

CHAPTER VIII

Role of Zilla Parisads - An Analysis of Empirical Data

The present study has endeavoured to project the following roles of the Zilla Parisads of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, viz., development, coordination, supervision and leadership. Besides these key roles, attempt has also been made to analyse the different organisational aspects of the Zilla Parisads including the performance of Panchayati Raj in general and Zilla Parisads in particular, in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

For the convenience of our analysis, the empirical data have been arranged on the basis of these dimensions, taking into account the responses received from the elected representatives and Government officials attached to the organisation of Zilla Parisads.

I. Development Role of Zilla Parisad

Development in our study is seen as an aspect of desirable change broadly predicted or planned or at least influenced by Governmental action¹. Development administration refers to those administrative systems or organisations which are centrally concerned with the achievement of progressive socio-economic and political goals which are innovational in attitude and operation. An important aspect of development administration is to develop the acceptance for change and to conduct various activities in a manner which can sustain and support the change objectives.

With the new dimensions introduced in the district development administration after the formation of new Panchayati Raj Institutions in West Bengal since 1978, Zilla Parisads have assumed a significant role in socio economic development of the rural areas of West Bengal, and are made responsible for a wide variety of development programmes.

Under the present system of Panchayati Raj administration, the Zilla Parisads have emerged as the main vehicle of development administration. A question in this regard was posed to the respondents of both the categories, i.e., the elected members and the officials of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar district respectively.

Table 8.1

Zilla Parisad as the Main Vehicle of Development Administration (Per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch- Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you consider the Zilla Parisad as the main vehicle of development administration	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes : (1) Total N = 72 (elected members 44 and officials 28).

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

When the question, whether Zilla Parisad was the main vehicle of development administration, was placed before the respondents, a complete consensus among both the elected members and the officials of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts was revealed in the above Table (8.1).

A further supplementary question was asked to the respondents about how the Zilla Parisads performed the role. In response to this supplementary question, all the 44 elected representatives of both the districts, pointed out that Zilla Parisads have become the nodal unit of development administration in the districts and the

development arms of the Zilla Parisad are the two organically linked institutions, namely, Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti. It is through these bodies the development programmes were implemented and Zilla Parisad acted as a friend, philosopher and guide. Moreover, the Zilla Parisad has representatives from different parts of the district and development programmes were implemented in an equitable manner. Elected members also highlighted the Governments' role in projecting Zilla Parisad as the most important organisation in implementing development programmes.

The officials were also asked an open-ended question as to how Zilla Parisad performed this role, and in response to this question the officials expressed their point of view that it was the logical frution[?] the Governmental decision to make the Zilla Parisad, the hub of developmental activities and to be the potential organisation to carry forward the essence of development administration. The officials also pointed out that through the lower tiers the development programmes are implemented by the Zilla Parisad.

It is not only important to know as to how the Zilla Parisads implement the development programmes, it is all the more important how much interest Zilla Parisads showed in development programmes.

Table 8.2

I Interest of Zilla Parisads in Development Programmes
(Per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you consider Zilla Parisads take adequate interest in development activities in the district.	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes : (1) Total N = 72 (elected members 44 and Govt. officials 28).

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate respondents in each category.

On the question whether the Zilla Parisad took adequate interest in development activities or not, the above Table 8.2 confirmed that Zilla Parisads took adequate interest in development activities in the districts. As in the previous Table 8.1, all the 44 elected members expressed their opinion in favour of the question put to them. The officials also agreed that Zilla Parisads attached adequate importance to development programmes. Here also a consensus among the elected members and officials of both the districts was reflected in the above Table.

Interest in development programmes of Zilla Parishad is dependent on the success of various programmes. We, in our questionnaire, put programmes under broad categories of agriculture, communication, health, education and industries. Respondents were asked to indicate whether these programmes were successfully implemented or not.

Table 8.3a

Success of Jalpaiguri Zilla Parishad in implementing development programmes (per cent)

Programmes	Response					
	Elected members			Officials		
	Fully success	Parti-ally success	Total	Fully success	Parti-ally success	Total
Agriculture	90.9 (20)	9.1 (2)	100.0	71.4 (10)	28.6 (4)	100.0
Communication	81.8 (18)	18.2 (4)	100.0	78.6 (11)	21.4 (3)	100.0
Education	90.9 (20)	9.1 (2)	100.0	64.3 (9)	35.7 (5)	100.0
Health	45.5 (10)	54.5 (12)	100.0	21.4 (3)	78.6 (11)	100.0
Industries	95.5 (21)	4.5 (1)	100.0	85.7 (12)	14.3 (2)	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 36 (elected representative 22 and government official 14).

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

Table 8.3a shows that on the question of success of the Zilla Parisad in matters of implementation of different programmes, the respondents expressed their opinion in a varied manner. It is to be noted here that respondents while answering in the category of "partially successful" which by and large, indicated that Zilla Parisad was either failed in implementing a particular programme or the respondent was not satisfied with programme achievement. The above analysis of data reveals that both the elected representatives and officials of Jalpaiguri district considered Zilla Parisad to be most successful in implementing programme relating to small industries. Most of the elected members (95.5 per cent) and (95.7 per cent) of the officials felt satisfied over the performance of Zilla Parisad in the field of small industries programme. Only one elected representatives (4.5 per cent) and officials (14.3 per cent) expressed dissatisfaction, which was reflected in answering 'partially successful', over the functioning of Zilla Parisad in implementing small industries programmes. On the development programmes relating to communication, there was an agreement of views expressed by both the categories of respondents that Zilla Parisad was successful so far as programmes relating to communication were concerned. A sizeable number of both the elected members (81.8 per cent) and officials (78.6 per cent) indicated with Zilla Parisad's success in this field.

However, Zilla Parisad's failure was viewed by some of the elected members (18.2 per cent) and by some officials (21.4 per cent). On the programmes relating to education, all the elected members excepting (9.2 per cent) indicated the success of Zilla Parisad in implementing programmes relating to primary education. But the officials had a different story to tell. Here a sizeable number (35.7 per cent) considered that Zilla Parisad was partially successful in implementing primary education programmes. Many of the official respondents (64.3 per cent) agreed on the point that Zilla Parisad was successful in implementing programmes relating to primary education. On health programmes initiated by the Zilla Parisad the above Table shows that there is a consensus of views that Zilla Parisad was partially successful. Most of the elected members (54.5 per cent) and officials (78.6 per cent) expressed the above opinion. But it should also be pointed out that elected members are relatively stronger (45.5 per cent) than the officials (21.4 per cent) in expressing satisfaction over the performance of the Zilla Parisad. In the field of agricultural programmes, it is evident from the above Table that not only the elected members (90.9 per cent), but most of the officials (71.4 per cent) felt that the success of Jalpaiguri Zilla Parisad was commendable. A very low percentage of elected members (9.1 per cent) and some of

Table 8.3b

Success of Cooch Behar Zilla Parisad in implementing development programmes (per cent)

Programmes	Response					
	Elected members			Officials		
	Fully successful -ful	Parti- ally success -ful	Total	Fully Success -ful	Parti- ally succe- ssful	Total
Agriculture	86.4 (19)	13.6 (3)	100.0	64.3 (9)	35.7 (5)	100.0
Communication	90.9 (20)	9.1 (2)	100.0	92.9 (13)	7.1 (1)	100.0
Education	69.1 (13)	40.9 (9)	100.0	71.4 (10)	28.6 (4)	100.0
Health	54.5 (12)	45.4 (10)	100.0	57.1 (8)	42.9 (6)	100.0
Industries	40.9 (9)	59.1 (13)	100.0	42.9 (6)	57.1 (8)	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 36 (elected representative 22 and government official 14).

