

CAPACITY BUILDING AMONG ELECTED WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES: PERFORMANCE AND PROBLEMS

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Abstract

After the 73rd Amendment being implemented, more than a million women have been elected at the village, block and district level, reserving 33 percent of seats in panchayati Raj institutions for women. Women faced a number of challenges in the political sphere in its initial phase. To make them cross the hurdles, Government has taken capacity building initiatives to ensure the effective participation in the local governance. This paper aims to analyze the Kerala Government's measures on capacity building which is done through KILA and how these support services has made the women to participate actively in developing the rural area. The study is based on the secondary data obtained from KILA regarding the capacity building initiatives that were conducted during a span of 5 years. To study its effect in the rural development, a case study method has been adopted taking Arimpur panchayat in Thrissur district as the case to study the development that women representatives have made in the area.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Rural development.

Introduction

73rd constitutional Amendment has become a milestone for the development of local governance and rural development covering a lot of responsibilities in the hands of women representatives in the panchayat level. Kerala is a model state where more than 50% of the elected representatives are women. To discharge the responsibilities in an effective way, there was a great need for capacity building. Past studies shows that training has to be provided to make the women

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representatives more strong, to develop better communication skill, to coordinate the activities, for proper fund management, better decision making etc. Kerala has implemented capacity building programmes through an organization KILA, which act as a catalyst in moulding the women for better governance. Its more than two decades that the amendment has been made. And it's high time to know what impact it has created for the development of rural people. This study is framed to know the initiatives of Kerala State Government through KILA to build the elected women representatives and how it has created an ability in the to sensitize important issues in the area.

Objectives

1. To study about the measures taken by KILA(Kerala Institute For Local Administration) to build capacity on elected women representatives in panchayats in Kerala
2. To examine the impact of capacity building on elected women representatives for the rural development

Review of Literature

Women is the mother of race and is the liaison between generations . Nehru Once said “To awaken people it is the women who must be awakened.Once she is on the move the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves(Desai 1967).

(MATHEW, 1997) in the article, “Women in Panchayats: The more Relevant Questions “cites that women feel disadvantaged in grama panchayats because of the lack of training they received. The study stresses the importance of capacity building in empowering women. The study highlights three areas in which women need to focus to empower themselves as a) credit, b) skill upgradation and c) sensitization of rights .The study concluded by making a remark that the gender equality should not be the basic issue for women but their ability to transfer the equality to good social and economic opportunities to make the panchayati Raj system a complete one.

(Panda, 1997) in the study highlight the situation of women representatives after 73rd Amendment. It was identified reservation as the major reason why the women entered into politics, But the women's outlook and ability gets enhanced once they enter into politics.

(Stephen & Sekharan, 2001) in the study "An Empirical study of women in Local Self Governance in Karnataka" identified the strength and problems of women panchayat members. Women who could perform well were thoroughly oriented and trained. And according to their study, four factors which contributed for better performance by women gram panchayat members were mobility, strength, education and training.

(Palanithurai G., 2002) in the article "Impediments to Empowerment of Women: Experiences of elected Women representatives in Panchayats in Tamil Nadu" highlighted the problems that women faced. Lack of leadership skills, lack of motivation, problems from family and society, inability to interact with the male, lack of mobility etc were some of the problems. The study suggested that periodic Capacity building exercises need to be given to improve the managerial skills, leadership qualities, accounting skills and communication skills. The study concluded by stressing the need of skill development and the capacity building programmes for enhanced development.

(Palanithurai & Ragupathy) in the study "Building Alliances and Capabilities among the Elected Women representatives of Grass Roots Institutions" at Tamil Nadu emphasized the need for capacity building. The findings in the study are that elected women representatives are of different categories like Educated, uneducated, rich, poor, dalits, wage earners and others. Some women leaders are still under the clutches of male, some women leaders show great commitments but are without knowledge. A Federation was set up which could orient a layer of women representatives at Tamil Nadu.

(Pal, 2003) in the article, "Capacity Building of Panchayats, Tasks Ahead", conducted at Harayana found out the effect of training and has identified Kerala as a model State for exemplary work on decentralization and

training. The need for participatory approach was emphasized to train the elected representatives and the training to be given in small groups.

(Kuduva, 2003) in the article “Engineering Elections: The Experiences of women in Panchayati Raj in Karnataka, India” reveals that in Karnataka, women participation in the political system has resulted in decreased level of corruption in panchayati Raj institutions thus increasing the efficiency of women.

