karmi was interviewed in detail (Table C).³ How is the shiksha karmi different from the teacher? Table C indicates that fewer women are joining as shiksha karmis. As against five women teachers in our sample, there were only two women shiksha karmis in school V, a girls' school and in school X, a city school. This trend, though unforeseen and unintended, is not innocuous, as women teachers are often seen as crucial in motivating girls. On the other hand, there is an indication of higher representation of scheduled tribes among the shiksha karmis. No teacher in the sample belongs to the scheduled tribes, but two shiksha karmis did. This is important for Madhya Pradesh, where

education of tribal people as well as their small numbers in formal employment are problematic. Significantly, the shiksha karmi is more likely to be local and rural based. Three shiksha karmis belonged to the village where they worked whereas no teacher did. Four teachers but no shiksha karmis working in rural schools belonged to urban areas. However, though shiksha karmis were not drawn from urban areas, they were not always local.

Thus, the shiksha karmi policy appears to have been partially successful in bringing about a local teacher and more so in promoting one who was rural based. One unanticipated consequence was that fewer women have joined as shiksha karmis, a fact that probably complements the rural base of the shiksha karmi. There is often a trade-off between the local and rural on the one hand, and female on the other, as women teachers are usually urban. While many educationists argue for recruitment of women teacher to encourage girls' participation in schooling, villagers often complain that urban women teachers spend too little time at school.

Expectedly (since the scheme was only four years old at the time of the study), shiksha karmis are younger than the teachers. Seven shiksha karmis of our sample were below 25 years in age and none over 40. In contrast, six teachers were over 40. Consequently, shiksha karmis had fewer family responsibilities. When asked about their major personal concerns, six shiksha karmis mentioned career concerns, while only three teachers did, which is not surprising given that the shiksha karmis were younger and professionally insecure.

The salary of teachers varied between Rs 3,100 to Rs 5,300 per month, while that of shiksha karmis between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 per month (trained shiksha karmis were paid an extra Rs 200) i.e., the shiksha karmi's stipend was one-third to one-fifth of the teacher's salary. Women generally had their husband's income as an extra financial resource but among the men neither teachers nor shiksha karmis tended to have any source of income other than their salary. None in our sample owned land. Notably, one of the major arguments against recruitment of local teachers in rural areas has been that the local teacher will look after his land and crops and not pay enough attention to the school. This is not borne out by facts. In fact, since shiksha karmis do not have additional sources of income, their extremely low stipend could have become problematic. As they got older and their familial responsibilities increased, they may have

become increasingly dissatisfied.

In terms of professional background, more shiksha karmis than teachers had college degrees, possibly because they belong to a younger generation. However, shiksha karmis were less likely to have trained as teachers, i.e., obtained BEd, and DEd, degrees. Whether shiksha karmis are more or less qualified than teachers is ambiguous, for though less likely to be trained, they are more likely to have college degrees. Notably, teachers and shiksha karmis of the same school tended to have similar educational qualifications. Those working in urban or 'developed' areas were more qualified, which illustrates that the context influences the kind of teacher that becomes available in any area, no matter what the process of recruitment. Less educated persons, i.e., fewer teachers with college degrees and fewer trained shiksha karmis are available in remote areas. Thus, the argument against local teachers on the ground that they tend to be less qualified needs to be examined in light of how centrally recruited teachers tend to be distributed.

An equal number of shiksha karmis and teachers, i.e., six of each, wanted to be teachers and were interested in education and teaching, though a slightly larger number of shiksha karmis were following other professions before joining. This, coupled with the fact that they are not likely to be trained as teachers, leads one to suspect that shiksha karmis are more likely to become teachers accidentally. However, it is also possible that since the policy is relatively new, potential candidates have not begun to plan for such recruitment.

Whatever the reasons, the fact that fewer shiksha karmis have trained as teachers has had important repercussions for the new criteria of appointment. Because of the pressure from shiksha karmis, many of who are not trained, a teacher training degree has been given a very low weightage as a condition for recruitment in the final policy which 'made the shiksha karmi 'regular'. There appears to be some weight to the argument that temporary recruitment of less qualified persons ultimately allows them to join 'the system permanently, making for a 'backdoor entry' of ineligible candidates. It may even distort the criteria for appointments.