(3) Figures in the parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

the officials (28.6 per cent) could not attribute credit to the zilla Parisad so far as the implementation of agricultural programmes were concerned. Let us now represent the data from Cooch Behar district.

The above Table 8.3b like the previous one (Table 8.3a), shows that on the same question of success of Cooch Behar

Zilla Parisad in matters of implementation of various development programmes, the respondents expressed their views in a varied manner. The above analysis of data show that both the elected representatives and the officials of Cooch Behar district considered Zilla Parisad to be most successful in implementing programmes concerning communication in the form of road construction, making bridges and culverts. Almost all the elected members (90.9 per cent) and (92.9 per cent) of officials were satisfied over the performance of Zilla Parisad in the field of communication. Only a microscopic percentage of elected members (9.1 per cent) and (7.1 per cent) of officials could not give credit to Zilla Parisad for the implementation of programmes pertaining to communication. On the programmes relating to agriculture a vast majority of elected members (86.4 per cent) felt satisfied. The officials, however, were not unanimous regarding the success of Zilla Parisad in implementing agricultural programmes. Here opinion is sharply divided. Though a majority of the officials (64.3 per cent) felt satisfied over the performance of Zilla Parisad, not less than (35.7 per cent) reserved their opinion on this issue. The data also reveal that regarding health programmes, a divergent views were expressed by the elected members and the officials. Though majority of the elected members (54.5 per cent) were satisfied regarding the performance of Zilla Parisad, (45.4 per cent) of the officials were of opinion

that Zilla Parisad had only partial success in health programmes. Almost identical views were expressed by the officials on health programmes. (57.1 per cent) of the officials agreed that Zilla Parisad was successful, while (42.9 per cent) of the officials differed in their opinion. On the programmes relating to primary education, the elected members and the officials of Cooch Behar Zilla Parisad were more or less satisfied over the performance of Zilla Parisad. A sizeable percentage of elected members (59.1 per cent) and (71.4 per cent) of officials indicated the success in programmes relating to primary education. However, Zilla Parisads failure was viewed by elected members (40.9 per cent) and by some officials (28.6 per cent). On the programmes relating to industries, a consensus is revealed among both the elected members and the officials regarding the failure of Zilla Parisad. Majority of the elected members (59.1 per cent) and the official (57.1 per cent) expressed utter dissatisfaction over the performance of Zilla Parisad over the programmes relating to industries. Only a minority of both the categories of respondents expressed their satisfaction. The official respondents (57.1 per cent) categorically pointed out, Cooch Behar being predominantly agricultural district, Zilla Parisad failed to motivate the rural population to take up small industry as their vocation. The elected members who admitted the failure of Zilla

Parisad, criticised the role of the nationalised banks in encouraging programmes of small industry. These programmes are generally sponsored by nationalised banks under Integrated Rural Development Programmes.

A comparative analysis of both the Tables (3a and 3b) reveals that in both the districts, programmes like agriculture and communication met with tremendous success. Respondents of both the categories in these two Zilla Parisads viz., Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar expressed a near consensus. On the programme like education, data show that the success of Jalpaiguri Zilla Parisad is more pronounced than that of Cooch Behar Zilla Parisad. On programmes relating to health, the elected members of both the Zilla Parisads expressed almost identical views. But the officials of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Zilla Parisads expressed their opinion in a varied manner. Majority of them (78 per cent) in Jalpaiguri district were not satisfied over the performance of Zilla Parisad. But majority of the officials (57.1 per cent) of Cooch Behar expressed their satisfaction so far the performance of the Zilla Parisad was concerned. One important fact that stands out from both the Tables (8.3a and 8.3b), is that both the elected members and the officials of Cooch Behar district, unequivocally expressed their dissatisfaction over the performance of Zilla Parisad in implementing programmes relating to small industry. But

the story is quite opposite in Jalpaiguri district where both the categories of respondents highly commended the role of Zilla Parisad in programmes relating to small industry.

The success of the development programmes is generally measured through the method whether the programmes leave any impact both on the clientele and on the areas where the programmes are dispensed, and ^{for} whom the programmes are meant for. It was asked to the respondents whether they considered that there was definite impact of development programmes on the people of the area.

Table 8.4

Impact of Development Programmes of Zilla Parisad (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think that there is a definite impact of development programmes undertaken by Zilla Parisad	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected representatives and 28 govt. officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate respondents in each category.

Looking at the Table 8.4 we, find that there is a complete agreement among the respondents of the districts that there had been a definite impact of development programmes initiated by the Zilla Parisads. This interesting feature of our respondents in having a high degree of consensus in relating to question whether there was a definite impact of development programmes undertaken by the Zilla Parisads, throws some light on the issue that both the categories of respondents have a clarity of views on the role and functions of the Zilla parisad in the field of rural development.

Development role of the Zilla Parisad becomes meaningful only when a definite change is noticeable in areas where programmes are implemented and also when the development programmes bring about the successful implementation of various change objectives³. For, change involves a shift in the basic values and attitudes of the mass of citizens⁴. This responsibility of bringing about change is thrust on the Zilla Parisad, and is being implemented with the leadership quality of the organisation. Another question, like the previous one, was directed to both the categories of respondents in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. The content of the question was whether the development role of the Zilla Parisad had been able to bring about a 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' change in the rural areas

of the districts. Qualitative change is defined in terms of creating permanent and durable assets or creating infra-structural facilities in the rural areas. The term 'qualitative' change has been defined as a change in the attitude and outlook of the citizens inculcating 'development conscience' meaning there-by, a forward looking, self-helping and action-oriented bent of mind⁵.

Table 8.5

Development role of the Zilla Parisad (Per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think that development role of the zilla parisad has been able to bring about a qualitative and quantitative change in the rural areas	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected representatives and 28 govt. officials).

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate respondents in each category.

Table 8.5 presents elected members' and officials' response of the two districts of Jalpaiguri and of Cooch Behar, whether development role of the Zilla Parisads had

been able to bring about a 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' change was tangibly felt.

