# Role of Middle Management in Policy Implementation

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**lfe** **LEADERSHIP FOR EQUITY**

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# Acknowledgements

# Abbreviations

| Abbr. | Expansion | Abbr. | Expansion |
|---|---|---|---|
| ASER | Annual Status of Education Report | MM | Middle Manager |
| BEO | Block Education Officer | MPSC | Maharashtra Public Service Commission |
| BDO | Block Development Officer | MIS | Management Information System |
| BRG | Block Resource Group | MSCERT | Maharashtra State Council of Education Research and Training |
| CRC | Cluster Resource Centre | NEP | National education policy |
| CRG | Cluster Resource Group | NGO | Non-Governmental organization |
| DIET | District Institute of Education and Training | PSM | Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra |
| DRG | District Resource Group | RTE | Right to Education |
| FLN | Foundational literacy and Numeracy | SCERT | State Council of Education Research and Training |
| GR | Government Resolution | SMC | School Management Committee |
| HM | Head Master | UDISE | Unified District information on School Education |
| KP | Kendra Pramukh | | |

# Executive Summary

India is a welfare nation known for formulating numerous policies for its people from time to time. The realisation of a policy from paper to ground requires efforts from all the levels involved in an administrative setup. Literature suggests that there are usually three levels of management that are essentially involved in designing, implementing and activation of any policy on ground. These three levels are the top, middle and ground level management. The top and the ground level management are mostly in discussions for various reasons, while the role of the middle level management usually remains far from the spotlight.

Here the study attempts to streamline the role of the middle level managers through a case study approach where the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM), a Maharashtra state FLN mission, was taken into consideration to better understand the role of the middle managers in implementation. This study centres around the officers of the lower middle management that included cluster heads, extension officers and block education officers. The data was collected using a convenient sampling technique through in-depth interviews with officers from both the lower middle management and top level management.

### Hierarchy and positions

The hierarchy of positions as per the Ministry of Education in the state shows the top-down distribution of all the positions in the department. The minister of education is the supreme head of the department, who is assisted by ministers of School and Higher Technical education. All the positions after the Secretary to the state are considered as middle managers. The positions from the joint secretary to the Education officers at the zilla parishad level are considered as upper middle managers and the district education officers to the end of the administrative hierarchy are the lower middle management cadre.

### The middle management cadre and their roles: Envisioned vs De Facto

The working document for revised job roles clearly lays out five key categories for the work of any middle manager concerned with education. These are (1) Academic quality improvement; (2) Infrastructure Development; (3) Attendance and enrollment; (4) Administrative duties; (5) Collaborative responsibilities. It was found that on a day to day basis their reality is very different.
- Middle managers seemed to constantly balance between academic and administrative responsibilities, in which they usually perform roles that may not be listed in their job charts.
- Further when asked about their own time use, many middle managers mentioned that they are most of the time working to complete the tasks given by their superiors as a result of which they cannot focus on their own responsibilities.
- The Middle Managers highlighted that they are currently working with only 30-40% staff in the place of total positions. As a result of this, having to take on 'additional charge' or responsibilities of vacant positions is a very common occurrence among them. On a day to day basis, middle managers often have to take on roles and responsibilities apart from their immediate positions.

**Major Roles beyond the job charts**

The middle managers are an important part of the hierarchical structure as they control and influence the flow of information from top to bottom and vice versa[1]. In their role middle managers are required to implement national policies and adapt these to priorities required, orient staff members to strategic issues, establish and maintain relationships with government institutions and stakeholders.

The nature of their roles can be summarised under the major heads of -

1.  Mediator - A mediator is someone who is unbiased, maintains a code of conduct and respects the confidentiality of both the sides while sharing information between them. As a middle manager the officers have to play certain roles like maintaining relationships between different departments in order to help share information from one department to another. A middle manager helps team members understand and implement solutions through detailed steps and systems to achieve desired results as a team. Middle managers are those who simplify the reporting structure in addition to communicating and explaining the goals to all the team mates. In an organisational setup, a middle manager needs to develop social skills in order to successfully connect all levels of the organization and move the team in the right direction.

2.  Expert - A middle manager is expected to perform all the duties with utmost clarity and quality. Their subordinates follow their footsteps and these managers usually guide them as experts in that path. A middle manager can be referred to as an expert here as they usually follow a model that may be successful and try to replicate that as per their own requirements. The middle manager in his expert role helps in the implementation of any kind of policy as an expert guide.

3.  Facilitator - The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'Facilitator' as "someone who helps to bring about an outcome (such as learning, productivity, or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision". Many skills are required to be a good facilitator. Facilitators also need a variety of listening skills including ability to paraphrase; stack a conversation; draw people out; balance participation; and make space for more introverted group members (Kaner, et al., 1996). It is critical to the facilitator's role to have the knowledge and skill to be able to intervene in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

4.  Leader - The most simple definition of a leader is such that any individual who leads or commands a group, organization, or country. The role of the middle manager also requires them to take leadership in performing tasks assigned to them and get things done by the team. As a leader the officer supports, encourages and directs all the other officers in the right path of success. They not only guide them but also work with them to achieve their goals.

5.  Role model - The middle manager majorly is seen as a role model at their position to other officers and teachers, as defined by some of the top officials. With time and experience the

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[1] McGurk, P. (2009). Developing "middle leaders" in the public services? The realities of management and leadership development for public managers. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

middle manager along with creating good relations with all the levels builds a good reputation for himself/herself.  This image is created by the performance in managing, maintaining, coordinating and producing the quality output within or without the Job chart.

**Shifts due to Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra Policy**

PSM as a policy was written with utmost clarity and detailed step by step guiding directions. What was commendable beyond its detailed GR is that we found that **almost all middle managers were aligned with its purpose**. Almost all the respondents had very clear knowledge about the PSM policy. Other factors that enabled its implementation include - clear strategic planning, demand-based training, recognition and trust among the levels, regular follow ups of policy status, transparency, power and authority to ground staff, freedom to perform, bottom to top approach. However, the challenges related to the implementation of PSM were that it was an ambitious policy that was generalised throughout the state without recognising the location specific problems. It required a great deal of attention, as a result of which the other policies may have been sidelined. **PSM also added an extra workload to the officers which may have caused them to pay less attention towards other parallel programs.** The policy gave freedom and authority to the teachers while limiting that of middle managers. However, the policy's goal to reach the remotest locations of the state still remains unreleased, as many officers pointed out.

**Major changes in Roles and Responsibilities**

Policy shifts during PSM required middle managers to change various aspects of their functioning:
- Drastic shift towards the academic role - teacher support, alignment with student learning goals became the core focus areas across all levels.  Now they started investing more time in their academic responsibilities of improvement in the quality of education and other related factors. The role of the middle managers was now developing as an academic leader rather than only working for the administrative roles.
- The training under the PSM was also different from their older practices as they now gave the same training to all the teachers as well as middle managers, including the officers at the block and district level as well.
- The interviews highlighted that the middle management works tirelessly as they feel continuously motivated. The officers have gained an understanding of direction and clarity to perform their duties after the PSM implementation. Whereas recognition and awards from time to time have also helped in encouraging the officers to perform well.

**Operational Strategies among middle managers**
- **Relationship building and communication:** It was observed from the interviews that a middle manager should possess certain soft skills that help them in getting their work done. Often relationship building and communication were highlighted as the most important soft skills. Middle managers keep good relationships across all levels-  within the cadre as well as below and above their cadre of officers.
- **Time Management:** It is known that the officers have to perform a variety of priorities simultaneously.  In that case the officers try to engage their well-performing subordinates, officers and even teachers, to support them and get the task  done. Officers have also

elaborately spoken about the nature of administrative work related to repetitive data calling from their reporting authorities for various reasons.

- **Recognition as a strategy to improve teacher motivation and performance:** To ensure the quality of education, middle managers have to build trust among the teachers and officers as well as encourage and motivate them for better outputs. The middle management shared about how they motivated the teachers to continuously improve and perform.
- **Regular follow ups:** Regular follow ups has definitely been one best practice that made policy implementation successful. The follow ups from the headmasters as well as teachers on a regular basis helps in maintaining the consistency in running the program

## Challenges faced by middle management

Certain challenges faced by the officers in their day to day functioning Include:

- **Vacant positions and resulting additional charge overburdening officers:** As discussed briefly, vacant positions remain a major roadblock for middle managers. The most highlighted challenge in a majority of the interviews conducted was the problem of vacant positions in the system.
- **Officer have to routeinly manage high workload resulting in lower quality of work, lower job satisfaction:** Many officers have spoken about the burden of work load as a result of various factors such as over- ambitious policy implementation tasks, load of both academic and administrative duties, repetitive data collection, report making, monitoring and support, etc. Apart from their own work when they have to work for additional charges that creates a sense of frustration among the officers.
- **Lack of skills particularly with regards to technology and data work:** This challenge was highlighted as a major issue by the middle managers as well as the top officials. According to the top officials, many officers of the middle management cadre lacked basic skills. They believe that the output could be more vibrant if the skills of the officers could be added at all levels.
- **Lack of infrastructure to carry out official duties:** Infrastructure plays an important role in the performance of the officers. As informed by officers there is a dearth of required infrastructure. It can be strat right from an office to sit and work, to a computer or a vehicle for the middle manager to make frequent visits. The officers mentioned that unavailability of a vehicle to travel to all the locations and the frequency of visits to school at regular intervals is also affected.

# Introduction

**The NIPUN Bharat Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission is a vital component of National Education Policy 2020**

After the last education policy of 1986 and 1992 that laid the foundations of Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, the Government of India in 2020 introduced a policy of paramount value to the educational landscape, titled the National Education Policy (NEP). One of the most important components of the NEP is the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission, recently launched by the Union Minister of Education in the month of July 2021, titled as the NIPUN Bharat mission. NIPUN Bharat aims to cover the learning needs of children in the age group of 3 to 9 years. The mission focuses on developing basic language, literacy and numeracy skills which will help the students develop into better readers and writers. NIPUN Bharat envisages making the experience of learning at the foundational stage Holistic, Integrated, Inclusive, Enjoyable, and Engaging.

One of the most important components of the NEP 2020 is the goal to achieve 100% developed Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) skills among the students till grade three. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy refers to building adequate literacy and numeracy skills during the foundational stage of school education. These are the first 5 years of education up to class 2 when the child is between 3 – 7 years. Since the majority of the brain development occurs  during this time, cognitive abilities in language and mathematics must be developed during these years. To have gateway skills of reading with meaning and basic maths, throughout the country by the year 2025.

This ambitious yet achievable goal would require several strategies and reforms in order to see its successful implementation. The burden of much of this policy implementation rests on the executive arm of the system. The main actors in policy implementation involve everyone in the hierarchical order from the top policymakers to the middle-level implementers and the bottom level players. Based on the literature, Natesan and Marathe (2017) identify three different levels of implementers in the policy implementation process, i.e., top-level leaders-policy designers and framers, mid-level managers and implementers and frontline workers or street-level workers. In between the policy framers and the street-level workers the main implementers are generally referred to as middle managers, executive officers or administrative implementing leaders, Natesan and Marathe (2017).  Bennet (1995) defines Middle Managers as key 'Brokers' who perform a transactional role of transmission of information and command up and down the line.
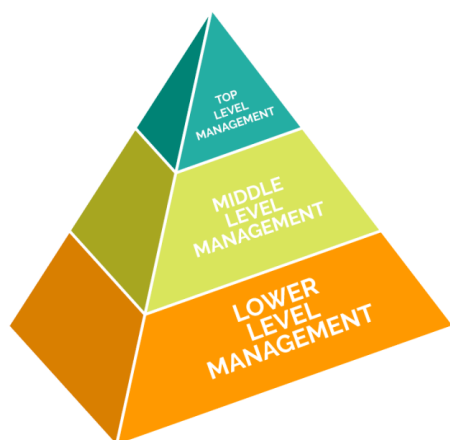
Top Level Management
They make decisions affecting the entirety of the system.

Middle Level Management
They are responsible for realisation of the targets set by the top management.

Ground Level Management
They are responsible for implementation of all programs and policies on ground

However, the role of Middle Managers implementing policies is little understood in our context. This study is an attempt to contribute to the current discourse on the role of administration, governance and middle managers particularly in successful implementation of any education policy. While every component of the structure holds equal importance in getting any work done, we focus on how the middle management influences the policy implementation in order to promote and strengthen public education systems.

**Maharashtra can leverage its experience of implementing a foundational learning program called the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra**

While states are gearing up to implement NEP and NIPUN in the near future, there are many valuable lessons that can be drawn from policies previously implemented. Maharashtra has a four-year experience of successfully implementing a similar policy to improve the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) titled the "Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra" (PSM) in its bag. The Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM) was an initiative of the Maharashtra Department of Primary Education to improve the educational condition of the state. Maharashtra definitely saw an increase in the enrolments in Public schools throughout the state but they failed to achieve the expected level of improvement in education. Also, according to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Survey, 2014, a majority of the children in Maharashtra couldn't read, write and perform basic numeracy skills. To change this reality, the Government of Maharashtra brought out a Government Resolution (GR) on 22 June 2015 titled 'Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra' (PSM) or the 'Educationally Progressive Maharashtra'. which announced a new programme to raise educational standards in all schools across the state. The objective is to ensure that not a single child remains below the expected norms, and gains age -appropriate proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetical concepts and operations.

Therefore studying the implementation of the PSM in the state as a case study, from the perspective of middle managers in the policy may prove a path-breaking study for providing recommendations to the national FLN mission. The study will also most importantly help in understanding the generally under-recognised role of the middle managers in the successful implementation of policies in India.
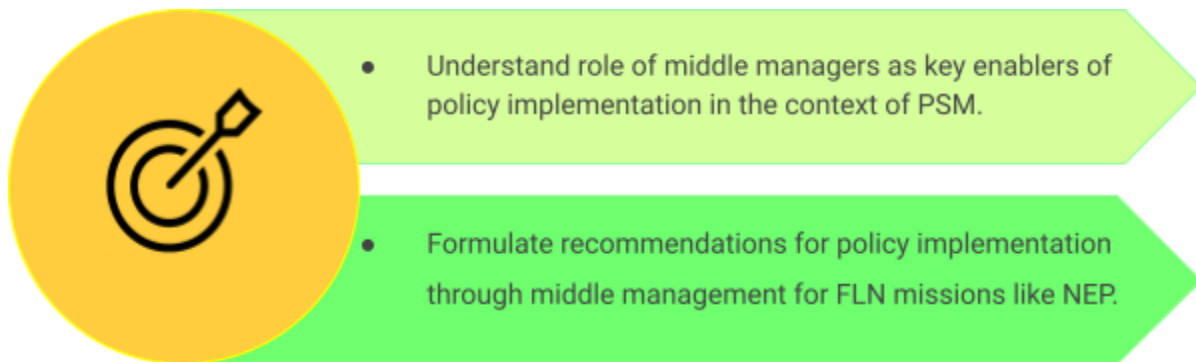
Focusing our attention on the role of middle management for successful policy implementation, it becomes important to understand the processes as well as the strategies used by them during several stages of a policy implementation. Studying their role in policy implementation may act as an important guide that can be suggested for the smooth and fruitful implementation of the FLN mission under the NEP 2020. We believe that the success of the national FLN mission will be dependent on the implementation of the aligned directives that are bound to be issued by the respective states, especially by the middle management in the way they rally resources and mobilise their staff towards this goal.