Why shiksha karmis are less likely to be trained as teachers is not immediately clear, though there are several possibilities. Firstly, lack of adequate weightage to teacher training in the selection criteria to begin with may have promoted recruitment of untrained shiksha karmis. However, it

may be noted that after the first year of the policy, the government did lay stress on the teacher training degree

Secondly, it is likely that the more rural based shiksha karmi has fewer opportunities for acquiring teacher training degrees, since these institutes usually exist in urban areas. A trade off between the 'local' and 'rural' on the one hand and the 'trained' on the other therefore, cannot be ruled out. This is also indicated by the proclivity of the janpad panchayats to hire local persons over trained ones, and the continued controversy over the teacher training degree. If so, this issue can be addressed by providing teacher training opportunities after selection, or as a condition of becoming permanent. This is possible, because the government itself runs a large number of teacher training institutes (57 in Madhya Pradesh). As pointed out earlier, because of the newness of the whole scheme, neither individual candidates nor institutions have begun to prepare for this recruitment. It is even likely, that if the scheme continues, and a BEd/DEd degree is made an essential condition for recruitment, such colleges will spring up in rural areas. Meanwhile, the government can fill in the gap by providing this opportunity to selected candidates.

Finally, it is possible that the lower salaries of shiksha karmis do not attract trained candidates, though the fact that shiksha karmis are more likely to be college educated belies this explanation. If one looks at the larger picture, in the multi-grade teaching context of the state, a larger number of teachers, e.g., one for each class, rather than few highly paid ones may have a better impact on school quality. Therefore, even assuming that a teacher who is paid less is likely to be less qualified, it may make more sense to recruit five less qualified teachers to handle five classes rather than two or three highly qualified teachers. If the trade-off is between more teachers and better paid teachers, the former may be more desirable.

Appointments and postings The shiksha karmi appears to be more politically savvy than the teacher, as three shiksha karmis had received information about vacancy for appointment through public representatives, while no teacher had. Notably, the shiksha karmi is more local compared to the teacher, and is also recruited by decentralised elected bodies. Both these factors could contribute to his closer links with the elected representatives.

Among teachers, only those posted in the cities or district headquarters, stay in their place of posting. Notably, all teachers posted in rural areas, i.e., seven, stay out

of their place of posting. In contrast, four shiksha karmis posted in rural areas stay in their village of posting with their families. Three have houses of their own in the village. Three are below 25 years in age and two are unmarried. They find it economically and psychologically satisfying to stay in their village of posting and report that it improves their performance at work. Most teachers and shiksha karmis based outside the village of posting live within a radius of 20 km, but it can take up to three hours per day in commuting to and fro from work, and this is likely to affect performance significantly. The most pressing reasons for staying outside reported were the needs of the family, followed by economic considerations. All shiksha karmis were satisfied with their place of posting while two teachers were dissatisfied.

Many factors could be contributing to the shiksha karmi's tendency to stay in his place of posting. Firstly, shiksha karmis are recruited for a particular school, and are likely to make some permanent arrangements, e.g., living in the place of posting or at least nearby for this situation. The teachers, who can be posted anywhere in the district, on the other hand, may continue to try and hope for a posting in an urban area. Secondly, shiksha karmis are recruited at the block level as against the district level recruitment of teachers. While all candidates are free to apply, local residents of the block are more likely to do so. Those unwilling to work in a particular block would probably not respond to the advertisement at all. Thirdly, the recruitment criteria of shiksha karmis allow favouring local candidates. Finally, the shiksha karmis are younger, and it is the youngest among them who tend to stay most in their place of posting. Significantly, the three shiksha karmis who live outside the village of posting are all over 25.

It seems clear that given the problem in getting teachers to teach in less developed areas, recruitment for specific schools, rather than recruitment to a pool for an area such as a district, may be more effective for identifying a teacher who is actually willing to work and possibly stay in these areas. Further, if the recruitment takes place at a more decentralised level (e.g., block rather than district), more such candidates are likely to learn of and apply for such appointments. Information about school specific vacancies is also likely to be more up to date in smaller, decentralised units closer to the school.

A question remains as to whether elected bodies *per se* are better agencies for recruiting a teacher who is willing to work

and stay in remote areas rather than the usual bureaucratic ones, all other things being equal. It may only be mentioned that problems very similar to those that plague the more bureaucratic system (e.g., 'attachment' of teachers, vacancies) can crop up with elected bodies too. Further, accountability is even more difficult to ensure. Elected bodies are ultimately accountable to the people, but day-to-day monitoring, to check if they have followed rules and procedures is not feasible.