This is evident from our data, that both the elected members and the officials were in complete agreement that there was a 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' change in the rural areas of the districts. The respondents were of opinion that as a result of development programmes, for which the Zilla Parisad has been chosen as the implementing agency, the quality of life in the village areas showed a definite upward trend. This was made possible by the achievement of physical targets by the Zilla Parisads. The elected members and the officials, in response to the question, gave a long list of areas where the action of the Zilla Parisads was met with tremendous success producing a 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' change. Zilla Parisads, through the programmes like National Rural Employment Programme and Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, had generated millions of man-days giving the poorer section of the rural population an opportunity to get work at least 200 days in a year. This employment generation programmes, had to a great extent, improved their living conditions and, in both the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, stopped landless agricultural labourers and other poorer sections to migrate to the urban areas in search of livelihood. Under these two programmes, rural assets and

infrastructural facilities were also created like minor irrigation, construction of primary school buildings, roads, bridges and culverts, preservation of environment through plantation of trees on vested land, rural housing for poorer section of rural population etc.

During the initial years, respondents of both the districts, pointed out that Zilla Parishad and other Panchayat bodies concentrated their attention in bringing about 'quantitative' change in the rural areas in the form of providing road facilities, drinking water, housing, community hall and other civic amenities. These programmes, under NREP and RLEGP, created infrastructural facilities and job opportunities in the rural areas of the districts. The introduction of decentralised planning, under the leadership of Zilla Parishad, as the respondents of both the categories pointed out, has brought about a qualitative change in the life of the vast number of rural people. The respondents also agreed that formation of District Planning Committee and District Planning and Co-ordination Council have fostered a change in the complexion of the rural areas of the districts.

It is clear from the Table 8.6 that there is no significant difference of opinion between the elected members and the officials of Jalpaiguri and of Cooch Behar districts. As much as (90.9 per cent) and (31.8 per cent) of the

Table 8.6

Distribution of Development Programmes (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected member officials			
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think that develop- ment programmes are distributed evenly in the district	Yes	81.8 (18)	90.9 (20)	100.0 (14)	71.4 (10)
	No	18.2 (4)	9.1 (2)	0 (0)	28.6 (4)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected representatives and 28 govt. officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage.

elected members and 100.00 per cent Government officials from Jalpaiguri district, along with (71.4 per cent) of Cooch Behar district, were of opinion that development programme undertaken by the Zilla Parisad's were distributed equitably. On the otherhand, only (18.2 per cent) and (9.1 per cent) of the elected members from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar respectively characterised their response as negative. Identical sentiment was expressed by (28.76 per cent) Government officials of Cooch Behar district. In contrast to the elected members, the officials of Jalpaiguri district seemed to be more positive in evaluating the functions of Zilla Parisad. But the officials of Cooch Behar (28.76 per cent) were not as positive as its counter

part in Jalpaiguri district. The respondents who answered the question in positive direction were of opinion that the programmes were distributed evenly throughout the districts and Zilla Parisad took an objective view in distributing the programmes. 18.2 and 9.1 per cent of the elected members from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and only 28.6 per cent of the officials from Cooch Behar district, while putting divergent views on the distribution of development programmes, categorically pointed out that many a time development programmes were concentrated rather than distributed throughout the districts. The explanation, they offered, that some of the elected members were very much concerned about their own constituencies or the areas where they belong to and tried to implement as many programmes as they could manage to get. Sometimes the personality factor also contributed towards the concentration of development programmes at a particular area.

On the otherhand, the respondents who answered the question in the affirmative, totally disagreed that the programmes of Zilla Parisad were distributed in a skewed manner through out the districts. They put forward the argument that the different tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions were required to prepare a shelf of projects and from that proposed projects development programmes were taken up for implementation depending on the felt-needs of the area and availability of funds leaving no room

altogether for Zilla Parisads to be partisan in distributing development programmes.

Today, under the Panchayati Raj system in West Bengal, the Zilla Parisad has been made the principal planner. Planning function has been entrusted to the Zilla Parisad, because the organisation has the capacity to initiate the planning process in the districts. The response to the question whether the Zilla Parisad was the appropriate body to plan for the entire district or not, is presented in the Table (8.7) below.

Table 8.7

Responsibility of Zilla Parisad to make plans (per cent)					
Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think Zilla Parisad should be made responsible for plans for the District	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate respondents.

The above table shows that one of the interesting features of our respondents in both the districts, is the

existence of consensus among both the elected members and the officials in their views that the Zilla Parisad was the competent body to make plans for the entire districts. The possible explanation of uniformity of answers to this question was that Zilla Parisad has emerged as leader of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Zilla Parisad has administrative capacity, technical know-how, financial authority and above all, being the apex tier of the Panchayat system, Zilla Parisad can take panoramic view of the entire administration. The respondents also highlighted the State Government's policy in conferring on the Zilla Parisad the exclusive power in the field of planning synchronising local, regional and national goals. So it was worthwhile, as pointed out by the respondents to keep the Zilla Parisads at the helm of such affairs.

So far as the developmental functions of the Zilla Parisad are concerned, it is amply demonstrated through the analysis of field data, that in the field of development administration, the organisation of Zilla Parisad has proved its worth and has emerged as the undisputed leader in whole gamut of Panchayati Raj system. Under the present set up the Zilla Parisad performs a large number of development functions for the rural people and plan for them to be implemented for the betterment of the entire district. The field data concerning the development functions of the

Zilla Parisad prove our contention that Zilla Parisad has become the vehicle of development administration in the district.

II. Co-ordination

Co-ordination is fundamental to any organisation⁶. It refers to orderly group efforts associated to provide unity of action in pursuit of common or shared goals. It entails mutual and interactive working and co-operation between various functionaries. It signifies team work, participation, co-operation and unity of efforts. It is a way of doing things through harmonious combination of functions. Such a combination involves search for a dynamic equilibrium among units which are independent in operation.

The second most important function of the Zilla Parisad is to co-ordinate the plans and programmes of development to be implemented effectively at the grass roots level. Co-ordination has become the most important variable in the organisation of the Zilla Parisad in view of the tremendous growth and complexity of development programmes under the leadership of the apexbody of the Panchayati Raj Institution. Co-ordination, at this level, can not just be left only to ^{official} machinery alone. Co-ordination, in development administration marked by democratic decentralisation,

increasingly calls for popular control over official machinery. This very development brings the problem of coordination in the administration of Zilla Parisad. When co-ordination is the task of bringing main materials in harmonious relationship, the initiative of the Zilla Parisad to this end, is considered to be one of the critical variable in the successful implementation of development programmes. In analysing our empirical data, we would see, how the mechanism of coordination works, its impact on development programmes and hindrances if any, in the process of realization of organisational goals.