# Review of Literature

In order to create a link between the concepts used in our study we conducted a detailed literature review on selected reports, journalistic articles and research papers related to two important aspects of our study, i.e.,

1. Role of Middle Managers
2. Challenges faced by middle managers in policy implementation

A range of literature from the domains of education, policy research, and management were taken into consideration. A deep review of the available literature helped us to understand the mechanisms of policy implementation - from passing a resolution to responsibility distribution as well as seeing it getting successfully implemented, the literature also helped us to build a base upon the role played by the middle management in the process, it also talked about the numerous scenarios where they face challenges and what lead to such challenges.

Reviewing the available literature has not only been helpful for us in understanding the diverse trends and themes that are pre-existent in this domain but also helped us in structuring the study by designing the data collection tools as well as the essential research techniques. Since the approach to the study is

exploratory in nature, apart from the diverse trends and themes that came up through literature review, we constantly keep an eye for unexplored themes that may come up in the various phases of the study.

In the process of reviewing the literature for the study we were able to recognise the following major themes upon which the study was structured :

**Challenges of policy implementers :** Lindquist and Wanna (2015) further list down the problems which may lead to challenges in policy implementation such as

a) Unclear policy statements and wording,
b) Use of legal terminologies without explanation and
c) Lack of vision in the policy.
d) Lack of staff to carry out multiple activities
e) Additional burden due to less staff
f) Operating under financial and infrastructure constraints
g) Lack of transparency in the system
h) Lack of support from superiors
i) Hierarchy of power and authority
j) Shortage of time to deliver gigantic targets.

While the above technical issue with the policy formulation exists, there are other administrative challenges that implementers often encounter. The challenges in implementing any policy may also vary with the various underlying factors such as geographical, cultural, regional, etc.

**Role of middle management :** The study delves to understand what attributes the middle management officers need to possess and what tasks are to be carried out that are beyond their prescribed job role. The study tries to decode this unseen aspect of policy implementation by understanding the work and responsibilities of the middle management policy implementers.

In a system that is governed by numerous policies, middle management officers are only a micro unit. The question that arises is why there is a need to understand the working of middle management? The argument is that within public sector organisations the role of middle managers (MM) has been identified as crucial particularly in the context of reforms and change initiatives (Malinga, 2008). Middle managers are seen as the crucial link between the top management and on-ground staff. In their role Middle Managers are required to implement national policies and adapt these to priorities required, orient staff members to strategic issues, establish and maintain relationships with government institutions and stakeholders (Malinga, 2008). Thus skill sets required by middle managers is a combination of the managerial, leadership as well as knowledge aspects of Middle Managers role (Mcgurk, 2009). On one hand, their role requires them to direct people and resources to implement programs, while on the other hand, it requires them to reflect on their experiences and relationships with others to deliver strategic changes driven from the top. In this sense, their role is both upward (in having to work with management at the top), downward (in directing subordinates) and outward (in having to manage relationships with partnering organisations)  (Mcgurk, 2009).

# Approach

The study focuses on understanding the role of the middle management cadre in policy implementation in the context of Maharstra's public education institutions. This includes breaking down the duties, responsibilities, challenges and strategies used by the middle management on a regular basis as well as while implementing a policy. We aim to bring out the various essentialities that are needed to be followed by the middle managers as well as the other inter-linked cadres whenever a policy would be implemented. In this study we directly engage with the middle managers to understand their role in policy implementation in general as well as in the specified context of PSM implementation, understand their experiences and the various exogenous and endogenous factors that influenced their day to day functioning. The following research questions guided our study:

## Research Questions

1. Who are Middle Managers?
    i. Definition of Middle Managers In the administrative context
    ii. What is the opinion of all the levels about the role of Middle Managers?

2. What is the role of Middle managers in the implementation of a policy?
    i. What was the role/strategies used by Middle Managers in the PSM implementation?
    ii. How much knowledge did the Middle Managers have about the policy being implemented through them?
    ii. Were there any changes in their usual role in the implementation of PSM?
    iii. What were the major challenges in PSM implementation?

The main aim of taking these questions into consideration for the study are as they allow us to explore all the angles of the middle managers role in the structure. These questions will be helpful in defining the regular roles and responsibilities of the cadre, as well as any changes in their normal functioning due to policy implementation. The questions might also help us in seeing the major changes in their role after the PSM was implemented along with some of the major challenges that the officers faced during the implementation.

Based on the conceptual frameworks identified through the literature review and allowing flexibility for the exploratory nature of this study, an open-ended interview schedule was used for the data collection. As the study moved ahead a mixed methods research design was developed along with a detailed sampling, methodology and analysis plan. These have been detailed in the section below.

## Scope of the study

The study covered the following aspects of location, time duration and sample characteristics keeping PSM as a context for reference for the study.

**Location**
- Districts covered - Ahmednagar, Chandrapur, Hingoli, Nagpur, Nanded, Nandurbar, Nashik, Osmanabad, Pune and Satara
- Both high and low performing districts as per PSM GR expected outcomes. (PSM Samata Report)

**Time Duration**
- Limited to the active years of PSM.
- First GR in June 2015 to the next three years until June 2018.
- Related documents,institutional mechanisms and relationship specific to that time period were examined.

**Sample Characteristics**
- Officers only from the lower middle management were taken.
- Lower middle management includes cluster heads, extension officers and block education officers

# Study Design

The study was structured in two phases, phase 1 and phase 2. Among the two phases of the interviews, in the first phase of the study we tried to understand everything in and around the important components of PSM. And in the second phase of the study we conducted the interviews with middle management only on their role. This section chalks out the important components of the study like the study design, sampling and data collection. The structural breakdown follows in two phases as well as its components can be easily understood from the figure below.
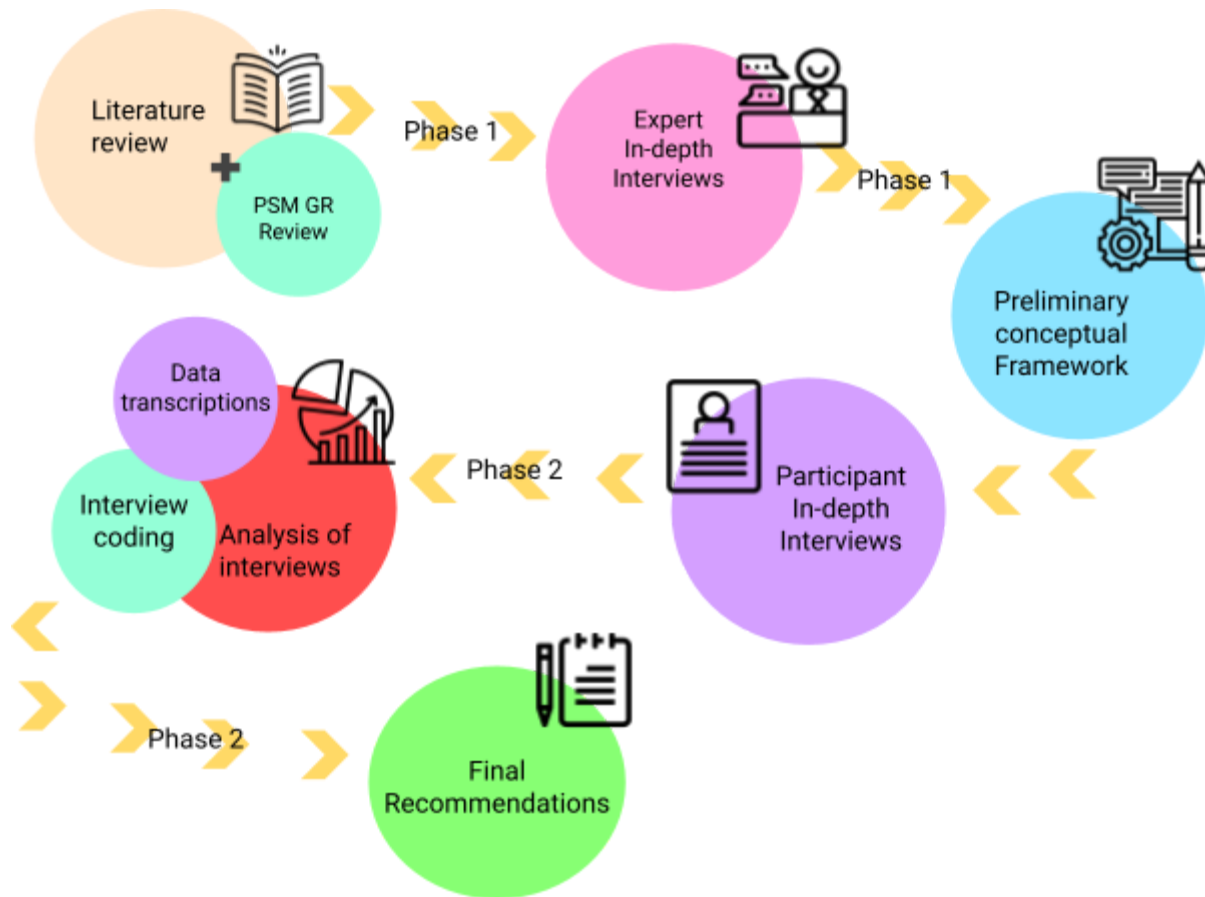
## Phase 1: Background of PSM

This includes literature review, policy document review and the expert in-depth interviews. In the literature review section, all the literature including the background of the study, definition of middle managers, role of middle management in the education department and the implementation of Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra was studied along with a review of the Government Resolution on the PSM.

After the review of literature was conducted a basic interview schedule was prepared for the first phase of interviews with a list of experts from the Education department of Maharashtra that were actively involved in policy designing and implementation. The interview schedule was an open-ended, semi-structured tool that had a lot of scope for improvement based on the suggestions from the first phase interviews.

The first phase of interview was done keeping in mind the birth of PSM from the initial program of "*Moolbhoot Vachan* and *Gyanrachanavad"* which started around 2009 in the Satara District, that later laid the foundation for the PSM at a large scale. Hence we started the phase 1 interviews from the Satara district from where the whole idea of PSM generated. The Extension officer and the Kendra Pramukhs from Satara district were interviewed to build the structure of the study as well as gain understanding

about the principal idea of the program and how it gave birth to the ambitious Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Program in Maharashtra.

It also included interviews with the main designer of the PSM program who laid the main idea, design and plan of going about the successful implementation. The interview helped us to understand about the different intra layers of upper middle management and lower middle management. It also explained about the role of leadership in such policy implementation, importance of the middle management cadre, skills and responsibilities as well as some operational challenges faced during implementation.

Next set of interviews were conducted with the people involved in devising, meeting and training all the levels for realising the idea of PSM. The interviews with the training heads as well as top level officers at high authority positions served the understanding of the mechanisms of the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra program and the portrayal of the role of middle management. Some interviews were also conducted with the middle management officers like the Cluster heads, Block Extension officers as well as Block Education officers to understand their expectations, opinions, challenges as well as their role in implementing the policy.

## Phase 2: Role of Middle Managers

This included in-depth individual key-informant interviews with the officers of the lower middle level management. The interview schedule was an open-ended tool, with structured questions targeting the role of middle management in policy implementation. A total of 15 interviews with the officers from the lower middle management were conducted. They included the positions like the Cluster heads, Block Extension officers and Block Education officers. Since it was a purposive sampling it was well taken care that both males and females should be interviewed, in a satisfying proportion nearly half of each given their availability.

As mentioned earlier, the second phase of Interviews were built on the suggestions and guidance given by the officers in the first phase regarding the role of middle managers in policy implementation. The second phase of interviews mainly focused upon understanding the various strategies used by middle managers in their day to day functioning and coordination with all the levels both horizontally and vertically.

## Sampling

The sample was taken from a whole population of the available list of officers through random selection from a convenient sample of middle managers. Given the difficulty in accessing individuals in government bodies and recruiting them as participants in this study, a convenience sampling method was used .The study is restricted to the lower middle managers, hence our sample was drawn from the cadre consisting of Cluster Head, Extension officer and Block Education officer (BEO). Since we did a random selection of officers from the convenient list of officers it was not determined whether the officers were a part of the PSM implementation. Some samples were also taken through snowball sampling. A sample of 25 respondents were taken, which included some individuals from the policy formulation cadre.

## Data collection

The data collection technique for the study was in-depth interviews in both the phases. Since there are not many databases and reports available on the role played by the middle managers in the Indian government and Educational policy implementation context, the interviews conducted in the first phase have helped us in structuring the data collection tool as well as the sample characteristics with utmost clarity for the second phase.

A total of 25 officers from the top and middle management were interviewed in both the phases. Where the first phase consisted of some officers from the top level management the second phase strictly considered officers from the middle management cadre. We interviewed 10 officers in the first phase and 15 in the second. Whereas the sample size for both the phases was fixed the number of interviews depended upon the availability and willingness of the officers to contribute for an interview.

**Table: List of number of officers interviewed by designation and phase**

| Designation | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cluster head or Kendra Pramukhs (KPs) | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| Block Extension officer or Vistar Adhikari | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Block Education Officer (BEO) | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Other Officers (top level management) | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Total Interviews | 10 | 15 | 25 |

All these interviews were conducted through telephonic interviews in the month of April, given the availability of the officers and the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic situations in the state. All the telephonic interviews were conducted with the consent of the interviewees as well as their convenience. Before conducting the interview prior appointment was taken from the interviewees, given their work schedule and availability. All the interviewees were asked for permission to record the telephonic conversation guided by the interview schedule. The data collection was done in two languages - Marathi and Hindi. Some interviews also included portions in English as well.