Finally, younger shiksha karmis appear to be more willing to live and work in rural areas, possibly because of fewer family responsibilities. This situation could change as they get older. Notably, among many cadres in government, it becomes possible to get qualified people to work in far flung areas when they are young because their career development is such that they move to urban centres as they get older. Also, their success in the future is made contingent upon their spending a certain amount of time in the 'field'. Moreover, minimum facilities such as housing are ensured. A transferable 'cadre' probably cannot work to the benefit of less developed areas without these conditions. If these cannot be met, then the local teacher may be a better option.

The shiksha karmi's future Barring one teacher, who felt that shiksha karmis got an adequate stipend for a temporary appointment, all teachers as well as shiksha karmis stated that they should get higher wages. Six teachers and an equal number of shiksha karmis said that their salary should be the same as teachers. One shiksha karmi and one teacher said that the remuneration should be as per the recommendations of the fifth pay commission. All teachers as well as shiksha karmis favoured the appointment of 'regular' or permanent shiksha karmis. Six shiksha karmis said that it would encourage them to work harder, though only one teacher said so. Three teachers and three shiksha karmis felt that teachers and shiksha karmis should have similar service conditions. Six shiksha karmis had taken action to voice their demands but only one planned to quit if their demands were not met. Three said that they would continue to protest as well as work.

The question is: is it possible for the state to provide different emoluments/benefits for people doing the same work, or have an island of low wages? This state of affairs was perceived as unfair by teachers as well as shiksha karmis. However, only one shiksha karmi actually planned to quit. Even though market forces indicated that teachers at these low wages

were available, there was a perceived unfairness all around, which ultimately forced the government to increase the shiksha karmi's salary and also provide for a 'permanent' job. Further, the possibility that many shiksha karmis joined and continued with the expectation that they would be able to bargain for permanent jobs and higher salaries cannot be ruled out.

The working environment It is the teachers' and shiksha karmis' lot in the state to conduct 'multigrade teaching'. Even when a teacher or shiksha karmi takes charge of one class formally he has to substitute for an absent teacher off and on. However, while all five of the regular teachers who do multigrade teaching reported that they found it difficult three out of four shiksha karmis did not share this perception.

Apart from their teaching duties, teachers perform many other official tasks. The pulse polio drive and the below poverty line survey were the two major (non-teaching) tasks, and others included general official work, women's literacy drive, updating of voters' lists and various kinds of surveys. Teachers were more likely to do these other tasks than shiksha karmis and four teachers had spent more than a month in the last three months on non-educational tasks. Furthermore, almost all teachers and shiksha karmis were involved in doing some work for the midday meal scheme. Most reported that the midday meal increased attendance, though there were complaints of wasted time, unethical behaviour by the sarpanch and that children came to school only for the meal or ration.

No teacher or shiksha karmi had ever received a formal reward or punishment. Only two shiksha karmis had received informal encouragement or reprimand from the headmaster or a public representative. It may be recalled that one reason for placing the teacher under the administrative control of the panchayats was that schools would be supervised better. In this case study, there was no direct evidence to substantiate this.

The working environment of teachers leaves a great deal to be desired. In fact, the transformation of the teacher may be contingent more on his working conditions, than on the nature of the recruitment process. For instance it is doubtful just how effective multigrade teaching can be, no matter who is recruited. If teachers are also kept busy with other official work, are given no incentive for working well and supervised poorly, it would be futile to expect results. Notably, many of the changes that have come about as a result

of the shiksha karmi policy pertain to the recruitment and service conditions of teachers. Shiksha karmis are recruited by different norms, are less well paid, can be removed, etc. While these may have their own impact, the working conditions i.e. multigrade teaching, the incentive system opportunities to learn, supervision, etc. may be the decisive factor for teachers' performance.

A major change that the shiksha karmi policy did introduce in the working atmosphere of teachers was placing them under the administrative control of the panchayats. While more evidence about the impact of this step is discussed later, the persistent problem of supervision would indicate that simply changing administrative agencies does not bring about effective and comprehensive change in working conditions.