Cooperation among several departments and the Zilla Parisad that form the very core of the coordination mechanism has assumed critical importance in view of the vast magnitude of development programmes which are executed by the Zilla Parisad. It is also important that success of development programmes ultimately depends on the quality of co-ordination. It was asked to the respondents whether the present system of co-ordination among various departments of the district administration and Zilla Parisad was working well. The Table 8.8 explains the situation.

Whether or not the respondents feel that the present system of the co-ordination was working well, can be varified by the working of various departments and the Zilla Parisad.

Table 8.8

Co-ordination between Zilla Parisad and development department of the district (per cent)

Item	Res- ponse	Elected members			Officials		
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Total	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Total
Do you think that the pre- sent system of coordination among various departments and Zilla Parisad is working well	Yes	54.5 (12)	63.6 (14)	59.1 (26)	57.1 (8)	71.4 (10)	64.3 (18)
	No	45.5 (10)	36.4 (8)	40.9 (18)	42.9 (6)	28.6 (4)	35.7 (10)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members, 28 Government officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N of respondents in each category.

The responses of the elected members and the officials to the above question are presented in Table (8.8). It is clear from the Table that there is divergence of views expressed by both the categories of respondents belonging to Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. The majority of the elected members 69.1 per cent of both the districts indicated that the present mechanism of coordination between the Zilla Parisad and the district level departments was working smoothly. This view was endorsed by a significant number of officials 64.3 per cent of both the districts. On the other hand, a large number of elected members 40.9 per cent

expressed unfavourable opinion in respect to the smooth working of coordination mechanism between Zilla Parisad and Government departments. This contention was supported by a sizeable number of officials (35.7 per cent) of both the districts. One important fact that emerges from the above Table is that as many as 28 (38.9 per cent) respondents of both the categories in both the districts expressed their dissatisfaction over the nature of co-ordination between the Zilla Parisads and Governmental departments. The respondents attributed such state of affairs to certain important factors, and these were revealed by the respondents in course of answering supplementary questions relating to the mechanism of coordination. The elected representatives stated that the initial years of the Panchayati Raj administration at the district level had produced several problems in achieving co-ordination between the elected representatives and the officials. It is very interesting to note that elected representatives of both the districts who differed with the question expressed their mind identically. They pointed out that the officials who worked for a long time in a situation where popular participation was totally absent, began to think in terms of 'empire-building'. They were not accountable to the people or their representatives. Under the present system, the officials with a hang over of the past, started viewing the elected members as intruder in the edifice of the power which was considered to be the absolute

monopoly of the officialdom. These very bureaucratic mentality stood in the way of building up a healthy relationship with the elected members. By bureaucratic mentality, the elected members meant, when they were asked to explain it, sticking to attitude best suited to law and order administration, nonfurnishing of information sought by the elected members, over emphasis on reports and returns and maintaining a distance from the elected representatives. One of the elected respondents referred, "colonial hang over of British administrative tradition still persists among our officials and this malady stands as a barrier between us"⁶.

Identical explanation of views by the elected members of both the districts can be attributed to the fact that all the elected representatives belonged to a particular political party and it is quite natural to have similar views on certain important issues.

On the other hand, the officials had their own positions to explain. To them the elected representatives aggrandised their new-found roles and thought to be the 'masters' of the system. The officials also pointed out that after the formation of the Zilla Parisads on the basis of the political parties, the elected representatives suddenly became all-knowing persons. One of the respondents from Cooch Behar district put it like this, "the politicians at the Zilla Parisad level are very myopic in their vision. They can not look beyond their political line. Development administration needs bright vision. Unfortunately most of

the members of Zilla Parishad lack that kind of outlook"⁸. Many of the officials from both the districts argued that if they could not see eye to eye with the elected representatives, it was due to the elected members' style of functioning. So the failure in the machinery of coordination, according to the respondents who expressed divergent views, can be categorised as lack of healthy understanding on each others role and mutual mistrust.

Moreover, there were field problems that hindered the process of smooth coordination. From the very beginning, the Panchayat bodies were entrusted with the responsibility of various departmental work and other functions in the field of rural development. Panchayats were implementing as many as 31 projects. These vast work in rural reconstruction were bound to produce lack of coordination during the initial years of Panchayati Raj administration. Because the 'work culture' required to implement a vast number of development programmes were, by and large, absent in the working relationship between the elected and the official representatives.

As we have already pointed out, Panchayati Raj, with its emphasis on decentralisation of administrative power and authority, provides the basic frame work in which elected members and the officials - the two main sets of functionaries - have to strive to realise the development goals through democratic process. The two sets of functionaries located in an institutional setting imply mutuality

and reciprocity of relationships. This normative situation was put to test in the form of a question, "has there been effective coordination between the district heads of development departments and the Zilla Parisads". The response to this question is presented in the Table (8.9) presented below.

Table 8.9

Co-ordination between Heads of Development Departments and the Zilla Parisad (per cent)

Item	Res- ponse	Elected members			Officials		
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Total	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Total
Do you think that there has been effective coordination between heads of development departments and Zilla Parisad	Yes	81.8 (18)	63.6 (14)	72.7 (32)	85.7 (12)	71.4 (10)	78.6 (22)
	No	18.2 (4)	36.4 (8)	27.3 (12)	14.3 (2)	28.6 (4)	21.4 (6)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (Elected members 44 and officials 28).

(2) Figures in parenthesis indicate N of respondents in each category.

The above table reveals that quite a substantial number of elected members 72.7 per cent of both the Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts, taken together and a large number of officials (78.6 per cent) felt that coordination between Zilla Parisad and heads of the development

Departments duly existed. On the other hand, some elected members, (27.3 per cent) from both the districts and a very small number of officials from the two districts taken together (21.4 per cent) claimed that there was a definite lack of coordination between the Zilla Parisads and the heads of the development departments of the districts. The reasons for the lack of coordination, as the respondents of both the categories put forward, were the mutual aspersion brought against each other in the field of action. Elected representatives alleged that the officials were not in the habit of supplying information required for making plans and cooperation at the implementation stage. They also identified certain departments such as departmental programmes like minor irrigation, primary education, health and small industries suffered badly due to lack of coordination. Lack of coordination existed, according to the elected members, right at the plan and estimate stage. Elected representatives (27.3 per cent) attributed such happenings to the 'superiority complex on the part of the officials. Officials intentionally do not bring to the notice of Zilla Parisad any particular difficulties in implementing departmental schemes which operate simluteniously with the Panchayat-runs schemes. The elected members also alleged that the officials do not want to bring Zilla Parisad into confidence regarding emerging field problems. This avoiding tendency on the part of the districts heads of the

development departments sometimes generated acrimonious relations with Zilla Parisads and thus hampered the implementation not only of departmental schemes but also of the development programmes undertaken by the Zilla Parisads. The officials (21.4 per cent) on the other hand, alleged that the elected members were interested only in political activities rather than development work. While planning, the officials pointed out that the elected members are mainly concerned with cheap popular stance so that they can ensure their return in the next elections. The officials also pointed out that elected members always used to put pressures to violate norms and procedure laid down by the Government in respect of various development programmes. This kind of political interference, as the officials complained, was the single most important factor that contributed towards the lack of coordination in the system. The officials who had different opinion regarding smooth and healthy coordination in the organisation of Zilla Parisad, also highlighted the fact that the elected members were in the habit of shifting the responsibility on their shoulders and did not care the technical niceties of a programme resulting in serious snags in the operation of development programmes.