## Interpretation of the Interviews

The most important section of the study is the analysis of the data collected to understand the various themes and new findings arising from them. The data that was collected in two languages Marathi and Hindi was then transcribed and translated into English to be able to use it for analysis. The transcription of the interviews involved detailed writing of each word said by the respondent in the discussion. The key to excellent and unbiased results of data analysis is the quality of data, hence utmost care was taken to maintain the authenticity of the data collected while translating the interviews from Marathi/Hindi

into English. While all the interviews were call recordings that needed to be translated, some of them were taken down as notes since they were not permitted to be recorded.

All the transcribed and translated interviews were then coded using a codebook prepared on the basis of the literature review as well as expert interviews taken in the first phase of data collection. The translated interviews were coded with the help of an open-source software named QCAmap. The codebook used for coding the data helped us to sort the important information that satisfied our research questions according to the study. The coded data was then classified as per the themes and the related excerpts from the interviews suiting those themes were taken.

# Limitations of the study

There were some major limitations that affected the study as a whole, these include:

- **Limited literature on the role of middle management**
  The literature on the particular topic of the role of middle management is quite scarce. There are some journalistic articles which talk about the middle management in school education but there are not many that focus upon such roles in the government education sector in India. Since there is not much evidence supporting literature for the topic, drawing from literature and validating our findings against it was a fairly difficult task.

- **Covid-19 and the underlying impacts**
  The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when India was entering the second wave of the COVID-19 viral spread. As a result of this, many officers, especially the KPs were actively involved in the COVID related administrative duty. The EOs and BEOs too were involved in the management of vaccination centres. Due to which the collection of desired sample size of data couldn't be done. Only a representative sample could be collected for the study. The unavailability of officers made it more difficult to get the data as on planned time.

- **Limitations in data collection**
  Given the pandemic situation, the data collection was done through telephonic interviews, as a result there were certain technical errors that affected the data collection process like that of poor network connection, unavailability of officers at the scheduled time, unclear voice recordings, etc.

- **Reluctance of middle managers to speak about the system**
  The PSM was a program of the previous ruling party which has now lost its impetus in the system. Many respondents didn't want to talk about the program in detail as it no more suits the political interests of the government. Many also informed us that the policy did not get a proper closure but it was rather lost in the mist, while it still continues in some locations and in others it remains as a good program but due to lack of follow ups there is no progress.

- **Biases in data collection**
  There are chances of biases in the data collected as the study uses convenience and snowball sampling techniques where a certain proportion of our sample may be biased about the implementation of PSM as a successful program.

# Findings

# Deconstructing the Lower Middle Management

Our first research question and objective to understand the role of middle management cadres leads us to deconstruct the role and characteristics of lower middle management from all the possible angles. Natesan and Marathe (2017) identify three different levels of implementers in the policy implementation process, i.e., top-level leaders or policy designers and framers, mid-level managers and implementers and frontline workers or street-level workers. The different Levels of management can determine the chain of command within a system, as well as the amount of authority and decision-making influence accrued by all managerial positions.

Talking about the middle management, these people are directly accountable to top management for the functioning of their respective departments, devoting more time to organizational and directional functions. There is usually only one layer of middle management in smaller setups but there can be two intra-layers of senior and junior middle managers within larger setups. Focusing upon the nature of middle management and their characteristics Bennett (1995) comments that the term 'middle management' implies a hierarchical structure which 'assumes a downward flow of authority from the leader, given in order to promote what the leader seeks'. The role involves the transmission of information and command 'up' and 'down' the line, leading to the concept of middle managers as key brokers within the organisation. Through controlling and influencing the flow of information, middle managers can be considered as a creative force in the hierarchical structure.

Our first research question and objective to understand the role of middle management cadres leads us to deconstruct the role and characteristics of lower middle management from all the possible angles. We explore the cadre through the various perspectives of Maharashtra's educational administrative structure, number of posts per position, opinions of middle management themselves about their role, factors affecting their role and major responsibilities beyond job charts.

## Administrative Structure of Education Department

While the above definitions can be applied to any context, for public sector bodies in a large country like India, Middle Managers can make up a sizable number. To identify middle managers in Maharsatra's public education bodies, we need to look closely at the education hierarchy from the teacher to the highest level. This has been detailed in the chart below. While the chart traces out all of the key positions between the State Minister of Education and Teachers at the school level, particular focus has been given to the directorate of Education and District level administrative structure that remain the focus of this study.

This hierarchical structure can be better understood by bifurcating it into top level management, middle management, and ground level management. This distinction has been provided by key experts and

informants through interviews themselves. The middle management has two layers within it- of the upper middle management and lower middle management.

*"There are two levels of middle management. The top middle managers include the District Education officer, DIET Principal, Deputy Director and Director of Education. The lower middle managers include the Block education officer, Block extension officer and Kendra Pramukhs"*

-       *Respondent 3, Top official*

*"We can define the middle managers as anyone above the head master and below the secretary in the cadre"*

-       *Respondent 7, Top official*

Minister of Education

Minister of State for Higher Technical Education

Minister of State for School Education

Secretary of School Education

Commissioner (Education)

Joint Secretary

Dy. Secretary

Dy. Secretary

Dy. Secretary

Dy. Secretary

Dy. Secretary Primary

Dy. Secretary Secondary

Dy. Secretary Budget

Officer on Special Duty

Project Director MH, Prathamik Shikshan Parishad

Director Primary Education

Director Secondary & Higher Secondary Education

Chairman Maharashtra State Board of Secondary & Higher Secondary Education

Director Of Minority & Adult Education

Director M.S. Council of Education Research and Training

Director M. S. Bureau of Examinations

Director M.S. Bureau of Textbook Production & Curriculum Research

Joint Director, Primary Education

Balbhavan

Regional Dy. Directors of Education (8)

Dy. Director Primary Est.

Dy. Director Schemes

Education Officers, Zilla Parishad

Administrative Officers

Dy. Education Officer (Schemes)

Dy. Education Officer (Est.)

Office Superintendents (2)

Block Education Officer (BEO)

Extension Officer (EO)

Cluster Head

Head Master

Teachers

Top level Management

Middle Management level

UpperMiddle Management

Lower Middle Management

Ground Management level

Legend:
- Total Posts
- Posts Included in Study

Source: Job Roles and Responsibilities, Administration Cadre. Working Document. Leadership for Equity.

As found in any hierarchical structure, we can observe that there are fewer positions per level  and more resources per post as we go from the bottom to the top. The largest carder by their sheer number can be found within the administrative structure of a district. The table below breaks this down further to reflect the numbers in Maharashtra.

| Level | Position | Background | Responsibilities | No. of positions in Maharashtra |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **District l** | Education officer | Class I officers, Clear MPSC Exams | • As a facilitator, monitor grade level learning. Support BEOs, extension officers and Cluster Heads. Responsible for schools of the whole district.<br>• Seeing overall infrastructural development of schools in the district.<br>• Ensuring increase in enrollments and attendance. Make school visits, etc. | 99[2] |
| **Block** | Block Education Officer | Class II, Clear MPSC Exams | • Acts as a mediator and facilitator for management of all academic and administrative functions of a block.<br>• Responsible for all the schools in the block. Support/collaborate extension officers and Cluster Heads.<br>• Ensure smooth implementation and running of policies, monitor progress and ensure outcomes. | 420 |
| **Beat** | Extension Officer (3-4 officers depending on size of beat) | Class III, Promotions | • Extension officers are class III officers who work with the Cluster heads and BEOs.<br>• They are responsible for 30-40 primary schools. (depending upon the size of the beat).<br>• The extension officers take care of all academic, infrastructure and administrative responsibilities simultaneously. | 1005-1340 |
| **Cluster** | Cluster heads (3-4 | Promoted from | • Cluster heads are posts promoted from Head masters or high performing teachers. | 13860 - 17640[3] |

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[2] The calculation of the number of Education officers is computed by adding the total number of officers at Primary and secondary Education Department and Municipal corporations throughout the state. (Approximately)
[3] The calculation of Cluster Heads is done as, there are 420 blocks that have 11-14 clusters in each block roughly and each block has 3-4 cluster heads.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| or more depending on size of Cluster) | Headmaster | <ul><li>They are responsible for 10-12 primary schools in the cluster.</li><li>They are the first point of contact for teachers.</li><li>Their role is to ensure the quality of education by acting as a support to the school teachers and headmasters.</li></ul> | |

Note : The number of positions in the table is a rough estimation based on the minimum no. of officers which changes depending on the size and number of schools in the district.

The table represents the level-wise positions, background responsibilities and number of positions by district, block, beat and cluster level. The number of positions in the table is a rough estimation based on the minimum number of officers per position, as there can be 3-4 or more extension officers and cluster heads depending on the size and number of schools in the area. In total there are roughly 3070 positions all combined in the lower middle management cadre, from where our sample size includes 25 officers from all the levels.

## Job Roles Envisioned for the Lower Middle Managers

When documenting the contribution of BEOs, EOs and KPs in education policy implementation, their job roles merit closer examination. These roles and responsibilities are a list of duties assigned to middle management in the system. The job roles for middle managers are dictated by GRs that have not been revised since 2002 in the case of KPs and EOs, and since 2007 in the case of BEOs. Attempts were made to review these as part of organizational restructuring efforts under PSM in 2017-2018. While these revised job roles were submitted for final review they are yet to be passed and are not in effect. Since these were revised to suit the more recent vision of education, we will be focusing on the draft document submitted for review[4]. This is relevant as it lays out in very clear terms the envisioned roles of middle managers. Given that the study takes into account the above positions of Block Education officer, Extension officer and Cluster Head as the sample, hence a character study of these positions will help us navigate better into their role in policy implementation ahead.

The working document for revised job roles clearly lays out five key categories for the work of any middle manager concerned with education. These are:
1. Academic quality improvement[5]
2. Infrastructure Development[6]
3. Attendance and enrollment[7]
4. Administrative duties[8]
5. Collaborative responsibilities[9]

The roles of BEOs, EOs, and KPs have been further detailed by the above five categories in the annexure. While day to day tasks may differ, in principle Irrespective of the position, each officer is expected to focus on these categories. But the importance of each category at each level changes. The chart below, highlights this important distinction based on where officers are expected to spend their time. For comparison, a time split for teachers has also been provided.

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[4] Note: The advisory team at LFE was closely involved in facilitation of the discussions for revised job roles. Notes for discussion here have been taken from a document prepared by the LFE team that was submitted to the ministry, titled "Job Roles and Responsibilities, Administration Cadre, Working Document."

[5] Activities for academic quality improvement refer to a combination of initiatives affecting learning outcomes, teaching learning practices, classroom culture, school environment, student safety and social-emotional health, and anything that directly or indirectly facilitates learning of students in schools and classrooms.

[6] It involves ensuring that children are getting the maximum benefit of existing infrastructure and access to constantly improving infrastructure based on their needs, aligned to providing the best possible learning environment to all children. At each level, officers have to ensure this is happening in one's jurisdiction.

[7] These roles includes all the activities necessary to understand the causes, track the numbers, and working towards ensuring that 100% children are brought into the mainstream education system and provided with quality education.

[8] As per the service rules of the MPSC and the GoM, many administrative duties are assigned to the people at the respective posts.

[9] Ensuring that all children get the best education is a collective responsibility and each official should aim towards collaborating with others in one's area of responsibility to work towards this.

|  | Educational Outcomes | Infrastructure Development | Attendance and Enrollment | Administrative Duties |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TEACHER | 80% | 5% | 10% | 5% |
| KP/HM | 60% | 15% | 15% | 10% |
| EXTENSION OFFICER | 50% | 15% | 15% | 20% |
| BLOCK EDUCATION OFFICER | 25% | 25% | 25% | 25% |
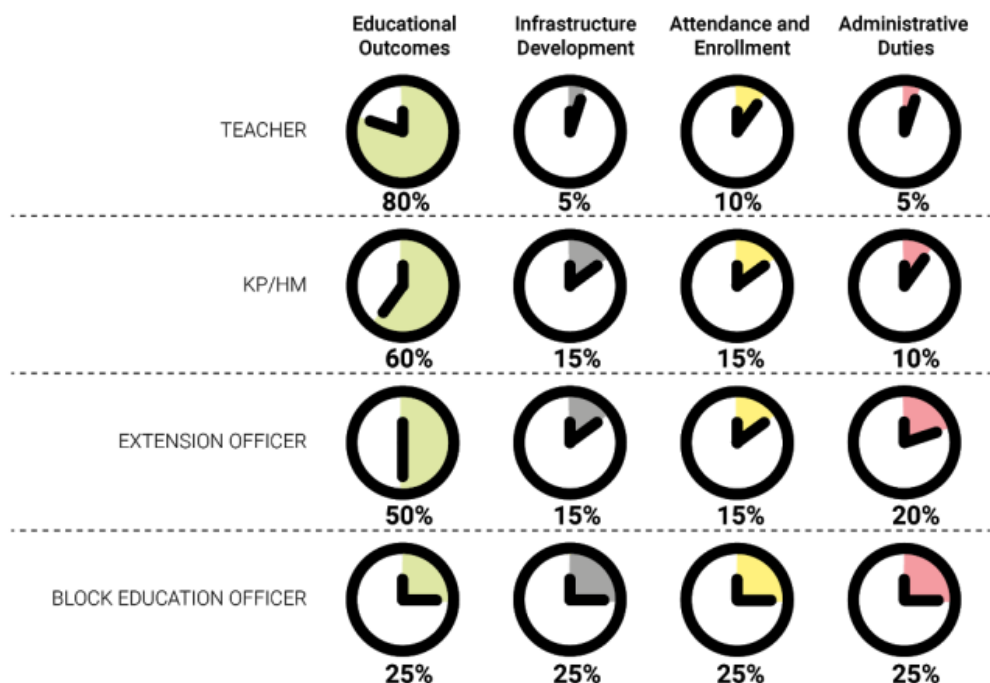
*Source: Job Roles and Responsibilities, Administration Cadre, Working Document (2018)*

## De-facto Roles and responsibilities among middle managers

While the chart above breaks down the envisioned roles of middle managers, we found that on a day to day basis their reality is very different. When asked what their current role involved the following key themes were highlighted on how middle managers see their own role:

### The administrative vs academic role

From the interviews conducted in both the phases, it was clear that while middle managers highlighted the importance of academic nature of their role, their administrative role dominated their work.

| Sno. | Opinion about the Role | Summary from the interviews |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Academic importance of the role | - Responsible for maintaining and improving student learning outcomes, ensure grade-level learning, school visits, encouraging and problem solving for teachers and fellow officers<br>- Without the middle management it would be difficult to maintain the quality of education.<br>- Continuous visits and follow ups help in maintaining the rigour of academic activities. |
| 2 | Administrative importance of the role | - The MM role is more of an administrative nature than academic.<br>- The middle management helps in the smooth running of the administrative functions like record keeping, followup on progress, etc |

| | | - As a part of their role the MM has the burden of getting policies and programs implemented as directed by the GRs. |
| --- | --- | --- |

In principle, the closer a middle manager is to a teacher, the time spent on academic duties is higher. (See chart above for time spent on educational outcomes) This has also been internalized by middle managers as they themselves understand and stress on the importance of their academic duties. However they find that their roles are more administrative in nature.