Another significant change in working conditions that came about must be noted. During the years that the shiksha karmi policy was taking shape, the government also attempted to improve the quality of primary school education by providing more facilities, better textbooks and teacher training. In this sample seven teachers and nine shiksha karmis had been trained in the previous year. All shiksha karmis and a majority of the teachers gave a positive feedback about the training though two teachers were critical. Most shiksha karmis perceived a need for more training, but fewer teachers did so. The response to the new textbooks was overwhelmingly positive, but shiksha karmis were more enthusiastic than the teachers. In general, the attempt to improve quality of education was welcomed by teachers as well as shiksha karmis. Thus an opportunity to learn and teach better which these reforms provided is a step in the right direction. If this opportunity could have been linked with encouragement, i.e. a system of incentives such as recognition, promotion and other benefits linked to performance, the results may have been significant.

Interaction with the community Teachers as well as shiksha karmis reported meeting the sarpanch regularly, mainly to verify attendance and sometimes about matters concerning the school. Neither the teachers nor the shiksha karmis had much contact with the janpad panchayat members. Their relationship with the departmental officers was similarly non-eventful and most officers were reported to behave well. There was a strong negative response from the teachers at the schools being placed under the control of the panchayats. The reasons given were, interference by the panchayat in schemes

like midday meals and the lowering of the dignity of the teacher who had to run around getting attendance papers signed, etc. Some teachers reported that the sarpanch wanted wrong figures given for midday meals. The shiksha karmis in contrast were less concerned about interference and favouritism, but half mentioned misbehaviour by sarpanches. However, some shiksha karmis also said that panchayat control made the school run better and that teachers became more punctual. The shiksha karmis appeared to experience the positive and negative control of panchayats more intensively in terms of actual behaviour but were less critical of it as a system.

To sum up, the shiksha karmi policy has given the state a teacher who was different from the erstwhile assistant teacher in some ways, but not in others. The new teacher is young and mostly college educated. However, he is less likely to have trained as a teacher. He is more likely to stay in the village of posting than his earlier counterpart. He is more in touch with and affected by the panchayat but less critical. Though worried about his temporary job and poor salary, he like the teacher, is enthusiastic about new pedagogic inputs, perhaps a little more so. However, the shiksha karmi works in the same conditions as the teacher, i.e. paucity of teachers, multigrade teaching, inadequate supervision and a lack of recognition and incentives for excellence.

The view of the village representatives Since decentralisation through the elected bodies formed the bedrock of the shiksha karmi policy, the opinion and actions of village level public representatives are critical to understanding its impact, current and for the future. Twenty Panchayat public representatives including sarpanches, upasarpanches, counsellors of the municipal corporations and members of the village education committee of the villages in which the sample schools were situated, were interviewed (Table D) for this survey.

Almost all village representatives knew the teacher as well as the shiksha karmi of their school by face, though a small number did not know them by name. Nearly all had met the teacher and the shiksha karmi. Most public representatives had discussed issues related to the improvement of the school with the teacher/shiksha karmi. Only in one village, i.e. village 1, did a public representative complain that the teacher did not come to school regularly and was unpunctual. The rest had no complaints about the teacher or the shiksha karmi. Importantly, no public representative made any comment on the way

in which the teacher taught or treated the children

This survey indicated a lack of clarity about the shiksha karmi policy at the panchayat level, among the very people who are expected to supervise and monitor the primary schools (Table D). Nine out of 20 representatives could not give a clear answer as to what the difference between the teacher and the shiksha karmi was and a comprehensive answer was rare.

Fourteen of the 20 village representatives interviewed articulated views about the shiksha karmis scheme. Ten thought that appointment of shiksha karmis was a positive development, while only one thought that it was a disadvantage. Three village representatives listed out advantages as well as disadvantages. The major perceived advantage was that the shiksha karmi because he or she was a local person, taught better and was more regular. The other stated advantage was that the government could get a cheaper teacher. Two village representatives commented on the shiksha karmi's inexperience and lack of training.

Only three out of the 20 representatives said that no change was needed in the salary structure of the shiksha karmis. Thus, the perception that shiksha karmis were not paid adequately existed at the panchayat level too. In fact, there appears to have been near unanimity on this issue. It is not surprising that the state government has ultimately had to give in to this pressure.

The reaction of the village representatives to panchayat control of schools was mixed. Eight thought that it was an advantage to have the school under the administrative control of the panchayat, three said that it was a disadvantage, two saw both advantages and disadvantages. Three village representatives said that it made no difference, while one did not know. The most commonly perceived advantage was that control by the panchayats allowed for better monitoring and the school became more regular. The most major perceived disadvantage was that there was unnecessary interference by the panchayats and harassment of teachers. Rather surprisingly, some village representatives themselves did not perceive control by the panchayats as advantageous, and admitted to the problem of undue interference. One village representative summed up the issue rather neatly by commenting that panchayat control would be good only if the panchayat had genuine concern about the school.