In an organically linked Panchayati Raj structure the roles of the different tiers, are defined by the acts and statutes by the Government. In the present Panchayat system,

the Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samities make plans for their own jurisdictions. These plans and programmes need to be coordinated at Zilla Parisad level. Much of the success of the development plans and programmes depend, to a large extent, on the mechanism of coordination employed by the Zilla Parisad. The respondents were asked to express their views on this aspect and views are presented in the Table (8.10).

Table 8.10

Coordination of Development Plans by the Zilla Parisad (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
		Do the mechanism employed by the Zilla Parisad to coordinate plans of the lower tiers.	Yes	100.0 (22)	81.8 (18)
	No	0 (0)	18.2 (4)	0 (0)	21.4 (3)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N of respondents in each category.

Regarding the question of mechanism that still operated to bring co-ordination in ~~formulation~~ and implementation of

plans, the above Table shows that respondents of both the categories from Jalpaiguri district were in complete agreement that mechanism of coordination exists at the Zilla Parisad level. But the respondents from Cooch Behar district held slightly different views. Almost all elected members (81.8 per cent) and a significant number of officials (78.6 per cent) expressed satisfaction over the mechanism followed by the Zilla Parisads to secure coordination in the entire district development administration.

A near consensus of views of our respondents can very well be explained by the fact that they were guided by the official procedure or to be precise, by the statutory provisions Zilla Parisads employ to secure coordination. This was made clear when respondents were asked to explain the process of coordination. The official procedure is stated below.

The Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samities make plans for their own territories and subsequently this plans are integrated at Panchayat Samiti level for Block Plans. Block Plans are they transmitted to Zilla Parisad. Zilla Parisad that prepares Annual Action Plan for projects like NREP, RLEGP, NORTH BENGAL PLANS SCHEMES after collecting plans from Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samities and integrates different plans at its own level. The techniques employed by, to secure coordination, when monthly meetings of Sthayee Samities are held.

Another monthly meeting is held with the District Level Officers, Block Development Officers, Sabhapaties of Panchayat Samitis and Karmadhakhys of Sthayee Samitis of Zilla Parisad. The Sabhadhipati of the Zilla Parisad acts as the chairman of the meeting. It discusses mainly the development programmes under NREP, RLEGP, NBDP and Special Component Plans. In this meeting discussion is held regarding various on-going programmes under these heads and acts as an anvil to sort out bottle necks in order to ensure effective coordination.

All the respondents pointed out the effectiveness of such meetings which offer to the Zilla Parisad the insight to monitor plans and programmes.

Besides this, the Sthayee Samitis of the Zilla Parisad meet every month to discuss the respective programmes. This meeting provides an ample opportunity to interact with the district level officers who are closely connected to each of the eight Sthayee Samitis⁹, strengthening coordination and developing a healthy work culture required for implementation of vast number of development programmes with the active assistance of both sets of functionaries.

On-going projects are inspected both by the technical staff of the departments and by Zilla Parisad elected members. This helps according to the respondents of both

the categories, in sorting out some important fields problems. The respondents also emphasised the informal methods employed by the functionaries to get things done and to get the hurdles removed. The respondents pointed out how informed techniques helped in minimising the dysfunctionalities in the organisation, In spite of the successful operation of the machinery of coordination at the Zilla Parishad Level in formulating and implementing development plans. Only 18.2 per cent of the elected members and 21.4 per cent of officials from Cooch Behar district expressed unhappiness over the situation that led to mal-coordination in the functioning. Though the number is not very significant, it suggested that there were some loopwholes in the prevailing system that needs serious attention. This very same opinion was transpired during the informal discussion with both the elected members and officials. The same sentiment was evident in Jalpaiguri. But this situation was of surprisingly not been reflected in the questionnaire.

The District Planning and coordination council was created to play a very important role in coordinating and integrating plans and programmes. The respondents were asked the question, as to whether, the district planning and coordination council is an effective factor in the entire system. Responses are presented in Table 8.11.

Table 8.11

District Planning and Coordination Council as an effective instrument of coordination (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
		Do you think the district planning and coordination council is an effective instrument in securing coordination	Yes	36.4 (8)	27.3 (6)
	No	63.6 (14)	72.7 (16)	28.6 (4)	28.6 (4)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

With regard to the issue whether the District Planning and Coordination Council is effective instrument in securing coordination or not, interesting shades of opinions are reflected in the above Table. Surprisingly, a large number of elected members (63.6 per cent) of Jalpaiguri district and (72.7 per cent) of Cooch Behar district, disapproved the idea of creating such a body and spoke highly against DPCC. While not many of the elected members (36.4 per cent) of Jalpaiguri district and (27.3 per cent) of Cooch Behar district answered in positive and gave credit to DPCC as an effective instrument in obtaining coordination.

The official respondents of both the districts represented almost different views altogether, so far the reaction of the elected members, relating to the above question, were concerned. A large number of official representatives (71.4 per cent) of Jalpaiguri district and a substantial number of officials (71.9 per cent) of Cooch Behar district considered DPCC as an important institution to secure coordination, and a very small number (28.6 per cent) from both the districts could not ^{give} credit to DPCC to inculcate the spirit of coordination in the entire planning process at the level.

In explaining the position of the elected members who answered in the negative, it was pointed out that structurally the DPCC is effective. They described it as purely a bureaucratic organisation. Its meetings are generally unproductive in nature. The only purpose the body served, the elected representatives alleged that it only pleased the bureaucrats. The officials on the contrary, pointed out that DPCC offered an opportunity to the elected members to pass the buck on the District Level Officers' shoulders to hold the officers responsible for all the ills in the administration in order to make the officers as scape-goats.

On the other hand, both the elected members and officials from both the districts, who favoured DPCC as an effective instrument in securing coordination, pointed out

that this sort of body accomodates all shades of opinion in the task of development. The competitive politics that political parties bring in the system of Zilla Parisad is generally counter balanced by co-operative and consencious function of the DPCC. Moreover, the functioning of the DPCC has offered an opportunity to accomodate the knowledge and experience of M.L.As and the M.Ps.

Another important mechanism of coordination at the Zilla Parisad level is the institution of Sthayee Samities that work along with the Government department, the representatives of the development departments at the district level and are closely associated with the organisation of the Zilla Parisad. Question was put to the respondents whether the Sthayee Samities are the effective instruments for coordination among various departments and the Zilla Parisads.