**Helping hand of officers and increasing workload**
Further when asked about their own time use, many middle managers mentioned that they are **most of the time working to complete the tasks given by their superiors as a result of which they cannot focus on their own responsibilities.** Whereas they are only seen as helping hand to the upper level officers, for completing their tasks. Some officers mentioned that they face difficulties in creating their own image as they continue doing tasks given by their superiors. *"We remain as Hand to the BEO" - Respondent 10.*

This completion of tasks for other officers along with their own duty creates a burden of workload. Additional workload is also created due to the additional duties done by the Middle Managers as a result of vacant positions. The Middle Managers majorly end up doing work beyond their job charts like facilitation and arrangement of various functions and requirements. These themes have been examined in more detail in sections below.

**Varying levels of performers**
Amongst themselves middle managers categories their peers and subordinates based on their performance. There are two types of performers among the middle managers, they are active and passive performers. Active performers are hard working officers who complete tasks on time. Whereas passive or non-performers are those who take the work lightly and it takes a lot of effort to get things done by them. The Middle Managers use different strategies to tackle both these types of officers in order to achieve results.

**Commonly work with additional charge due to no recruitments and high vacancy**
The Middle managers highlighted that there is a huge problem of vacant positions in the system as a result of which they have to perform additional duties and manage extra workload. There are a lot of vacancies in the cluster heads position and also many extension officers are working in additional charges as BEOs. The officers mentioned how there has been almost zero recruitments in past years. The Middle Managers highlighted that they are currently working with only 30-40% staff in the place of total positions.  As a result of this, having to take on 'additional charge' or responsibilities of vacant positions is a very common occurrence among them. On a day to day basis, middle managers often have to take on roles and responsibilities apart from their immediate positions.

# Major Roles beyond Job Charts

The section above discusses the role of middle managers on the basis of their core education related functions and examines how it translates into their day to day roles. While it is clear that middle managers align with their envisioned roles in principle, their day to day tasks look very different. This gap between what is envisioned and what exists can be a major challenge for any large organization. However, beyond this it is pertinent to highlight the specific contribution of BEO, EOs, KPs and others, as middle managers in a system implementing policies.

As the literature review suggests the role of middle management is defined as the crucial part in the public sector functioning. Middle managers are seen as the critical link between the top management and on-ground staff. In their role Middle Managers are required to implement national policies and adapt these to priorities, orient staff members to strategic issues, establish and maintain relationships with government institutions and stakeholders (Malinga, 2008). Whereas Mcgurk suggested that a middle manager requires to perform a combination of managerial, leadership as well as knowledge aspects.

Figure :Major roles played by the Middle Management beyond the Job charts -

While the top officials defined the Middle Managers as mere connecting links between the levels, the middle management themselves see their role in the centre of the system, according to them it is the role of someone responsible for being the first point of contact for both the levels, i. e. top and bottom. Where the literature review did not provide much evidence about the role of middle management in educational policy implementation, the interviews with the officers presented 5 other important characteristics of the role that may not be described in the official job charts. They are facilitators, mediators, experts, leaders and role models. These have been examine in further detail here:

Some excerpts from the interviews are presented here to support the various characteristics of middle management-

*"Middle managers cannot only be called as only mediators but someone who can contribute more than just the job chart to the daily functioning."*

- *Respondent 6, BEO*

*"Middle managers are like the spine of the system that manage everything from top to bottom acting as a connecting link between all levels"*

- *Respondent 12, EO*

## Facilitator Role

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines **'Facilitator'** as "someone who helps to bring about an outcome (such as learning, productivity, or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision". Many skills are required to be a good facilitator. The basic skills of a facilitator are about following good meeting practices: timekeeping, following an agreed-upon agenda, and keeping a clear record. The higher-order skills involve watching the group and its individuals in light of group dynamics. In addition, facilitators also need a variety of listening skills including ability to paraphrase; stack a conversation; draw people out; balance participation; and make space for more introverted group members (Kaner, et al., 1996). It is critical to the facilitator's role to have the knowledge and skill to be able to intervene in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

The middle managers presented many instances during the interviews that focused upon their role as a facilitator to all levels. As a part of their role they used a lot of social skills to build, maintain and develop relationships with officers from both top and bottom management to help them conduct any tasks smoothly. The facilitation includes both academic and administrative functionalities apart from those mentioned above in their roles and responsibilities -

- The BEO, Extension officers and cluster heads facilitate the **arrangement and management of cultural functions** for award distribution on behalf of the District Education officer. At times the officers also **facilitate the platform for starting local schemes or ideas** in schools throughout the block.
- The lower middle management is responsible for conducting and facilitating the **needs assessment based training session** for their area of control.
- They are responsible for **managing and conducting examinations** like the Xth and XIIth board, the B.ed exams, etc as officers on Examination duty.
- As a part of their facilitation role the Middle Managers also work with and for the Gram panchayat to avail and help them in managing certain functions.
- They facilitate the successful **conduction of Census Surveys, data collection surveys, voting during elections** and management of vaccination centres, etc.
- And most importantly they facilitate the **implementation of policies** like 'Shaley Poshan Aahar', 'Bal Rakshak', 'Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra, etc.

## Mediator Role

The middle management position acts like a bridge between all the levels as they play an important role in the transaction of information from top to bottom and vice versa. Many of the officers did not take the term 'mediator' very happily, that was often used by the top level officers to define the role. While the top officials defined the middle managers as just a connecting link between the levels.

A middle manager helps team members understand and implement solutions through detailed steps and systems to achieve desired results as a team. Middle managers are those who simplify the reporting structure in addition to communicating and explaining the goals to all the team mates. In an organisational setup, a middle manager needs to develop social skills in order to successfully connect all levels of the organization and move the team in the right direction. A mediator is someone who is unbiased, maintains a code of conduct and respects the confidentiality of both the parties while sharing information between them. (Three Key roles of Middle Managers, Desk and More)

- Their role not only involves **passing information** but **processing it by improving the techniques of its implementation**, in that way they add more value to any particular function in the role. For Instance, whenever a GR is passed there are general guidelines for it to be followed, the BEO or the EO adds value to it by formulating more location specific convenient ways to implement it and then passes it on ahead in his/her purview.
- They also work with the Block Development Officer, as a mediator As a mediator the lower Middle Manager has to work along with both the Block Development Officer (BDO) as well as the officers in the Education department according to the needs of the particular departments. they create **inter-departmental coordination** to ease the flow of information and operation.

- As a part of their mediator role they work with the Gram panchayat in sharing information and complaints between the education department and the Gram Panchayat.

> *"Kendra Pramukhs are like bridges; they try to maintain the connection from both sides. And at the same time don't lose our balance."*
>
> *- Respondent 12, EO*

## Expert Role

A middle manager is expected to perform all the duties with utmost clarity and quality. Their subordinates follow their footsteps and these managers usually guide them as experts in that path. A middle manager can be referred to as an expert here as they usually follow a model that may be successful and try to replicate that as per their own requirements. They devise strategies and guidelines

- As an expert the middle managers work with their team and help them in guiding through the right way of working, for example attending the training along with the teachers and other officers to get the context of the work, that later helps them to keep pace with the work expected of them to be managed.
- The middle managers have to be **expert in the modern technical skills** so that they can help others if there is any problem.
- The middle managers play an important role as an expert for providing guidance in policy implementation. The officers help in the smooth implementation of the policies by **providing their experience in implementing** other similar policies.

## Leadership Role

As mentioned above, most importantly a middle manager is a leader in his/her block or cluster who leads the team in conducting and getting things done. We observed that many of them placed instances of when they themselves took the initiatives and motivated the team in implementing a scheme or program that would be beneficial for improving the level of learning, officers performance, etc. Some officers also defined them as motivators and supervisors who constantly work for the betterment of students.

As per the definitions given by the higher level officials, the positions in middle management include officers between the Principal Secretary and the Headmaster.Given the importance of their academic roles, a middle manager is most essentially an academic leader who is responsible for managing the educational progress by ensuring the smooth implementation of programs.

- The Idea of *Mubhut vachan* and *Gyanrachanavad* which later on formed the basis of the PSM was initiated by a Middle Manager in her own beat with the help of some officers of the middle management.
- Even during the pandemic times they have taken numerous efforts like starting educational channels on Youtube, formulation of Abhyas gat, etc at their local level to help students learn while schools remained closed.

- Some officers have organised training sessions and workshops for their team after observing the challenging areas like poor technical knowledge of officers or teachers, etc.

## Role Model

The middle manager majorly is seen as a role model at their position to other officers and teachers, as defined by some of the top officials. With time and experience the middle manager along with creating good relations with all the levels builds a good reputation for himself/herself. This image is created by the performance in managing, maintaining, coordinating and producing the quality output within or without the Job chart.

*"The middle managers are usually expected to perform many function like that of managing, maintaining, coordinating and producing the quality output, even if it is beyond the job chart"*
- *Respondent 3, Top Official*

- A middle manager is always found multitasking in order to maintain the pace at work, as there are both academic and administrative roles overlapping together, they always try to navigate through the work.
- In the perspective of the middle managers it was observed that their subordinates always look up to their seniors, and our interviews highlighted that the cluster heads look up to extension officers and extension officers to BEO with respect and as a guide. Interestingly, middle managers believe that they receive enough respect from the next level below them. But on the contrary Respect for the position is perceived to be lower from superiors. As was seen above, they are seen only as "helping hands".

# Conclusion: Lower Middle Management in Totality

The central point of this section is to disassemble layer by layer the lower middle management cadre in totality. The lower middle management level considers the positions of KPs, EOs and BEOs. These middle managers are a creative force of the hierarchical structure as they control and influence the flow of information from top to bottom and vice versa. In their role middle managers are required to implement national policies and adapt these to priorities required, orient staff members to strategic issues, establish and maintain relationships with government institutions and stakeholders. This section answers our first research question of "Who are Middle Managers?" in detail along with their roles and responsibilities as envisioned and observed from the documents and data collected respectively. We assimilate the connection between all these inter-linking pieces about the role of lower middle management one by one.

### Hierarchy and positions

The hierarchy of positions as per the Ministry of Education in the state shows the top-down distribution of all the positions in the department. The minister of education is the supreme head of the department, who is assisted by ministers of School and Higher Technical education. They are further followed by secretaries and deputy secretaries. Our concern as per the study is the school education department hence we focus upon the hierarchy of positions in that department.

All the positions after the Secretary to the state are considered as middle managers. The positions from the joint secretary to the Education officers at the zilla parishad level are considered as upper middle managers and the district education officers to the end of the administrative hierarchy are the lower middle management cadre. The study takes into account only the lower middle management officers in the sample.

### Relationship between size and density of positions

As observed from the discussions upon the size of the number of positions and the number of posts in the hierarchy. While we see the number of officers per post and number of positions per level. The density of the number of officers per post remains high as compared to the density of number of officers from bottom to top in the ladder. Whereas the density of number of positions per level remains high forming an inverted triangle with a narrow base. This is a very similar structure that is followed in every organization, the only difference is that the other organisations may not be working with minimum staff whereas the government education department is working with minimum staff.

Middle Management cadre roles breakdown

Ministry of Education

Middle management

Lower middle management

- Block education Officer
- Extension officer
- Cluster Head

PSM was a state policy.

Maharashtra

No. of Posts per level

No. of positions per post

Envisioned Roles and Responsibilities of MMs -

- Academic Quality improvement
- Administrative Work
- Enrollment & Attendance
- Infrastructure Development
- Collaborative Responsibilities

Opinion of MMs about their Role -

- Central working system
- Administratively & Academically important.
- Limited decision making power
- Perform beyond job charts

Major Characteristics of MMs Roles

Mediator

Leader

Facilitator

Expert    Role Model

**Factors affecting the roles of the Middle Managers**

There are two types of factors that affect their roles - administrative and individual factors. The administrative factors that impact the roles of the middle managers are freedom to make decisions, hierarchical distribution of authority, role of gender. The individual factors affecting the role of Middle Managers are Personal ambitions, job satisfaction, soft skills and motivation at work.

**Major Roles beyond the job charts**

The major highlights of our interviews with the middle managers who discussed the importance of the roles, helped us to understand that the middle managers have to perform a variety of functions on a daily basis. These roles may not be clearly mentioned in the job charts  but are definitely a part of the daily functioning of the middle management cadre. All these roles are that of a mediator, role model, expert, leader and facilitator.

# Role of Middle Management in PSM Policy Implementation

Our objective to study the role of the middle management cadre in policy implementation,aims to provide effective insights and recommendations for FLN policy implementation. In line with this  we have taken the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM), an erstwhile FLN policy as a case study. Specifically examining the role of the lower middle management during PSM implementation helped us comprehend their strategies and struggles in detail. We start with a detailed description on the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra policy below.

## Background: Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM)

Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM) was the paramount policy initiative taken by the Department of Education in the state of Maharashtra to improve the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) of the children in the state. The reports indicating the level of improvements in educational standards of the children within the expected timelines remained far behind, as result to which the the Government of Maharashtra brought out a Government Resolution (GR) on 22 June 2015 titled 'Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra', which announced an ambitious new programme to raise educational standards in all schools across the state. The main objective of the policy was that every child should attain expected norms like age-appropriate proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetical concepts and operations.

The PSM recognised that in order to achieve the expected norms, it was needed that a great amount of focus should be laid upon the development of FLN skills of the students. And this could be done by not only empowering the students but also teachers. Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra aimed to create an environment that would be conducive to learning and would empower each element within the educational system.

### Focus on teacher empowerment
The PSM was a policy that focused upon bringing an all round change in the educational practices in the state. It began with changing the role of teachers in teaching -learning practices. It has been an established practice to blame the teachers for the poor performance of students. But the PSM revolutionised the idea by giving the teachers more freedom and power to perform. Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra decided to give teachers the freedom to do their work, and to recognise their efforts publicly. The underlying message was that an empowered student makes for a stronger, more developed nation. This becomes the success of the teacher. Teachers began to realise that the importance of their role was being recognised under Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra.