(Sinha, 2004) in the article “Women in Local Self Governance” remarked the quantitative difference that women has made by sensitizing most wanted issues and highlighting the problems faced by them and the need for proper training. She concluded her study emphasizing that by the women entering the local governance, the local councils are being more environmentally and have more stake in the local natural resources.

(Singh, 2004) in the study “Empowerment of Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj- A Profile from Haryana” emphasized the need for capacity building programmes to be conducted at the doorsteps to ensure effective attendance in the programme. More trainings knowledge sharing sessions need to be conducted to change the mind set of all stake holders. Further the need for all the stakeholders to be together and to be committed to make the Panchayati Rajsystem effective and strong.

(Singh S. P., 2004) in the article, “Capacity Building of Gram Sabha for efficient Local Governance” pointed out that even after a decade of 73rd Amendment, the performance of PRI's were not good. There was lack of capacity in PRI's to smoothly run the activities. And he has emphasized the need for capacity building programme. He has defined capacity as a support or intervention that empowers people, communities or organizations to achieve their objectives,

(NARAYANA, 2005) in the study, “Local Governance without Capacity Building: Ten Years of Panchayati Raj” focuses on ward members and presidents of Gram panchayats of three states i.e. Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. The study focused on the importance of devolution of power along with the responsibilities to the local government. Absence of

trainees from the training programmes, literacy and family support were some of the factors which hindered the growth of women representatives. (Ahmad, Nilofer, & Parveen, 2008) in the study, "Women's Political Participation and Changing pattern of leadership in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh" remarks the transition of women as a good leader and good decision maker after the 73rd Amendment being implemented. Traditions, culture, family and caste plays a direct role in directing the life of a rural elected women. Those were the determinants to decide about the participation of women in governance. In their study, they identified age as another factor in deciding the role of women in political and social life. And the capacity building training makes the women explore the world and helps in gaining more insight and confidence. They have identified education, experience, self motivation, communication, competence, willingness etc as direct contributors to leadership.

(Chathukulam & John, 2016) in the study "Empowerment of Women Panchayat Members: Learning from Kerala (India)" examined the effect of including women in local governance. After detailed interviews with the representatives it was found that women representatives had excessive pressure on them by the political parties so that they couldn't create much changes. The study concluded by suggesting that changes are inevitable for a better administration by women representatives.

Methodology of the Study

The research method is descriptive. Through secondary data, initiatives from KILA for capacity building of elected women representatives are collected and a case study method is followed to assess the impact of capacity building for the ultimate rural development. Arimpur Panchayath in Thrissur District, Kerala is selected as the case. Analysis are made on the data collected.

Capacity building measures of kila

The 73rd Amendment emphasized the need to bring the people together into the mainstream of politics by reserving seats for women, SC and ST's. Thus the voice of the women were heard and their issues and problems started to get highlighted. There were many factors which limited the

women representatives to focus the mainstream. The narrow-mindedness of the society, domination by men, caste ad class restrictions, the general mindset of the patriarchal system, lack of exposure, unwillingness to take up responsibilities, illiteracy, less confidence, lack of mobility, less leadership skills, poor decision making, poor fund management etc were some of the factors which made the women reluctant to come forward.

It took almost a decade to understand and comprehend about the Amendment and its impact. All the above said factors made the Government to take up a strong decision on implementing the capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India and UNDP took the initiative to build up capacity for better local governance. Capacity Building Programmes was to make the women to have more concern in the political activities and to ensure their participation by organizing training programmes and follow up to make them enable to take up the responsibilities and roles which will ensure the effective development.

KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration) is an autonomous research, training institute constituted under the Government of Kerala. KILA was established in 1990 with the main aim of strengthening the local governance. The Institute being a model centre for capacity building has made the centre recognized as the Centre for Excellence. Training programmes range from one day to even a month. Training is given to various groups. Certificate courses are also conducted for Elected Representatives.

Table 1: Some of the Training Programmes in KILA

Local Planning for Innovative Projects
Training for Local administration
Good Governance Training
Strengthening of Grama Sabhas
Accounting and software training
Skill Development Programmes
Leadership training
Various special trainings
National and International Workshops

(Source: KILA)

To have more exposure for the elected representatives, visits to innovative panchayats are conducted. The training participants were taken to many excellent enterprises. After the visits, an action plan was prepared by the elected representatives and from the exposure, prepares the innovative practices which the representatives can bring to their area. And KILA makes a follow up on the action plan prepared and makes continuous monitoring. The training of Grama Sabha members was conducted by KILA which was felt very necessary. 14440 batches of ward members were trained during the last five year plan (Source: KILA Report).The officials in the panchayats were also given training in Finance, Accounting, Rules and procedures etc.