The table (8.12) shows on the issue of the effectiveness of the Sthayee Samitis as the instruments of coordination, there is a near complete agreement of views expressed by the two sets of respondents. All the 44 elected members agreed that the Sthayee Samitis were most important institution to make the process of coordination a success with the departments and the Zilla Parisad. On this aspect almost all (92.9 per cent) officials of Jalpaiguri district also expressed their opinion inconsonant with the elected

Table 8.12

Role of Sthayee Samitis (permanent committees) in Coordination (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think Sthayee Samitis are main instrument of coordination between department and Zilla Parisad	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	92.9 (13)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	7.1 (1)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N. of respondents in each category.

members. Only one (7.1 per cent) official differed and his response was negative. While the officials from Cooch Behar completely agreed with the questions put to them.

Both the categories of respondents, save one, considered that these Sthayee Samities were the real work-shops where effective coordination was produced. It facilitated healthy interaction of both sets of functionaries and signified team work, participation, cooperation and unity of efforts. In the Sthayee Samitis all major departments are represented which are concerned with the development programmes and the officials concerned are closely associated with the functioning of the Sthayee Samitis. All the development programmes

are discussed at the sthayee samitis and both administrative and technical matters are taken up for discussion in a thread-bare way. The nitty-gritty of the field problems are generally solved with not much delay in the meetings of the Sthayee Samitis. The respondents pointed out that another important development concerning the constitution of Sthayee Samitis is on the anvil. Presently the secretary of Zilla Parisad by virtue of section 172(3) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, acts as the Secretary of all Sthayee Samitis. Now efforts are made to induct district level officers to take charge of the Sthayee Samitis except the finance committee in conformity with the patterns followed in Panchayat Samiti. This would the members said, further, facilitate the process of coordination in the development projects under the department projects.

The orientations expressed by the elected members and Government officials indicate the following situation :

- (1) There is a good deal of agreement in the role expectations of the two sets of functionaries.
- (2) Cooperative work culture is produced and both the functionaries realise their role as supplementary and complementary to each other.

So far as the questions relating to coordination were concerned, it became apparent that the system is working well

due to gradual realisation of each others role in the set up of democratic decentralization under Panchayati Raj. The initial hurdles that produced certain tension areas, were on the wane and could very well be said to be teething trouble of Zilla Parisad during initial years. As the time went by, the problem of coordination also receded to the background. But in order to make development administration, under the leadership of Zilla Parisad, fruitful a lot of more healthy grounds are yet to be created in respect of coordination in every sphere of activities.

III. Supervision and Control

In the Panchayati Raj structure, the importance of supervision is tremendous in case of successful implementation of development programmes under the guidance of Zilla Parisad.

Supervision is the function of assuring that an action is taking place in accordance with the plans and instructions. The objectives are to supervise action on the programmes which are correctly and actively in progress. Good supervision contributes feasibility of a particular action in progress. The emphasis is generally more on the programme guidance. It means dissemination of information, imparting administrative and technical guidance for constant improvement of the skill of the supervised.

During field investigation, it was found that supervision has not become a routine job concerned only with utilization of funds and fulfilment of targets. It is in the nature of giving proper guidance to the implementing authority. It is not mere a routine inspection or field visits and scrutiny of reports and returns sent to the Zilla Parisad.

Analysis of empirical data shows that supervision and control was viewed by the respondents as an instrument not of domination or empire-building attitude of supervisory agency, but as a tool to construct collaboration and mutual dependence.

Who supervises the plan ? this question was put to the respondents. The responses are presented in the Table below.

Table 8.13

Power of Supervision of the Zilla Parisad (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar
Who supervises the plan	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members, 28 officials)

(2) Figures in parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

Table 8.13 shows that regarding the issue as to which organ of Panchayati Raj supervised the plans, all the elected representatives responded that it was the Zilla Parisad that supervised the plan.

The officials also agreed to the views expressed by the non-officials.

The uniformity of answers may very well be explained by the fact that Zilla Parisad being the apex tier, all plans and programmes are integrated at the level. Moreover, the Zilla Parisad can take a general view of the entire district and implement development plans in a balanced and uniform manner. The Zilla Parisad also has the technical competence which no other tiers have got.

Routine supervision sometimes proves to be detrimental to the entire process of plan implementation by lower tiers of Panchayati Raj Institution and which is contradictory to the purpose of supervision. To make the entire exercise conducive to concept of development administration to which the Zilla Parisads are wedded to, it can impose certain decision on its own on improving the skills of the supervised.

With regard to this question whether Zilla Parisad can impose its decision on the lower tiers in achieving supervision, the respondents expressed their point of view in the Table 8.14.

Table 8.14

The Authority of the Zilla Parishad to Impose its decision
(per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
In achieving supervision can Zilla Parishad impose its decision	Yes	59.1 (13)	68.2 (15)	71.4 (10)	64.3 (9)
	No	40.9 (9)	31.8 (7)	28.6 (4)	35.7 (5)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate number of respondents in each category.

The above Table (8.14) presents an interesting situation in which divergent opinion is expressed. A large number (59.1 per cent) of respondents belonging to the category of elected members from Jalpaiguri district, and even larger number of elected representatives (68.2 per cent) from Cooch Behar district, agreed that Zilla Parishad could impose its decision on the lower tiers to achieve supervision.

Unfavourable attitude to the above question was expressed by no less than 40.9 per cent of the elected

members from Jalpaiguri district and slightly lesser number of elected representatives from Cooch Behar (31.8 per cent), echoed the same negative sentiment. On the other hand, the officials also have difference of opinion, though not, as significantly, from those of the elected members. Only a few (28.6 per cent) of the respondents belonging to the category of officials from Jalpaiguri district and 35.7 per cent from Cooch Behar district expressed negative views. On the same issue majority of the officials from both the districts, 71.4 per cent from Jalpaiguri and 64.3 per cent from Cooch Behar district, agreed that Zilla Parisad would have the right to impose its decision on lower tiers in achieving supervision.

In answering the question whether Zilla Parisad can impose its decision, the respondents of both the categories in responding positively, stated the statutory position of the Zilla Parisad. The West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1973 clearly states, "a Zilla Parisad shall exercise general power of supervision over Panchayat Samities and Gram Panchayats in the district and it shall be the duties of these authorities to give effect any directions of Zilla Parisad on matters of policy or planning for development". Even in replying affirmative, the respondents indicated that under normal circumstances, Zilla Parisad did not impose its

decision on any matter should it be of general nature. But Zilla Parisad did certainly impose its decision on technical matters in respect of policy or planning.