### Focus on student learning and evaluation
As discussed above in the literature review, it suggests that there were 25 parameters set according to which the schools had to declare themselves "Pragat" or "Educationally Progressive". For a strong educational foundation, Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra ensured that each child acquired

age-appropriate language and mathematical skills. These skills were to be tested in order to map the success of the programme. Under PSM, baseline tests were one of the main methods to evaluate a student's progress. A massive exercise was conducted in the academic year 2015-16. Students from standards 1st to 8th of all schools, publicly funded and private, in all the different languages of instruction, were tested for their first language proficiency and mathematical skills.

The aim of these tests was not to check the children's scores as in a conventional test, but to give teachers a useful tool to check how students were doing. The tests were designed to identify areas of difficulty and to measure comprehension. Based on the results, teachers could focus on the problematic areas. Rather than testing memory, the questions ensured that the student had to demonstrate their understanding, and ability to use their knowledge to write the answers. The design and implementation of these tests was unique for several reasons. This was the first time that a state-level test was organised for almost 1,60,00,000 students. The tests were done in all the 10 languages of instruction prevalent in Maharashtra. The students belonged to private and government schools. These schools were under the state boards as well as other India-wide boards.  (Samata report, 2017). The results of these baseline tests provided data on student ability, and subject awareness, mapped against their age.

### Clarity in directives

The policy uses a constructivist approach where the main aim of the policy was to raise the standards of learning among students as well as improve the schools overall performance. The PSM Government Resolution was launched on 22 June , 2015, it was a 25 page long detailed resolution that explained the whole policy with clarity. The GR included the parameters, guidelines, timelines, roles and responsibilities, tasks, expected outcomes and many more. The PSM policy GR was one of its kind, its uniqueness lies in its detailed nature. It was a well-researched, well-planned policy document that covered all the necessary steps upon implementation of a policy.

### Transformation of key teacher and officer roles

Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra aimed to create an environment that would be conducive to learning and would empower each element within the educational system, starting with the teachers. The PSM gave freedom to the teachers' to act, share and perform freely, using a constructivist approach. Teachers began to realise that the importance of their role was being recognised under Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra programme. Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra not only gave teachers space to grow and experiment, but it also gave officers the liberty to step out of the age-old 'inspector' role. (Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra - A year's Journey, Samata report, 2017). Where the FLN Policy mainly focuses upon developing the foundational literacy and numeracy skills among the children from the beginning of their education, the PSM policy focuses upon the all round development of both the children as well as the teachers. The PSM also covers the need to develop school premises, etc.

## PSM as understood by Middle Managers

An important question we try to answer in this study is "How much knowledge did the Middle Managers have about the policy being implemented through them?" This remains an important point of

consideration as goal setting and communication has been recognised as an crucial enabling factor for successful implementation.

PSM as seen from the lens of the middle management is a highly appreciated programme. Even though some of the participants of our study were not involved in the policy implementation, they have seen it being implemented as a policy from a distance. As discussed previously, PSM was a well planned - well designed policy that was written with utmost clarity and detailed step by step guiding directions for its successful and effective implementation. What was commendable beyond its detailed GR is tha**t we found that almost all middle managers were aligned with its purpose**. Almost all the respondents had very clear knowledge about the PSM policy. They very well knew and understood the aim, purpose and vision of the policy being implemented through them. They had clarity about the targets, timelines and steps of the policy. The PSM GR very explicitly defines the roles and responsibilities of all the levels and positions in order to reduce uncertainty and misuse of time. The middle managers knew the expectations from their roles throughout its implementation.

## Changes to roles and responsibilities under PSM

As noted, there were all round changes in the system's functioning after the implementation of PSM, and the regular role played by the middle managers too did not remain untouched. Much of this was spelled out in the GR, as discussed above.

**Drastic shift towards the academic role - teacher support, alignment with student learning goals**
For instance, there was a **change in the style and reasons for visiting the schools,** they started **facilitating instead of supervising**. They now started calling it 'Student visit' rather than 'School visit'. The purpose of the school visit after the PSM was implemented now shifted from merely monitoring overall status of the school to checking the quality of educational progression of students. The aim of the school visits by the middle manager was now to provide guidance and counselling to the headmaster and school teachers. They increased interaction with the teachers and now instead of spending just 3 to 4 hours they started spending the whole day in the school, trying to analyse the details and later on suggest solutions and required guidance. They started following the concept of **"Saheb se saathi"**[10] hence the officers became very close to all the levels reducing the barriers of communication and misunderstandings.

The training under the PSM was also different from their older practices as they now gave the same **training to all the teachers as well as middle managers**, including the officers at the block and district level as well. The modules used for the training sessions on the PSM implementation were not like the old lecture method but they were more interactive and engaging.

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[10] **"Saheb se saathi"** was a concept used during the PSM implementation where the distance between the top and the bottom level was removed. The Top level was now easily approachable, the bottom level was given freedom to talk and discuss ideas anytime with all the levels above.

As middle managers they never practiced **appreciating and praising other team members**, but with the implementation of PSM when they saw the principal secretary himself praising the work of each and every individual, the other officers too started this practice with their fellow colleagues.

The most important shift in the role was that the officers earlier used to be more involved in the administrative roles but now they started investing **more time in their academic responsibilities of improvement in the quality of education** and other related factors. The role of the middle managers was now developing as an academic leader rather than only working for the administrative roles. The officers agreed that they were continuously trying to balance between their academic and administrative role.

**All of these factors impacted officer motivation.**The interviews highlighted that the middle management works tirelessly as they feel continuously motivated. The officers have gained an understanding of direction and clarity to perform their duties after the PSM implementation. Whereas recognition and awards from time to time have also helped in encouraging the officers to perform well.

Various aspects of the policy have been discussed in further detail in the annexure.

# Functions of Middle Managers in PSM Policy Guidelines

The PSM GR laid out important roles and responsibilities for the middle managers in order to help the implementation of the policy. For instance, the Samata report[11] highlights that instead of keeping a strict eye on the teachers, middle managers were asked to find out the level of competence among students – to discover whether the students had age-appropriate mathematical and language skills, whether they appeared happy and confident, whether the atmosphere in their school was free and relaxed. So just as a school's progress indicated the teachers' success, when a cluster progressed and developed it was considered a joint effort by the teachers as well as the officers in charge of that cluster. Following are the major functions assigned to middle managers as well as their resulting contributions:

- **Freedom to perform as leaders, but with limited agency**
  As per the GR of the PSM the middle management cadre were given utmost freedom to experiment with their roles as well. They were expected to act as a leader to be able to take initiatives, encourage and motivate the whole system in implementation of the policy. As a result, middle managers found that **providing encouragement and motivation to the teachers and staff** was one of the important prescribed responsibilities of middle management. During the PSM years the middle management were actively involved in providing encouragement to staff, headmasters and teachers to realise the policy on ground.

  However, on the contrary some middle managers have pointed out that the middle management was given less respect as power was perceived to be with teachers more than them. The middle managers were expected to act as a support system in such a manner that instead of getting involved in the school teaching-learning process they were asked to observe and provide support only when needed by the teacher. In this way the teachers were given more agency than the middle managers.

- **Support teachers as mentors**
  They were expected to act as a support system to the teachers in enabling them to perform freely. These officers were encouraged to step out of the age-old 'inspector' role and act as facilitators and motivators. Instead of being strict administrators keeping a watch on teachers, the officers were asked to find out the level of competence among students. Instead of studying paper records, the officers now opened their eyes to the truer indicator of development, the student[12].

  For instance the middle management was responsible for **encouraging and leading the various types of school visits** for teachers. The visits included those of model school visits, school

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[11] Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra…a year's journey, January 9, 2017. Samata, Quality Education for all.
[12] Bennett, N. (1995) Managing Professional Teachers: middle management in primary and secondary schools. London: Paul Chapman.

exhibition visits, visit to Kumthe beat Satara,etc. They encouraged the teachers and staff to make visits to those model schools in order to understand the policy for better realisation. In other instances, they attended meetings and training for the related policy implementation targets and also conducted training sessions with some best performing teachers to transact the information and training materials with all the staff and teachers in their beat, cluster or block.

- **Ensure implementation of PSM as per guidelines**
  Middle managers were also responsible for realizing all the guidelines on paper onto the ground. They were responsible for ensuring if the policy was following the right course and timeline through regular follow ups and visits to the schools and communication over phone and messages with the headmasters and teachers. The middle management was required to make regular school visits to ensure whether the GR is being followed, the students are showing improvement as per the expected norms, the teachers are following the policy correctly, etc. These continuous follow ups were to be accompanied with reports about the school, teachers and students progress and status.

- **Enable the flow of information to teachers**
  The first task of the middle management cadre was to create awareness among the staff, departments and schools about the policy, as they were often the first point of contact for headmasters and teachers. Their duty was to transact information upon the guidelines and purpose of the policy to all the sections and corners of the system. As they work with all the levels as a part of their role as a mediator, the Middle Managers have easy access to all the levels for creation of awareness regarding the importance of PSM.

  For instance, they had to attend all the meetings, training and workshops regarding the planning and implementation of the PSM. Later they conducted meetings and workshops at their local level to inform the concepts and process of PSM with the teachers and other officers. All the training was need-based, hence the burden of attending less important or irrelevant training was avoided.

# Conclusion: Review of PSM as a case study

The study takes into account the pioneering Foundational Literacy and Numeracy policy named as the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM) in the state of Maharashtra as a case study to deconstruct the role of the middle managers both horizontally and vertically during its implementation.

The middle managers are an important part of the hierarchical structure as they control and influence the flow of information from top to bottom and vice versa[13]. In their role Middle Managers are required to implement national policies and adapt these to priorities required, orient staff members to strategic issues, establish and maintain relationships with government institutions and stakeholders.

The in-depth detailed interviews with the middle management helped us a great deal in interpreting the functioning, management, strategies, challenges and suggestions regarding the role. **The main reasons for the successful implementation of the policy were found to be- clear strategic planning, demand-based training, recognition and trust among the levels, regular follow ups of policy status, transparency, power and authority to ground staff, freedom to perform, bottom to top approach.** The PSM was a revolutionary policy that changed the traditional way of functioning, which also impacted the educational outcome of the public education system[14] .

The challenges related to the implementation of PSM were that it was an ambitious policy that was generalised throughout the state without recognising the location specific problems. It required a great deal of attention, as a result of which the other policies may have been sidelined. **PSM also added an extra workload to the officers which may have caused them to pay less attention towards other parallel programs.** The policy gave freedom and authority to the teachers while limiting that of middle managers. However, the policy's goal to reach the remotest locations of the state still remains unreleased, as many officers pointed out.

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[13] McGurk, P. (2009). Developing "middle leaders" in the public services? The realities of management and leadership development for public managers. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*.

[14] Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra…a year's journey, January 9, 2017. Samata, Quality Education for all.

# Operational Realities for Middle Management

## Key Strategies among Middle Managers

Operational strategies used by middle managers is an important theme taken up in this study and the research questions. As discussed previously, middle managers can have a major impact on the extent to which policy intent is actualized during implementation. Thus a closer look on how they operate will be relevant to any discussions on strengthening this carder in the future.

In their day-to-day functioning middle managers come across various problems, where they use different strategies to handle them without affecting their performance. Such as maintaining good relationships with all levels, managing time for different tasks accordingly, keeping trust and motivating everyone in their  purview, regular follow ups and problem solving. We try to understand all these strategies with the help of the data from the interviews.

### Relationship building and communication

It was observed from the interviews that a middle manager should possess certain soft skills that help them in getting their work done. Often relationship building and communication were highlighted as the most important soft skills. Middle managers keep good relationships across all levels-  within the cadre as well as below and above their cadre of officers. The BEO is expected to maintain good communication and relations with the extension officers as well as KPs, and also the Education officer above them. In the same manner all the officers have to respect and trust all their officers to continue their role and get things done on the ground. They need to know how to communicate, and with whom, to get their work done. The working style of all the officers differ from each other, it is difficult to get things done from different people with different mentalities. The officers have to maintain relationships with all the levels in order to get work done through various alternative ways.

### Time Management

It is known that the officers have to perform a variety of priorities simultaneously. They have to manage time in such a way that two different tasks do not collide with each other. In that case the officers try to engage their well-performing subordinates, officers and even teachers, to support them and get the task done. Officers have also elaborately spoken about the nature of administrative work related to repetitive data calling from their reporting authorities for various reasons.

> *"Many times the top officials call for the same data twice in a month, which causes us to invest a lot of time in data collection and updating them"*
>
> -  *Respondent 15, EO*

The collection of data for all the clusters involves a lot of time and support from all the teachers. It takes a good proportion of time of the day, many times the teachers complain about the repetitive data being

collected as it is a clear wastage of time and energy. Middle managers have to then maintain the time and be productive as well.

**Recognition as a strategy to improve teacher motivation and performance**

To ensure the quality of education, middle managers have to build trust among the teachers and officers as well as encourage and motivate them for better outputs. The middle management shared about how they motivated the teachers to continuously improve and perform. The middle management uses a strategy of recognising good work at the local level. For Instance they arrange local level awarding ceremonies where they both recognise and give awards to teachers for their performances and in a way also promote the ideas among the larger group for replication. The middle management who is also responsible for preparing performance reports of the teachers and Headmasters always try to motivate them through their suggestions and feedback for improving their performance.

**Regular follow ups**

Regular follow ups has definitely been one best practice that made the PSM policy implementation successful. Some officers have mentioned how they included regular follow ups in their routine. The follow ups from the headmasters as well as teachers on a regular basis helps in maintaining the consistency in running the program. Both the KPs as well as EOs maintained the practice of regular visits to schools. The interviews revealed that taking regular follow ups upon all kinds of tasks has helped the officers in understanding the style of working and how to handle such situations where some officers are less cooperative. In that case the officers have to take multiple follow ups, complete some tasks on their behalf, or even request other officers to help them out.

> *"I feel really happy to share that it is my strategy that I always take follow-up from the headmasters and Teachers".*
>
> - *Respondent 14, KP*

# Challenges for Middle Managers

The day to day functioning of the officers and teachers includes various kinds of challenges:

**Vacant positions and resulting additional charge overburdening officers**
As discussed briefly, vacant positions remain a major roadblock for middle managers. The most highlighted challenge in a majority of the interviews conducted was the problem of vacant positions in the system. There are a lot of positions that have been vacant for years. The officers are working on additional duties to suffice the roles of the vacant positions. Some interviews mentioned that they are working on 50% staff and in others even less than that. KPs and EOs face the largest brunt of the vacant positions.