The term Skill Development was given due consideration by KILA in which Leadership training for Elected Women Representatives was the focus. The training is set up covering modules.

Table 2: Leadership Training to Women Representatives (Highlighted Modules)

1. Know one self
2. Democratic Leadership
3. Effective communication
4. Presentation skill
5. Meeting Management
6. Conflict Management
7. Stress Management
8. Decision making
9. Team Building
10. Time Management

(Source: KILA)

This proves to be highly effective for the elected women representatives to be empowered to the mainstream of the society.

Refresher courses are also provided in between to make them aware of the changes in the society. National and International trainings are also conducted by KILA which makes KILA as the Centre for Excellence. Research activities and seminars for all the relevant topics in Local Governance are conducted time to time.

KILA is an initiative which is assisted by Central Government, State Government and other supporting agencies to make the 73rd and 74th Amendment in its real heights. KILA's working has proved to be highly satisfactory and this is referred to many other states as a model.

Findings from Arimpur Panchayath

Arimpur panchayat is situated in the Anthikkad Block, western part of Thrissur District. The Arimpur panchayat is surrounded by Manakkodi back waters and paddy fields. Arimpur panchayat was formerly known as Eravu panchayat. The primary means of livelihood for the village people is agriculture and cattle rearing. A co-operative milk society functions in the area to provide the village a means of livelihood. The panchayat is situated in an area of 22.65 kilometer square. The village has water facilities, health centres, veterinary hospital, Homeo dispensary, public library, effective and well functioning kudumbashree etc. which makes the panchayat a highlighted one.

- The panchayat is having a population of 23289 people from which 11375 are male and 11914 are female (Source: Census data)
- Out of 17 wards in the panchayat, 9 ward members are women and 8 are men. (Period 2010-15)
- Out of the 9 women representatives, 5 Elected Women Representatives have their educational qualification SSLC, 3 Elected Women Representatives are graduated, and 1 with plus two as qualification
- Most of the Elected Women Representatives had a passion to help people in the society. Majority of the Elected Women Representatives were kudumba shree members before they join politics.
- Hence they have a great need to work for the development of that area.
- Majority of the Elected Women Representatives could sensitize the gender issues more effectively than men in their locality and strongly opined that they had accessibility to women whenever they needed. Jagrata committees are functioning very effectively to ensure the safety of women and girl children. An advocate comes once in a week to solve all the issues related to women. This has created an

empowerment in the women in general. But issues related to sex abuse and others were not reported even if it happens. Women found very reluctant to make an issue regarding that,

- Out of 9 Elected Women Representatives, two had a strong opinion that men were more efficient in handling infrastructural development. But it was evident from that locality that women holds an equal status along with men in the political sphere. Elected Women Representatives are more efficient in handling sensitized projects. Social Pensions are made available to the needed persons.
- Elected Women Representatives are highly satisfied with the capacity building initiatives obtained from KILA. They found it highly useful and it had a positive reflection in their personality
- While interviewing the Elected Women Representatives, it was observed that they were bold enough in handling all the activities
- Elected Women Representatives though satisfied with the capacity building initiatives opined that attending all the training founded to be difficult. And because of this everyone could not attend all the training programmes.
- Though Elected Women Representatives are built with more capacity, they find difficult to communicate with the general public in a stage for a public programme. Lack of communication skill still exist in the EWR of Arimbur panchayat.
- Kudumbashree is functioning very effectively in the area. They are doing micro finance activities and collective money is spent for productive purpose thus ensuring a means of livelihood.
- Political Pressures existed among Elected Women Representatives which hindered the ultimate growth.
- Out of 9 Elected Women Representatives, two faced constraints from the family since each thing in the family has to be given more importance.
- On the other hand, people were happy with the Panchayat Raj system and had the opinion that development in rural area has happened very drastically than olden days.
- The General Public found Grama Sabhas to be an interactive platform. They faced little difficulty in attending all the gram sabhas since some of them were conducted in the working days.

- People were happy with the services provided to them. They hold the opinion the services are delivered faster than before. Also they had better access to the representatives than before.

Conclusion

Through reservation women have changed in a positive way thus bringing them to the mainstream of society. Though the first decade saw a slow pace in their growth, now they are acting in a highly satisfied way for the betterment of the society. The Capacity Building measures of KILA have made them achieve this status. Ultimate participation of all the stakeholders must be ensured to make the KILA's initiative in a complete way.

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