The respondents who differed on this issue pointed out that Zilla Parisad could not impose its decision in achieving supervision. It was mainly because of the fact that Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats are, though organically linked, independent to draw plans and programmes, of course, adhering to the broad guide lines propounded by the State Government and the state planning board. According to them, Zilla Parisad only does integrate the plans and programmes in tune with the financial resources placed at its disposal. What the Zilla Parisad can, at best, do is to ask the lower tiers to modify their plans in view of the over all financial position. In an open-ended question as to how the Zilla Parisad provides effective supervision over the work transferred to Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats, the respondents of both the categories pointed out that supervision was done mainly on the technical aspects of the plans and programmes through the technical staff of the Zilla Parisad. The Zilla Parisad has a technical cell with Executive Engineers, Assistant Engineer, Sub-Assistant Engineers and Estimators, to look into the entire technical aspects of the plans and programmes. Administrative

supervision was not of a normal job of the Zilla Parisad. Only under certain extreme situation administrative supervision was resorted to.

The respondents also made it clear that Zilla Parisad employed certain routine procedure of supervision like reports and returns and field visits.

The process of supervision by the Zilla Parisad was not without any difficulties. It was pointed out by the elected members that it proved to be very difficult on the part of the Zilla Parisad to supervise plans and programmes operating under the Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats. The reasons, they mentioned were that supervisory staff at those levels belong to the Government departments and they used to be very loyal to their respective heads of technical departments at the district level. The technical staff at the Panchayat Samiti level, many a time, put importance to the departmental programmes which generally do operate simultaneously with the Panchayat-run-schemes and the elected representatives found it very difficult to effect supervision through them. Thus situation sometimes produced unhealthy relation between elected members and officials at the district level in a vicarious way as the technical officers at the district level tend to protect their junior colleagues at the lower levels.

An analysis of the above Tables shows that Zilla Parisad enjoys powers to supervise plans and programmes formulated by lower tiers. It is also found that the lower tiers accept the decision of the Zilla Parisad on technical matters because it has the technical expertise which no other tiers possesses. The Zilla Parisad has also the power and authority to supervise and coordinate the Panchayats-run-schemes. In respect to the implementation of departmental schemes, it is the responsibility of the respective departments, and there should be coordination in supervision between such schemes and Panchayats-run-schemes. The implementation of Panchayat-run-schemes are the responsibility of the relevent Panchayat bodies, but Zilla Parisad retains the powers to coordinate and supervise the developmental programmes in the district.

IV. Leadership

Leadership, in our study, is viewed as the quality and competence of all members of an organisation i.e., Zilla Parisad, that determine the effectiveness in bringing about progressive socio-economic and political goals. Development administration, under Panchayati Raj, seeks to concentrate attention on the administrative requisites for achieving public policy goals which involve substantive political,

social and economic transformation¹⁰. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to create representative institution which would supply local initiative, supervision and care necessary, to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development¹¹. The Zilla Parisad is expected to provide the administrative leadership meaning, thereby, the concerted endeavour of all the members of the organisation who are to participate and cooperate with each other in achieving the set goal¹². An accurate identification and effective utilization of leadership provides the key to the smooth and speedy implementation of development programmes at the grass-roots level¹³. The Zilla Parisad has become the nodal unit through which multidimensional programmes of rural development are implemented. Success of such programmes depend entirely on the organisational capacities and leadership qualities. The leadership quality of the organisation is the product of dynamism, responsiveness and commitment of the members who comprise it. Moreover, the members of the organisation should have a clear idea of the goals to which they are wedded, this clarity of goals provides the organisation with dynamism and quality to lead others.

The investigation is essentially an attempt to describe and analyse the leadership of Zilla Parisad on the basis of empirical data gathered from the field of our study which

would provide an insight to the actual working of this system.

As has already been pointed out, leadership is one of the most important variables to determine the success of an organisation committed to the concept of development administration. Zilla Parisad being the apex body of the Panchayati Raj structure, it has the statutory obligation to lead the lower tiers. But mere statutory provision does not automatically confer on the Zilla Parisad the qualities of being leader in the whole gamut of development administration under Panchayati Raj System. Different questions were put to the respondents to ascertain the quality of leadership of Zilla Parisad. One of the questions that was put to the respondents whether the lower tiers accept the organisational leadership, the responses are figured in Table 8.15.

Table (8.15) shows that on the question of acceptability of the leadership of Zilla Parisad by the lower tiers, the respondents expressed unanimous views in accepting leadership of Zilla Parisad.

This proves that Zilla Parisad has emerged as the undisputed leader in the entire Panchayati Raj structure. This uniformity of responses can be explained by the fact that Zilla Parisad has more powers, resources, machinery, and above all, the Government wants Zilla Parisad to assume

Table 8.15

Acceptance by the lower tiers of the leadership of Zilla Parisad (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai-guri	Cooch Behar
Do the lower tiers accept the organisational hardship of Zilla Parisad	Yes	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	100.0 (14)
	No	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total number of N = 72 (44 elected members, 28 officials)

(2) Figures in parenthesis indicate N of respondent in each category.

leadership in Panchayati Raj administration. The most important reason why the lower tiers accept the leadership of Zilla Parisad is that the grants are made in the name of Zilla Parisad and Zilla Parisad, further allots the grants to the Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats. Lower tiers are to sent necessary reports and returns in respect of the Panchayat-runs-schemes and programmes like NREP, RLEGP and District Plan Scheme, to the Zilla Parisad.

It was revealed at the same time, that the respondents did not favour any other tiers to be the leader of the

Panchayati Raj system. Question in this regard was asked and is presented below in Table format.

Table 8.16

Acceptance of Panchayat Samiti to be the leader (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
		Would you accept the Panchayat Samiti to play leadership role in the Panchayati Raj administration	Yes	0 (0)	0 (0)
	No	100.0 (22)	100.0 (22)	100.0 (14)	71.4 (10)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected numbers, 28 officials)

(2) Figures in parenthesis indicate number of respondent in each category.

In the above Table (8.16) an absolute consensus is revealed between the elected members from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and officials from Jalpaiguri district. In Cooch Behar district, all but four respondents refused to accept Panchayat Samiti as leader in Panchayati Raj structure. The elected representatives put forward their arguments in rejecting the idea to crown the Panchayat Samiti with leadership. They argued that planning has become a very technical job and it is not mere an aggregation of schemes drawn up by certain units. It is a

complicated exercise and has to accommodate various socio-economic factors etc. which require a broad vision. Panchayat Samiti is a small unit in comparison to the Zilla Parisad to have a wide angle of vision that performs the national priority jobs. Panchayat Samiti does not possess the technical and administrative capabilities matching that of the Zilla Parisad's calibre and expertise. Moreover, the scope of the Panchayat Samiti is very small.