*"There are so many vacancies that we as KPs are overburdened, it is like we 40% staff are working for the 100% positions"*

- *Respondent 4, KP*

While some extension officers highlighted that they are on additional duties in place of the block extension officers, others said that they have to work for more than one area of charge. The extra work usually leaves the officers overburdened with work load.

**Officer have to routeinly manage high workload resulting in lower quality of work, lower job satisfaction**
Many officers have spoken about the burden of work load as a result of various factors such as over-ambitious policy implementation tasks, load of both academic and administrative duties, repetitive data collection, report making, monitoring and support, etc. Apart from their own work when they have to work for additional charges that creates a sense of frustration among the officers. They are busy with their work for a major part of the day. Some officers also mentioned that they have to always be in continuous contact with other officers taking followup or managing things. As a result of this the officers are not able to give time to family and hence remain occupied all the time, leading to fatigue.

Along with this remains the pressure of time bound projects along with other work responsibilities that affect the poor quality of output. Some officers said that they don't get many leaves as a result of workload, while others have to work beyond duty hours. The managers also informed us that they think most of their time goes in getting work done for the upper cadre and as a result they cannot complete their own duties. When they are unable to perform their own duties on time their performance is affected. For instance the KP does a lot of work assigned by the EO, the EO does a good proportion of work assigned by the BEO and so on. As quoted by an EO - "*We remain as Hand to the BEO, our work gets less recognised*" (Respondent 22, Additional BEO) All of these factors also affect their job satisfaction as a small proportion of the interviews highlighted that some officers are not satisfied with the role as a middle manager as they have to face various issues related to work like overload of responsibilities, pressure, politics and corruption.

**Lack of skills particularly with regards to technology and data work**

This challenge was highlighted as a major issue by the middle managers as well as the top officials. According to the top officials, many officers of the middle management cadre lacked basic skills. They believe that the output could be more vibrant if the skills of the officers could be added at all levels. Many officers struggle in basic computer work like updating a sheet, keeping record of data, etc. Technology has a primary role in today's government offices. Where the inclusion of technology has been beneficial for making the work easy and less burdensome for some officers. The others face difficulty in coping with the advanced techniques of data collection and management, record keeping, etc. Some cluster heads who are not very tech savvy and towards their time of retirement struggle a lot in technology. The officers stated that they try to train other officers to improve and maximize digital work. Whereas the officers pointed out that there is very little guidance and training to enhance the skills of the officers. The officers also said that they have to invest extra time into training the clerks as per their requirement.

*"Many officers lack the modern technical skills as a result of which they have to request help from others."*

- *Respondent 5, Top Official*

*" Sometimes the clerks allotted to us lack such skills, we ourselves have to go the extra mile to train them accordingly. "*

- *Respondent 14, BEO*

**Lack of infrastructure to carry out official duties**

Infrastructure plays an important role in the performance of the officers. As informed by officers there is a dearth of required infrastructure. It can be strat right from an office to sit and work, to a computer or a vehicle for the middle manager to make frequent visits. The officers mentioned that unavailability of a vehicle to travel to all the locations and the frequency of visits to school at regular intervals is also affected. Many female officers who don't know how to ride a vehicle usually tag along with some other teacher or miss the visit entirely. Other issues may be related to the location and poor network connectivity, it becomes a difficult task for the officers to keep the region up to date by providing regular information and support.

# Factors affecting the role of Middle Managers

After defining the role of middle managers based on evidence from interviews, we are trying to understand the factors affecting their role both from an administrative and individual point of view.

## Freedom to take decisions and hierarchical distribution of authority

### Decision making is limited by hierarchy of positions

Key informants have pointed out that often a major roadblock for middle managers can be their agency to take decisions and power assigned to them. It is known that all government systems have a systematic hierarchy of positions. The extent of power and authority to take decisions as well as perform actions is distributed in the top to bottom structure. Even though the officers have freedom to perform certain things in the system. Apparently during the interviews middle managers agreed that they have all the required power and authority to perform their academic roles.  However their freedom to make decisions in academic matters is high, or even with respect to disciplining teachers. But they have to walk a tightrope in balancing their actions with the authority of their seniors.  Contrastingly they also have to take permissions from the SCERT or DIET if they wish to give training. Given the hierarchical nature of the system, a middle manager always goes by orders from the upper cadre.

### Middle management has a considerable amount of decision making power regarding the functioning of the system under their purview

They are free to take any decision as per the situation. It is not always that they are told how to do things, in that case they have to make their own decisions. A good proportion of middle managers agreed that they don't completely rely on the guidelines given by the policy documents but believe in devising new and faster techniques to achieve their goals. For instance if a BEO or EO sees that the officers and teachers are facing issues in policy implementation or functioning, s/he can take decisions to conduct training programmes, make school visits and organise meetings. Such decisions can be made without taking any permission from their superiors with the condition of informing them about the activities.

The best example would be that of the *"Gyaanrachanawad Programme"* initiated by the Extension officer of Satara block which later built up to be the base of the monumental FLN mission in Maharashtra. Many BEOs, Extension officers as well as Kendra Pramukhs have given instances when they have started programmes such as - Abhyas gat, Youtube channels, Pahade Pathantar, awards for best performing teachers, etc at their block level to encourage officers and teachers. All such initiatives can be easily implemented successfully with collaboration between officers and teachers.

### Middle managers exert influence on administrative components like salaries, leaves as a form of disciplinary action

Not only the BEOs or EOs but also the KPs have power to deduct a teacher's paychecks if they do not perform upto the mark. In these cases KPs prepare a confidential report about the teacher, which has ratings upon their performance and feedback. Similarly, the middle management does not have that

freedom to take leaves at any desired time. Strict disciplinary actions have been taken on officers for taking unplanned leaves. The interviews suggest that the middle managers at many points have to face problems and complaints from their subordinates regarding several issues. They try to solve them on their own first, and in case they are unable to solve those issues they reach out to their seniors. The managers have authority to take required actions, it can be in the form of solutions or even punishment at times.

**Influence and power are linked to perceived seniority among peers**

We have already discussed that the government machinery is highly understaffed and as a result of that the officers have to work on additional charges. In that case when an EO works as a BEO on additional charge their orders are not taken seriously as compared to an appointed class II officer. The appointed class II officer would have actual power to give orders unlike the officer on additional charge.

> *"If the officer is an appointed class II officer rather than an officer on additional duty, his/her orders are taken seriously and also respected".*
>
> > *- Respondent 23, BEO*

However, in general, given their authority and the hierarchical nature of the government, middle managers do feel that they are well respected by subordinates or teachers below them.

**Middle managers are unable to influence any top down or high level decision making in the system**

Middle managers feel that their position is such a hierarchy that their opinions and suggestions are rarely heard on the top. A good proportion of officers also said that they doubt whether their voice would be heard if they gave any suggestions or made complaints regarding their problems. As many said " *I don't think it will be heard above*" (Respondent 7, BEO). Some of them said they have the freedom to speak and share views while others mentioned the limited area of speaking, only regarding their field. On asking for suggestions about the role, many said that their suggestions will never reach the top. They doubt the fact that their complaints and suggestions are taken seriously enough to make changes in the system.

## Role of Gender

**Gender and administrative work**

The impact of gender on the administrative performance of the middle managers was felt from both the male as well as the female officers. Gender role of male and female middle managers clearly impacts how they are perceived, how they interact amongst peers and how they themselves think of their work.

For instance, a male officer informed us how they at times may get into trouble for asking the lady teachers or other fellow officers to work in a certain manner. They may make it a 'gender issue' and complain about the same to the teachers union. Therefore they don't force many orders upon them. The women officers on the other hand raised the issue of male ego, where men working under them at times showed unwillingness to take orders from women officers. Some managers said that there are not many female officers who have good relations with each other.

Some officers of the upper middle management also mentioned that some women KPs cannot visit schools regularly as *"many of them don't even know how to drive a Scooty"* (Respondent 7, BEO), they have to always tag along with some teachers or other male officers. This impacts their performance as a KP. The women managers have placed many instances where they have to manage between work and family responsibilities. They have to travel alone to locations for attending the Shikshan parishads or for school visits.  Many mentioned how they have gained experience to tackle situations related to gender without affecting their performance. The women officers have also talked about how they applied for transfers to a desirable location  due to family requirements. They praised how supportive their families have been towards their role.

## Individual Factors

### High degree of individual ownership, growth mindset and ambition
During interviews, we found many instances where it was clear that middle managers were very ambitious. Many of them foster a growth mindset and showcased how they always strive for improvement and growth. Almost a majority of the officers started as a primary teacher and then either got promoted as a KPs or passed exams for EOs or cleared the MPSC exams for the post of BEO. While this was a result of the recruitment structure or opportunities, their individual efforts cannot be ignored. Some failed in their first attempt but continued with their efforts along with regular work. Some officers also completed higher education in the distance mode, and many among them have earned PhDs.

### Officer mindsets are aligned with student growth and often links to their satisfaction levels
Officers are keen to also promote their schools, blocks or districts at the state or national or international level. They are constantly striving to show improvement.  One of the aspirational examples they see as their goal to be achieved is the Wablevadi school, which received international funding and was updated to international standards. They also mentioned how their efforts like starting a Youtube channel or other technology based platforms and other efforts have helped students in attaining maximum scholarships or in other instances improving results of students, increased enrollments and reduced school dropouts. We found that officers are constantly motivated to achieve these aspirational indicators without any external forces.

This aspect was also linked to their job satisfaction, where a majority of the middle managers elaborately spoke about how happy and satisfied they feel at the end of the day. Working towards improvement of students' learning gives them satisfaction when they see students performing well. They always strive to achieve perfection in their work. Some said that the respect that they receive after the performance boosts their morale and encourages them to work hard.

# Changes in Roles and Responsibilities: Suggestions by Middle Managers

When asked about the role of middle managers and the ways in which the role can be supported in order to make their functioning more efficient, the officers provided a number of suggestions:

### i) Shifting work culture towards providing more recognition, time and value for work

The first suggestion by officers was regarding strengthening all the components of the system. By providing strength to all the components they meant providing infrastructural, manual, technical and emotional support to all the officers at all levels. When the officers are given respect, support and motivation it impacts their performance. The middle management is such a cadre which needs a lot of recognition for their continuous work. They should be given more time, value and respect as that of other levels.

*"The PSM used a wonderful strategy of giving respect and recognition to innovative ideas as well as the hardworking staff, this practice should continue in order to motivate officers to perform well".*
- *Respondent 24, EO*

### ii) Providing needs based trainings

The officers really praised the benefits of need-based training that was a part of the PSM policy. The PSM policy revolutionised the format of training unlike the previous practice of providing training to the officers and teachers based on a set progression. The frequency of training was reduced, and the purpose of training aligned with training needs. When asked about suggestions a majority of officers said that it would be really good if the practice of need based training continued even after the PSM policy period was over. Some officers also mentioned that the practice of generalising a particular training throughout the state should be stopped, instead a more location specific problem based training should be started.

*"During PSM the whole staff was given training as per their requirement and request only, that saved a lot of time. Need-based training is a better idea than regular training".*
- *Respondent 20, EO*
-

### iii) Increasing training for organizational and technical skills

The suggestions included the training sessions to improve the various skills related to technical development. The interviewees mentioned the role of technical skills in easing the workload, they highlighted how the lack of such skills take more time and energy. Regular training on these skills to all the officers as well as clerks would be helpful and improvement of these skills may enable the person to fulfill their goals.

*"Many officers and clerks lack the modern technical skills, it is important that there should be technical skill trainings to keep the officers updated"*

- *Respondent 17, BEO*

### iv) Reducing the impact of political shifts on educational programs

It is well known that in a country like India the influence of politics over all the government departments is quite prominent. All the decisions regarding funding, planning, designing and implementation of any policy is determined by the political will. The department of education cannot remain untouched from that influence. The officers talked about the political pressure of starting, continuing or stopping a policy even if it is beneficial for the students and teachers. It has happened a number of times that a successfully running program was halted after the political leadership changed. Hence the officers suggested that whatever be the leadership it should not impact the educational programs.

*"Even if a particular programme is successful and beneficial, it has to be stopped as per the changing Government. Even if we want to continue it, we cannot"*

- *Respondent 8, Top Official*

### v) Regular promotions and appraisals

The officers laid emphasis on the role of regular promotions and appraisals in the efficient working of any cadre. In order to keep employees invested in their job it is necessary that their work is praised by the leaders as well as they are given some appraisals. It was observed that the KPs were given very late promotions to the post of EOs, also the OEs don't get promoted to the post of BEO very often. There should be changes like the recruitment of BEOs should only be through MPSC exams only, instead through promotions of headmasters. At times, headmasters who are working under the cluster heads directly get promoted to BEOs and start working as their seniors. It is known that there are very few promotions in the Government hierarchical structure, but there is a great need to change this system for the benefit of employees.

*" There are very few promotions in our cadre. Timely promotions and appraisal act as a great boaster in the performance."*

- *Respondent 11, EO*

### vi) Recruitment for Vacancies

As discussed earlier there are a lot of vacancies in almost all the cadres and levels. As a result of which the officers are overburdened with additional duties and extra workload. The gaps created due to vacancies impact upon the performance of officers, like timely submission of reports, working even on weekends, extra work leads to frustration and fatigue. The officers informed us that the system is currently performing on an average of only 40% staff. There is a major requirement that there should be more recruitments and gap filling.

*"There are a lot of posts yet to be filled, almost every department is functioning with minimum staff and extra work load. How can you expect us to perform well with this load?"*

- *Respondent 16, KP*

**vii) Demand for additional support through clerks for data work**

The respondents made suggestions throughout their interviews regarding starting new positions like that of record keeper in order to reduce the burden of repetitive data calling and submission. They also mentioned that like the Block development officer(BDO) has their own clerks there should also have appointed clerks for them. As of now the officers are getting clerks from the BDO's office or the Gram Panchayat office. They have to train those clerks, investing more time and energy in them.

*"There should be some supportive staff for the middle management to reduce the workload, like that of a clerk and a recordkeeper"*

- *Respondent 17, EO*

**viii) Policy provision for jurisdiction specific needs**

It is a well-known fact that every region is different from the other and so are their problems. Some are location specific and others may be process oriented. When the policies are declared by the government they are to be implemented throughout the state even if they are not needed or they don't suit the criteria. For example, starting a policy where all the schools are required to work upon the reading and writing skills of the students, but it being a remote location there are a lot of school dropouts, hence in that location there should be a program to retain students first. Therefore generalising a particular policy without understanding its implications for that location may seem useless.