Though they appeared to sense a need for improvement in the school system, the

village representatives were uncertain about how the school system should be changed. When asked what changes were needed in the education system, eight out of 20 had no comment to offer. Five felt that teaching should improve in some way. Other desirable changes suggested were more teachers, more teaching aids, teachers not to be involved in non-teaching work and no interference in schools. However, no village representative offered a clear plan or even an agenda. This lack of opinion stands in stark contrast against the furor over the appointment of shiksha karmis. Obviously, education has yet to come on to the public agenda in the way that jobs are. Mostly, the panchayats had taken an interest in some construction or repair activity of the school building.

An issue that needs to be addressed here is, whether schools should be run by popular representative bodies such as panchayats or by experts and people involved in primary education. Notably, elite schools in this country are usually run by the latter even though they cater to resourceful communities capable of looking after their own interests. It cannot be assumed that panchayats, even when deeply concerned about improving schools, would necessarily know how to go about it. Motivation and will are not sufficient to manage schools, skills are equally important.

The Parents The final verdict on the product can only be given by the consumers, i.e., the children and the parents in this case. While no specific information about the teachers or the shiksha karmis could be elicited from the children, all of who said that they were "good", it was more possible to get parent's perceptions. Forty-five parents whose children studying in the 10 sample schools were contacted and interviewed (Table E).

Almost all parents knew the teacher and the shiksha karmi by face and by name. Most had met them to discuss their wards, though nearly one-fourth had not. How-

ever, a majority of the parents were uninformed and unconcerned about the shiksha karmi policy. Twenty-four parents did not perceive any difference between the teacher and the shiksha karmi. Among the 21 who were aware of a difference, nine understood that the shiksha karmi was not well paid or a temporary appointee. Three said that the shiksha karmi was an employee of the panchayat while the teacher of the state government. Some parents pointed out that shiksha karmis worked harder or were more enthusiastic. About the shiksha karmi's salary, 25 parents had no comment to offer. Nineteen favoured an increase, and only one thought that it was adequate.

Similarly, 26 parents did not have an opinion as to whether there was any advantage in employing a shiksha karmi instead of a teacher. Of the 19 who did have an opinion, all except one thought that shiksha karmis were advantageous. The most often quoted reason was that the shiksha karmi because of being local, was more regular, committed and understood the children better. Two parents perceived the shiksha karmis as not being trained. The parents' opinion is valuable, since they are not likely to 'take sides' on the various issues involved.

The views expressed by the village representatives and parents would indicate that shiksha karmis do appear to perform better than the teacher. They are perceived as more regular, punctual and hardworking. Moreover, most village representatives and parents attributed this to the 'local' nature of the shiksha karmi. Significantly, shiksha karmis at this point of time were contractual employees who could have been thrown out easily for negligence of duty by the janpad panchayats. No doubt this fear kept them performing at a minimum level.

However, hiring temporary personnel who can be removed for non-performance is not an effective and comprehensive incentive system. Firstly, fear of being thrown out does not encourage people

CORRIGENDUM

THE TORONTO-DOMINION BANK

With reference to the Balance Sheet published in *EPW* of June 12, 1999 (pp 1544-1548) the statement as under was inadvertently omitted on page 1546 under the heading 'Advances'

"As at March 31st 1999 and 1998, the Bank has no non-performing advances"

The omission is regretted

towards excellence, but only towards performing at a basic minimum level to keep going. Secondly, all the problems of lack of security, i.e., people looking for better opportunities, not investing in long-term skills, better candidates leaving, etc., can appear. Finally, when the 'incentive', or rather blow, of being thrown out is delivered, even the employer does not benefit very much. Rather than better performance, he is faced with a vacancy, which has to be filled up and a new appointee has to be put on trial yet again. Experience has shown how difficult and time-consuming recruitment can be.

Unfortunately, apart from the basics, such as the teacher/shiksha karmi being regular and punctual, neither the village representatives nor the parents had much to say. Teaching styles, how much children had actually learned, grievances about standards, workload, home work, etc. did not emerge as issues. Like the village representatives, the parents did not have a clear vision about what they wanted the school to be. Twenty-four parents had no comments to offer about whether any change was needed in the system of education. Among those who did, an improvement in the teaching-learning process was seen as desirable.