*"It is a very common practice of generalising problems and their solutions in almost all the fields. Rather than generalising programs and schemes everywhere it is necessary to understand location specific problems and act accordingly "*

- *Respondent 21, BEO*

**ix) Well-managed MIS system to reduce data calling requests**

There is a requirement of data for some reason or the other all year round. For any kind of data requirement there is always a demand from the upper management or the top level officers to collect the required data. And many times it happens such that the data called is repetitive in nature. When the same data is called again and again through various survey forms it causes irritation and wastage of both time and energy. Undoubtedly the UDISE was created to store the data for different data points but it is very important that the officers use them when needed instead of request for data through more survey forms.

*"Most of our time goes in collecting and updating repeated information requested from above, there is a huge need to not only develop such platforms but also use the information available on them"*

- *Respondent 12, EO*

# Conclusion: Key Roadblocks for Middle Managers

### Role of middle managers

As a middle manager in the state education department, officers are responsible for performing a range of functionalities for the department. They have to perform both the academic as well as administrative responsibilities. All these academic and administrative responsibilities include duties of managing, arranging, planning, execution and implementation of programs and policies. In their day to day functioning the middle managers face a number of challenges that may be acting as roadblocks in the regular performance. To which the officers use a variety of strategies for tackling them and to make it easier for successful running of all kinds of programs and policies. The challenges that the middle managers face in their everyday functioning may be location or particular problem specific.

### Strategies used by middle managers

Some of the major strategies used by the middle managers are that of maintaining good relationships with all the officers across all the levels and within the cadre itself. Maintaining a good relationship with all the officers makes the task of implementation of any policy easier. The officers also try to encourage and motivate the teachers from time to time in order to help in the realisation of the guidelines in the GRs. Most important strategy of all is regular follow ups with the teachers and fellow officers regarding the status of programs and also help in maintaining the pace of the policy implementation.

### Challenges faced by the middle managers

Some of the most common challenges faced by the middle managers in their day to day functioning are interlinked with each other. Those challenges are that of - i) The officers are functioning with a large gap of vacancies. ii) Workload and additional charges due to those vacancies, iii) Investment of extra time, iv) Lack of skills, v) Lack of support and infrastructure, vi) No vehicle for transportation, vii) Time bound targets and deadlines for target completion, etc.

# Recommendations

The recommendations from the study were prepared on the basis of the analysis from the interviews with the lower middle managers upon their day to day role in the system, with special reference to the implementation of Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra. The study revolved around the functions, responsibilities, struggles and strategies used by the middle managers. The study also presents a detailed overview of how the middle managers see themselves as officers. Whereas in case of the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra policy implementation we saw how the middle managers acted as a crucial component in it being executed successfully.

The recommendations for the study have been prepared on the basis of three major dimensions, they are Administrative Structures, Policy Design and Considerations for policy implementations.

| Dimensions | Components | Recommendations |
|---|---|---|
| Administrative Structure | Vacancies | The government departments are surely functioning with minimum staff. That leaves a huge vacuum in the posts and positions in every section of the departments. This vacuum of vacancies leads to the disruption in performance and on-time outputs completion by the departments.<br><br>It also creates a visible burden of additional tasks on all the cadres, along with a sense of frustration and dissonance among officers. Additional load of work also shows a huge impact on the outputs by the departments,as all the departmental functions are interdependent and can lead to delay and poor quality of performance. Hence it is important to start filling up the vacancies across all cadres and departments. |
| | Incentives and recognition | The PSM is seen as a successful policy, which used the strategy of giving respect and recognition to well performing officers. In order to motivate the performance of the officers the machinery should always give recognition and respect to their achievements, that promotes them to perform even better.<br><br>Along with recognition the officers should also be given regular incentives in their jobs. This also includes regular promotions in their roles. Since promotions are believed to be the best way of providing appreciation and motivation, it can act as a helpful tool. |
| | Clarity in Roles and | Since performance and improvement is difficult if the officers don't know what is expected of them from that position. Hence, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **responsibilities** | It is very crucial that all the officers in every cadre should know their roles and responsibilities with utmost clarity. |
| | **Revision of old Roles** | It is very essential that the roles and responsibilities of all the cadres should be newly revised as per the needs of the current functioning of all the departments. |
| **Policy Design** | **Clear Strategic planning** | The success of a policy depends upon the way it is designed. The PSM GR for example was a detailed policy that included everything like steps, tasks, responsibilities, strategies, gtimelines, solutions, training and outputs. Therefore we learn from the PSM that it is very essential that a policy should be very clear in sense of wording, roles and responsibilities, strategic implementation plan, etc. |
| | **Decentralisation of power** | Every policy should be designed in such a way that it allows a certain amount of authority, agency and flexibility to all the cadres. When power is decentralised among all the levels and the officers have the freedom to solve problems and take decisions on their own, many issues and roadblocks can be cleared then and there reducing the unnecessary time taken to solve them. |
| **Considerations for Policy/Program implementation** | **Regular Trainings for skills and Capacity Development** | Training is an inevitable part of every policy in order to successfully implement the given policy guidelines. Regular training helps in the development of skills and capacity among the officers, which may in return improve the performance of the officers and also benefit the policy implementation process. |
| | **Regular Performance review** | Followup meetings on a regular basis can not only help in the improvement of the performance of officers, but also in maintaining the right pace of policy implementation. Regular performance reviews also promote the officers to strive for excellence. |
| | **Data entry and data management** | There should be a well devised MIS to enter, maintain, manage and coordinate data related to all the departments on a large scale. While there may be several such platforms like UDISE, SARAL, etc, for easing the data collection and usage, they are rarely used by the officers. Which leads to repetitive data calling from time to time.<br><br>A well managed data entry and maintenance system will help reduce unnecessary wastage of time in repetitive data collection for various assignments with same data but different objectives throughout the year. |

# Note to External Partners

The implementation of any policy or program includes the active participation of several stakeholders like concerned government departments, ground staff and the external partners. The external partners could be the non-governmental organisations, philanthropic foundations or individual philanthropists. All these external partners support the government in getting the policy successfully implemented on the ground. While implementing any policy when seen from the point of view of the middle managers there is much potential to ensure that the external partners are strategically placed to provide support and help in easing the work of the cadre.

The expectations from these external partners to the government departments are majorly related to working through collaboration with each other for the aim of policy implementation. The collaboration of these external partners to the middle managers while implementation of any policy are listed below -

- The NGOs/foundations can provide support to the officers by providing lobbying and advocacy support in relation to the policy being implemented on ground.

- The NGO's can provide local support through their established network with other organisations with similar motives on ground. The use of their community resource persons can be made in a useful manner to propagate the objectives and purposes of the policy on ground.

- They can use their expertise and experience in assisting the government department in providing the officers with necessary skill development and capacity building training.

- The external partners can be a good link in conducting stepwise evaluation of the policy, as well as recognise the errors and roadblocks in policy realisation on ground.

The Government is planning to implement a similar Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) policy like the PSM at the national level where the role of external partners can be very crucial in creating awareness among masses, providing training to teachers and officers, building understanding of the policy among the community and lastly encouraging the families and students to improve admission, enrollments and retention in schools. All the above can be done through collaborating resourcefully with the different levels of officers from top to bottom in the government.

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# Annexure

## Roles and Responsibilities of Middle Managers

**A.        Block Education Officer (Gat Shikshan Adhikari) :**  The Block Education officer (BEO) is also known as the Gat shikshan Adhikari in Maharashtra. The post of BEO is right after the position of District Education Officer in the hierarchy. They are Class II officers who are selected by the State Public Service Commission. There is one BEO for each block and each block has around 200-300 schools; there are a total of 355 blocks in Maharashtra, hence there are 355 BEO positions throughout the state. They are assisted by the Extension officers and cluster heads in their role. The nature of this role is mainly administrative, juggling between both academic and administrative prospects of their duty. Most importantly the BEOs collaborate with the extension officers, cluster heads, other BEOs as well as DIET lecturers for ensuring the smooth running of the programs, workshops and training. The responsibilities envisioned for Block Education officers are as follows -

**i) Academic Quality Improvement -** The BEO ensures that all the students in all the schools of the block are achieving grade level learning. They create evidence-based educational goals and work plans on the basis of analysis of state and national educational reports and KRA's of the government. Supporting Extension Officers, cluster heads and teachers to develop the basic grade and subject wise competencies of students through diverse strategies and technology. Organising cluster/beat level need based education conferences with support from DIECPD. Conducting a regular block level data analysis of student data, along with Extension Officers, Cluster Heads, HMs, SMC members. Enabling Extension Officers to conduct similar discussions with  Cluster Heads, HMs, SMC members, and students.

Based on data analysis, the BEO makes visits to at least 10 schools demonstrating highest learning outcomes and 10 schools demonstrating least learning outcomes in block, every academic term, to understand what factors are responsible for the respective success and struggles by interacting with students, teachers, parents, and community members. Post this, working closely with the respective officials to ensure that success is sustained at the high performing schools and that the schools that are struggling can learn from positive factors of the high performing ones. Providing access and exposure to extracurricular, co-curricular activities and sports, conduct guidance workshops for students to promote holistic development of students.

**ii) Infrastructure -** Supporting the infrastructure development for ensuring that students of the age 6 to 14 receive effective education as per the norms of RTE 2009. Inviting need based proposals from schools as per RTE Act 2009 - 10 Standards on school level, approving the same, ensuring their fulfillment, construction and maintenance work. Operationalising and enriching BRC as an excellent

resource centre to benefit all teachers in the block by giving them an opportunity to access localised support.

**iii) Enrollment and Attendance** - Confirming the number of out of school children of the age group 6-14, enrolling them in schools, planning for ensuring their 100% attendance. Special focus to be given on transition from primary to secondary, by consistently tracking transition rates and addressing causes of potential drop outs. Planning for reducing the dropout rate to zero at all primary and secondary schools in the taluka with support from all administrative and social bodies.

**iv) Administrative Work -** The administrative responsibilities of the BEO includes, organising various tests to gauge student learning outcomes throughout the academic year. Providing necessary administrative support to DIECPD in execution of all training in the block. Monitoring and supporting all the primary and secondary schools of all managements and all the responsibilities of Superintendent (Mid day meal), Panchayat Samiti and ensuring a need based reporting of the Education Officer's (Primary) work. Planning for and implementing the health related programs for students of all schools.

Sanctioning the casual leaves of Kendra Pramukh, Extension Officer (Education), Superintendent (Mid day meal), sanctioning the long leaves (upto 120 days for medical or transfer purposes) of teachers, headmasters, cluster head. Implementing all student and school welfare government schemes. Creating proposals of promotions, retirement, salaries etc for the reporting employees - teachers, headmasters, Kendra Pramukh and submitting the same to the Education Officer (Primary). Supporting the design of the yearly schemes under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

Completing all tasks related to e-governance (salaries, SARAL, all welfare schemes, scholarships etc.) within designated time. Completing the tasks given by state level and district level senior officers and the Commissioner, School Education Department, Maharashtra. Writing the confidential reports of Extension Officer (Education) and Superintendent (Mid-day meal) and submitting the same to Education Officer (Primary).

B. **Extension Officer (Vistar Adhikari) :** The Extension officer works at the Beat level, which is a combination of a number of clusters. They are otherwise called as Vistar Adhikari in common usage. An extension officer is a class III officer, who are either promoted or clear departmental examinations to qualify for the posts. They are positioned as at least 3-4 officers or more for one block and there are a total of 1005-1340 positions of extension officers on an average. They are responsible for 30-40 schools under their purview. The extension officers are the main facilitators of the structure who maintain the ground staff along with being in assistance to the BEO. Extension officer is visualized to be the role where academic excellence and administrative diligence converge and drive both these attributes through cluster head and headmasters. The roles and responsibilities of an extension officer are as follows -

**i) Academic Quality Improvement -** The extension officers are responsible for a range of academic roles such as planning for SMC meetings of all schools in the beat, attending at least one SMC

meeting of each school through the academic year and providing need based support. Visiting all schools in the beat at least twice in the academic year (one of these visits should be with the cluster head and must include at least 2 classroom visits) to assess the level of learning and challenges faced by teachers and students. Reviewing the work of cluster head and headmasters on a monthly basis, ensuring changes to the course of work for improving learning outcomes.

Creating a yearly academic plan for all schools in the beat with support from cluster heads. Ensuring implementation of various educational policies, programs, activities, student benefit schemes, exams and competitions etc, verification of the same in 10% of the schools. Supporting headmasters and cluster heads to plan for Shikshan Parishads, workshops, panel discussions, parent meetings, mothers' meetings, women's meetings etc, conducting meetings with them for this purpose for at least twice in a month. Ensuring that all schools in the beat achieve and maintain grade 'A' eventually, supporting schools in the 'B', 'C', 'D' grades to move to a higher grade. Arranging beat-wise education conferences with support and supervision from DIECPD. Creating a work plan with help from Kendra Pramukh for improving the learning outcomes of 100% students in the field of work.

**ii) Infrastructure -** Supporting the infrastructure development as per the norms of RTE 2009.

**iii) Enrollment and Attendance -** Conducting surveys of families having eligible and out of school/ migrated children with support from cluster head, headmaster and teachers, verifying the surveys of 5% families. Monitoring the attendance trends of the beat, supporting school teams in identifying students with irregular attendance, initiating support programs to ensure their attendance.

**iv) Administrative Work** - Monitoring all primary and secondary schools in the beat from an academic and administrative perspective. Conducting primary enquiries of any type of academic, financial, administrative irregularities, complaints, etc from the beat and reporting the same to senior authorities. Writing the confidential reports of cluster head of the beat and reviewing the confidential reports of acknowledged headmasters and teachers written by cluster head.

Sanctioning the casual leaves of cluster head, forwarding the long leave applications to Block Education Officer. Sanctioning the tentative work travel plan of cluster head for the upcoming month, forwarding the work diary for the past month with proper feedback to Block Education Officer for approval. Keeping documents of the beat office, attendance and movement registers updated. Reviewing the documents, proposals to be sent to senior authorities, ensuring that they are in the required format with proper feedback and comments (example - Opening a new school, a new classroom, rent proposal etc). Conducting the yearly inspection and evaluation of all private primary schools and minimum 5% and maximum 10% secondary schools of the beat.

C.       **Cluster Heads -** The Cluster heads are another important position of the lower middle management level that are also known as Kendra Pramukhs in Maharashtra. The cluster heads are promoted from Headmasters, hence they are officers with a good amount of teaching experience. The cluster heads are responsible for at least 10-12 primary schools in the cluster. They are the first point of contact for the teachers and headmasters. They provide immediate support to the teachers and

headmasters, primarily on academic issues but also on some administrative ones. A cluster head ideally provides technical support to the teachers in meeting their academic goals, and also be a source of motivation and provide inspiration to perform well, by leading by example rather than through lectures/speeches. They are also responsible for holding the teachers in his cluster accountable for excellence in class. Cluster Head exhibits a balance of motivation, support and accountability across carrying out all duties and providing technical assistance to the teachers. 'Technical support' here, refers to detailed classroom observations, debriefs and corrective measures suggested to ensure all children in the classroom are taught based on their learning levels and needs with the ultimate objective of bringing all children to the appropriate grade level.

**i) Academic Quality Improvement -** Planning and organising workshops for Headmasters and teachers of all types of accredited schools of the Cluster before the academic year starts to improve the basic and grade level learning of students through planning and timely implementation of yearly curricular and extra curricular activities. Working as a support, facilitator, counsellor and mentor to inculcate the belief in every teacher that each child can learn. Organising Cluster level Shikshan Parishad for teachers and headmasters on a monthly basis with the need based support from CRG, BRG, DRG and DIECPD.

They are also responsible for testing the learning levels of students of grades 1 to 8 from each school in the Kendra with the help of teachers and CRG, finalising the list of students as per the 'Adhyayan Star', ensuring that teachers create a student-wise and level-wise work plan and following up on the same. Visiting each school in the Kendra at least twice in a month to mentor teachers. Attending and guiding the School Management Committee meetings(at least one in every semester) of schools in the Cluster. Planning, implementation and follow up to achieve KRAs prescribed by the government. Using recent technology in teaching-learning, mentoring and administrative work and promoting the use of technology for teachers.

**ii) Infrastructure Development -** Developing CRC so that all teachers in the cluster are benefitted. Completion, implementation and maintenance of the ten basic facilities prescribed by RTE 2009.

**iii) Attendance and Enrollment -** Reviewing the surveys of children eligible for admission in schools as per RTE 2009 guidelines on cluster level, planning and implementation of enrollment and retention of 100% children eligible for admission.

**iv) Administrative Duties -** Monitoring the continuous overall evaluation at school level. Updating and maintaining the archives through inspecting CRC and schools. Working as ' Punarvilokan Adhikari ' for sub-teachers of schools having eligible headmasters and as ' Prativedan Adhikari ' for other sub-teachers. Organising for temporary alternative teachers in case of teacher leaves, training periods etc. Sanctioning casual leaves of teachers and headmasters in the cluster. Reporting to senior authorities in case of irregular work by teachers, headmasters. Sanctioning casual leaves of teachers and headmasters in the cluster.

# Successful Policy Implementation Strategies

The interviews as well as the reports spoke well about the successful implementation as well as output of the Pragat Shaikshanik Maharashtra (PSM). As we know that every policy implementation uses some sort of strategy which paves the path to its success. We here try to dismantle some prominent strategies of the policy that made it a hit among the other policies implemented in the state.

### Regular performance review across all levels

Among the various other strategies highlighted by the interviewees, the foremost and very proudly spoken of strategy was the regular performance reviews through the follow up meetings. Both the middle managers and the policy designers credited the importance of regular performance reviews as a key component for quality implementation. The practice of keeping regular follow up upon the status of the work done by the officers and teachers played an important role in keeping the policy implementation on track. There were regular meetings where the officers were asked to give updates about their region. The principal secretary called himself the "Chief Learning officer" who visited the schools on a regular basis to check upon the status of the policy. If someone said they are doing something good in their region, then they were asked -

*'How are you doing it, would that be beneficial to replicate in other regions'*
*- Respondent 3, Top Official*

This practice of regular performance review and meetings where the officers met regularly or updated status about work helped in maintaining the rigour of work and strictly follow the timeline. It also helped in recognition of successful strategies and models as well as problems that may be acting as barriers in continuation.

### Problem solving

The policy laid emphasis on removing roadblocks in implementation on the part of officers and teachers. As mentioned earlier the regular performance review strategy was quite helpful in keeping in touch with the officers about the status and progress of the policy. The regular follow ups helped in recognising any problems related to policy implementation that may be arising out of various factors. These factors can be specific to location, structure, process or strategy, etc. The recognition of problems through meetings helped in devising solutions and strategies to tackle those problems. As the officers mentioned they faced some problems while parallelly implementing too many policies. The team together worked to prepare solutions for such problems blocking the successful policy implementation. This practice proved to be a major support to the officers in making the policy a grand success.

### Switch to demand-based training exclusively

The demand-based training strategy was a revolutionary idea that was praised by all the officers. The regular training which may be location/problem specific but were generalised throughout the state was banned during the PSM implementation. Previously officers found that training was very frequent and

the officers had to invest productive time in attending them, leading to a task backlog. The officers mentioned that they had to attend all those training sessions that were of no use to them. Sometimes the officers at the block level would take signatures from the district head and conduct a training at the local level, that would in other terms create a traffic of training at the same of other administrative duties. The PSM started demand-based training where the training was conducted only upon the topics which were requested by the teachers and officers. In that way it helped them in capacity building as well as saving time for productive work.

### Bottom to top approach

The bottom to top approach follows the principle of giving more responsibilities and expecting outputs from the ground level in any kind of policy implementation. The PSM also followed the bottom to top approach in terms of realisation of GR guidelines, where the teachers and the ground staff were given the maximum freedom to decide and enact new ideas for making the policy a success. By the ground level we mean the school teacher and Headmaster, who are the first point of contact with the students and who see the policy implementation very closely on ground. They preached the idea of "*Saheb se Saathi*". The barriers between the officers and the teachers were removed in order to reduce fear among the teachers so that they can perform to their fullest. The actual implementation of the policy was done by the teachers and the lower middle managers who were actively involved at the school level implementation. They were responsible for seeing all the guidelines being successfully implemented at all the schools. The teachers gave status reports to the officers and they forwarded them ahead to senior officers and so on. The policy could not be successfully translated without the stepwise status information from the teachers on ground.

### Recognition and Respect boosting morale and motivation

The most commendable part of the PSM policy that probably made it successful was giving recognition and respect to the actual policy implementers on ground. Many officers mentioned that during the PSM policy implementation the principal secretary himself called all the officers, be it a week day or a sunday and took follow ups from them, he praised their work and thanked them for their efforts. A small portion of time given in providing special attention to each and every officer gave a lot of motivation to work more and better for the targets. Some officers also informed that unlike earlier they now knew all the officers at the top level personally and they could reach them personally anytime they wanted. The policy also made attempts to honor and respect the commendable work done by the officers by giving their examples with their names in all the training and meetings. The well performing officers were also given awards for extraordinary performance. All these efforts from the top officials about giving recognition and respect boosted the morale of the officers and teachers. The officers at all levels were encouraged to follow the GR step by step and strive for target completion of all the tasks outlined in the document. All the officers and teachers wanted to perform better than the other officer/teacher to prove themselves worthy of receiving praise, which simultaneously made policy implementation through officers an easily achievable task.

### Detailed strategic planning and clarity of policy documentation

The PSM GR was a detailed 25 pager policy that included characteristic features and steps to be followed by all the levels of officers, right from the principal secretary to the teachers. The policy was well researched and well planned. The officers mentioned that the structure of the policy was quite clear unlike the other policies, which are usually ambiguous and overlapping. The PSM laid more focus upon certain strategies like regular follow ups, problem solving, demand-based training, recognition and respect to the officers, and a bottom to top approach that made this policy stand out from others. One of the most important strategies followed by the policy was replication of successful models and school visits, which gave the officers a clear understanding about the policy functioning and next steps towards its implementation. The achievement of timelines and targets was very well outlined in the GR. This detailed and clear nature of the policy also made it very easy for the officers to navigate better in the process of policy implementation which may also be considered as another reason for the successful implementation of PSM.

## PSM as understood by Middle Managers

| Major Themes | Sub Themes | Perceptions of Middle Managers about PSM |
|---|---|---|
| Enhance Quality of Education | All round School development | - The PSM essentially talked about bringing an all round development in the school education system. Like improvement in the school infrastructure, teaching-learning, etc.<br><br>- For an all round school development frequent classroom visits and observations were encouraged. Interaction with students to understand their problems was incorporated, the officers called it 'Student visit' instead of 'School visit'. |
| | Increase enrolments and retention rate. Improve Results | - Another most important perception about the PSM was improving the quality of education by building a strong foundation by focusing on the foundational Literacy and numeracy skills of the students.<br><br>- Focus on increasing student enrollments, improving school attendance, reducing dropout as well as improving retention rates.<br><br>- Whereas the primary focus of the policy was to improve students' results by enhancing rudimentary teaching-learning practices. |
| Engine of Change | Shift from Administrative to Academic role | - The role of the middle managers saw a major shift from the administrative to academic roles. Now more focus and time was given to academic duties than the administrative responsibilities. |
| | Change in style of Working | - PSM gave them clarity in work, output oriented sense of achievement in working was induced. |

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| | **Change in Roles & Responsibilities** | - A change in the roles and responsibilities was such that the Middle Managers were now working as facilitators or supporting background to the teachers who were implementing the PSM on ground. |
| | **Change in power dimensions** | - The teachers were given more authority to act and work, which led to the reduction in the power and authority of Middle Managers. |
| **Trainings and Support** | **Need-Based Trainings** | - PSM eradicated the old style of unnecessary training and started a need-based training that was conducted on the demand placed by officers in particular areas of improvement.<br><br>- This saved them with a lot of time and energy that was invested in unwanted training. |
| | **Common Trainings** | - It was taken care that there should be similarity in trainings given to both the officers and teachers in order to reduce differences in the policy execution. |
| | **Level-wise Trainings** | - Training was also given specific to the roles played by the officers in that particular cadre as defined by the GR. Each level had a different role in policy implementation hence every level had to be given different training sessions. |
| | **Support Teachers and Headmasters in implementation** | - The PSM policy GR made it very clear that the middle management officers should act as a supporting agent to the teachers and headmasters in policy implementation.<br><br>- It is the duty of the MM to provide guidance and motivation to teachers, help them solve problems and give suggestions to arrive at conclusions. |
| **Regular Performance reviews** | **Regular Follow up meetings** | - The PSM was a top - priority policy that was regularly followed-up by the Principal Secretary of state himself through meetings and personal calls with officers, that helped maintain the pace of the policy implementation in place. |
| | **Problem Recognition and Solution** | - Regular review about the progress in implementation also helped in the recognition of road blocks, hence it helped in finding solutions. |
| **Time bound target** | **Clear timelines** | - The policy had clear timelines for target completion, every step had estimated time for the successful implementation. |
| **Power & Authority** | **Freedom to take decisions** | - The officers had freedom to make decisions at their local level, like using specific strategies, related to policy implementation. |

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| | | - Many also feel that their freedom to make decisions is capped to a certain as it is influenced by the top authorities |
| | **Recognition and Respect** | - The PSM policy was also successfully implemented as it took care that good performing officers are given recognition and respect as well as shown as role models to give them motivation to work.<br><br>- The officers feel that the PSM policy was designed in such a way that it reduces their respect and importance as an important component of policy implementation. |

# Enabling Factors for PSM policy

The PSM policy itself was an absolute path breaking change in the education system of the state. It is known for the revolution it brought about in every part of the department of education. Not only the style of teaching, practice of meetings, training sessions, workshops, authority, perspectives about school education, etc, but also the roles of each cadre was also influenced. For instance, the primary change was the shift in the style of teaching, i.e., from "Read, Write, Narrate" to a more comprehensible style where the focus was upon enabling the student to learn from experiences and comprehension. It was a shift from regular teaching - learning to "How to teach and learn". (PSM, a movement for educational transformation. Stories from Maharashtra on reshaping the nature of education, 2017)

Another major change informed by the officers was that earlier the schools were ranked as per the student performance, but after the PSM GR was passed all the background factors were considered in the ranking - such as the facilities at school, teachers, etc. And even in those conditions if the schools perform beyond the "Adhyyan Star" then the school will be in the list of Pragat schools. However for these drastic changes to result in any shift, we have identified the following enabling factors for implementation:

### Acceptance of change
The officers mentioned that with the release of the PSM GR, there was a wave of change in the system, a new motivation and encouragement was felt by the whole system. Everyone was talking about doing something good for the quality of education and work for the betterment of the students. There was a visible change and most importantly there was an acceptance of this change. The officers were taking this up as a rejuvenation of the old style of working. This change was also accompanied with a shift in the point of views of all the components of the education system such as Teachers, Parents and Officers. The teachers were now giving more instructions, taking extra time to work on the students who are 'Apragat'. The parents became more alert, they talked to teachers about the progress and problems with their child. The teachers and officers both felt self-motivated with a positive attitude towards the work.

**Strategic changes**

After the PSM was implemented there was a lot of exchange in the strategies as well the style of working, that we have already mentioned above. Some of the most visible strategic changes after the implementation were that the schools now started working for 365 days even in the tribal areas. The unnecessary training that took a lot of the productive time of the officers was banned. Instead, it was replaced by need-based training. Now as a part of the PSM strategy there were regular follow ups unlike other policies where the followup practice was comparatively loose. Until now teachers were only given orders, now they were given the authority to use their own technique and they were also given training based on their needs. There is a definite shift from rote learning to experiment based practical and digital learning. Another most important noticeable change in the governmental structure was that the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) were being restructured. The education department rose to the spotlight during the time of PSM and gained much prominence and as a result of the pressure too they started performing better and more differently than before.

**Influence of technology**

The implementation and the success of the policy can very much be associated with the inclusion of technology in the system. Both the teachers as well as the middle managers started using technology like Google sheets to keep record of the contacts and students progress, use of zoom calls for meetings, whatsapp groups to share information among the teachers, officers and parents. The use of whatsapp groups were also seen as a crucial link for the successful follow up of the policy.

**Transparency**

With the implementation of the PSM policy there was an assurance of transparency in the system. By transparency here we meant that there was a creation of network connection among the officers from the top to bottom. There was a direct flow of information and follow up among all the cadres, this reduced the chances of corruption. The officers proudly highlighted the active involvement of the Principal secretary, who is also the principal designer of the PSM policy, who himself took follow ups, made visits to schools and classrooms, attended meetings, presided over workshops and training. His strict discipline also helped maintain transparency.