Parents were also non-committal about the shift in administration of schools. Twenty-six parents did not know if it was better or worse for the panchayats to control schools. Out of the 19 who gave an opinion, 10 saw it as advantageous, seven as disadvantageous, and two could see the positive as well as the negative points. The most major perceived advantage was better monitoring at the local level and the disadvantage, undue interference and insulting behaviour of public representatives towards the teachers. Six parents commented that the panchayat and the villagers themselves were also careless about the school.

This paper has argued that the transformation of the teacher may be much more an issue of his/her working conditions, i.e., motivation, skill development, school atmosphere, the incentive system, supervision, etc., than of recruitment policies. If so, the expressed concerns of the panchayats do not auger significant change for the school system as yet. The relative passivity of the parents, as of the panchayats, about improving the performance of the teacher/shiksha karmi forms the crux of the whole issue of decentralisation and community control of schools. While recently researchers have argued that parents 'want' to send their children to school, it needs to be pointed out that this

demand appears to exist in the more passive sense, i.e., parents are willing to send children to school if it exists and functions. The more active manifestation of this demand, in terms of supervising and supporting the school, taking an interest in the teaching-learning process and thinking about educational issues is more difficult to come by.

It is not within the scope of this paper to comment on why such active demand did not exist among the parents and public representatives surveyed. It is sufficient to say that it does exist among better-off, specially urban people, who can be greatly concerned about their children's quality of schooling. Moreover, even when people are concerned, translating the concern into action and actually getting results depends on skills, level of information, confidence, resources. The point is, that given the current situation, the transformation of the teacher may not be achieved by simply transferring the administration of schools to panchayats. Possibly, panchayats will develop greater understanding over time. In the interim, however, a more proactive role at the government level, through panchayats or otherwise, may be in order.

A SUMMING UP

The impact of the shiksha karmi policy has not been even in the ten schools. However, there is at least one happy ending to the story. In school I, which has one teacher and one shiksha karmi, a minor revolution has come about with the appointment of the shiksha karmi. In this school, the teacher stayed in a nearby city and was dissatisfied with his posting in a small, badly connected tribal village. He also said that lack of knowledge of the local language was a major handicap in teaching. In the three months previous to the survey, he appeared to have spent almost all his time on non-educational work. In this, representatives and parents were vocal about their dissatisfaction with the teacher. Most parents had never met him. In contrast, the shiksha karmi belonged to the village, was devoted to the school and committed to educating the children of the community. Moreover, his knowledge of the local language makes him effective. Parents and public representatives reported that the school functioned regularly and punctually since the appointment of the shiksha karmi and there was a substantial increase in children's attendance. Incidentally, the qualifications of the teacher and the shiksha karmi were the same. Both had studied up to grade XII and neither had a teacher training degree.

School I is situated in a small tribal village and the 'regular' teacher clearly did not think it worth his while to make too much effort. A young enthusiastic local youth as the shiksha karmi appears to have changed things for the better, illustrating how a local teacher can contribute significantly to developing the school as an institution of the community.

On the other hand, school II, which is also situated in a small village connected by a 'kachcha' road, did not report such a transformation. It may be noted that the shiksha karmi of this school was not a local resident but, like the teacher, belonged to another village in the district. Neither stayed in the village. The village sarpanch was inactive, with her husband frankly and openly the power behind the throne. None of the parents had any opinions to offer about the school. The upasarpanch, who did venture some comments, remarked that there was no advantage in the panchayats controlling schools, the whole point was sincerity, whether of departmental officers or panchayat members.

These two examples illustrate that a more committed and effective teacher, as in school I, cannot be brought about through suitable recruitment policies and panchayat control alone, though these may well facilitate such change. In school I, the concerned and enthusiastic teacher has 'happened' with the arrival of a shiksha karmi who belongs, and is motivated. But in other schools, such as in school II, the same may need to be induced. Moreover, it may be noted that even in school I the lack of positive incentives could dampen the shiksha karmi's enthusiasm, train him and provide incentives to make him into a really good teacher. If the transformation of the teacher is to be systemic rather than sporadic, it cannot be left to chance and good luck, but will have to be promoted, step by step.

Notes

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1. This policy should not be confused with the shiksha karmi policy of Rajasthan. The two share a common name, but little else.
2. This provision had existed earlier but had not been implemented effectively.
3. The sample of ten teachers and ten shiksha karmis is admittedly tiny. The attempt in this case study however is not to draw statistical conclusions but to delineate emerging issues.