The officials have also certain points in favour of their views. The officials summarily rejected the idea of giving Panchayat Samiti the prime position in Panchayati Raj set up. To them, the Panchayat Samiti is not structurally situated to lead the Panchayat organisations. The structural pattern of Panchayati Raj has offered the Sabhadhipati and members of the Zilla Parisad a leading role over the representatives and over their tiers of Panchayats. Since the members of Panchayat Samiti are elected on the tickets of political parties, Zilla Parisad gets an extra leverage to control the lower tiers having same political party at the helm of affairs. This very political influence has, to a great extent, strengthened the leadership of Zilla Parisad as the lower tiers are placed under political surveillance.

Though not very significantly the officials (28.6 per cent) of Cooch Behar district favoured the idea of conferring leadership role to the Panchayat Samiti. The reasons advanced to sustain their argument was that the Panchayat Samiti, according to the officials from Cooch Behar, was an organisation more nearer to the people than that of Zilla Parisad. They claimed, that people have already accepted Panchayat Samiti as their own organisation and have identified themselves with the organisation. So Panchayat Samiti was best suited organisation to motivate people to participate in the process of rural development under Panchayati Raj.

One of the components of leadership, it is presumed in our study, is that the Zilla Parisad should have adequate administrative powers to modify or restrain some policies and programmes of the organisations organically linked to one another. A question of this kind was placed before the respondents to bring out their reaction. The Table 8.17 explained the situation.

Table (8.17) shows, so far the powers of Zilla Parisad regarding modification of policies and programmes of Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats were concerned, the response of the elected members from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts is significantly different. In this respect, as compared to elected members (81.8 per cent) from Cooch Behar district,

Table 8.17

Power to modify the policies of Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar	Jalpai- guri	Cooch Behar
Do you think that					
Zilla Parisad	Yes	59.1	81.8	57.1	57.1
possesses ade-		(13)	(18)	(8)	(8)
quate powers to					
restrain or	No	40.9	18.2	42.9	42.9
modify policies		(9)	(4)	(6)	(6)
of Panchayat					
Samiti and Gram	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Panchayat					

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N of respondent in each category.

59.1 per cent of respondents from Jalpaiguri district expressed the views that Zilla Parisad can modify the policies and programmes of Panchayat Samitis and of Gram Panchayats. As many as (40.9 per cent) of the respondents from the Jalpaiguri district and only 18.2 per cent of respondents from Cooch Behar district differed on the above question and pointed out that Zilla Parisad did not have any power to do so.

On the other hand, if we take into consideration the responses of the officials, it transpires that on this question, opinion was sharply divided in both the districts. As

many as 57.1 per cent of the officials in both the districts answer in positive that Zilla Parisad has the power to modify policies of the lower tiers, while 42.9 per cent of the respondents from Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar differed in their opinion and pointed out that Zilla Parisad would not have the power to modify the policies of the lower tiers.

On the above question the elected representatives in responding positively to the issue, highlighted the fact that power of modification is restricted only in case of Panchayat Samitis. In respect to Gram Panchayats, Zilla Parisad under normal circumstances can not exercise this power. The reason being, the Gram Panchayat is the grass-roots organisation and has the authority to draw plans and take up programmes of its own. But the Zilla Parisad can at best, sanction funds can ask Gram Panchayats to implement programmes within the broad guide lines from the State Government.

The officials, in answering this question in a positive direction, categorically pointed out that Zilla Parisad has such power of modification under the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1973.

The elected members who opposed the idea of modifying policies of the lower tiers by the Zilla Parisad, put forward their arguments in the following lines. They pointed out

that in Panchayati Raj structure, each tier has well defined powers and functions. Higher tiers can not interfere in the functioning of the lower tiers. Such act of interference would tantamount to the violation of democratic norms which have been successfully planted in the field of local self government. Statutorily, even if, Zilla Parisad under the wide umbrella of power has the authority to modify the policies of the lower tiers, can not use it in the interest of the basic principles of democratically constituted local self-Government units.

Table 8.18

Power of Zilla Parisad to sanction budget of the lower tiers
(per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri N=22	Cooch Behar N=22	Jalpai- guri N=14	Cooch Behar N=14
		Does Zilla Parisad sanction the budget of lower tiers	Yes	63.6 (14)	40.9 (9)
	No	36.4 (8)	59.1 (13)	28.6 (4)	42.9 (6)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 28 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N of respondent in each category.

In our study we have taken the authority of the Zilla Parisad to sanction the budget of the lower tiers as one of the parameters to show the leadership quality of the organisation. Question was put in this regard to ascertain the leadership of Zilla Parisad. Table 8.18 would explain the situation.

So far as the power of Zilla Parisad to sanction the budget of the lower tiers was concerned, the opinion of the respondents differed significantly. Of the elected members 63.6 per cent from Jalpaiguri district agreed on the question that Zilla Parisad has the power to sanction the budget of the lower tiers and 36.4 per cent of them had expressed different views. In respect of Cooch Behar district, the elected representatives expressed almost opposite view than those of the elected representatives from Jalpaiguri district. As many as 59.1 per cent of the elected members differed in their opinion and pointed out that Zilla Parisad can not under any normal circumstances sanction the budget of the lower tiers. This view was contradicted by the representatives with a percentage of 40.90 per cent.

In respect of the respondents belonging to the category of 'officials', the views expressed by the officials from Jalpaiguri district, more or less echoed the same sentiment as expressed by the elected representatives. As many as

71.4 per cent answered in favour of Zilla Parisad. The majority of the official respondents (57.1 per cent) from Cooch Behar district also pointed out that Zilla Parisad should have the power to sanction the budget of the lower tiers. Only 28.6 per cent from Jalpaiguri and 42.9 per cent from Cooch Behar district, the officials expressed negative views.

The elected respondents while answering in the affirmative, quoted the Panchayat Act of 1973 to confirm their position. Normally, the respondents pointed out that the development budget of the Gram Panchayat are prepared on the basis of the grants-in-aid made available to the units. The Zilla Parisad, while making to the grants to the Gram Panchayats, is guided by the official norms. But in case of Panchayat Samitis, Zilla Parisad has clear cut authority to sanction the budget of the Panchayat Samitis.

The respondents who answered in the negative mainly based their arguments on the ground that Zilla Parisad can not sanction the budget of the Gram Panchayats which are normally fixed. Gram Panchayats receive fixed amount of money in the programmes under NREP and RLGP.

But with respect to the leadership question on the part of the Zilla Parisad, it is very crucial whether Zilla Parisad

make any alteration in the budget of the lower tiers particularly in respect to Panchayat Samiti or not. A question in this regard was put to the respondents.

Table 8.19

Power of Zilla Parisad to make alteration in the budget (per cent)

Item	Response	Elected members		Officials	
		Jalpai- guri N=22	Cooch Behar N=22	Jalpai- guri N=14	Cooch Behar N=14
Does Zilla Parisad exercise its control in making every alteration in the budget of the Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat	Yes	22.7 (5)	13.6 (3)	71.4 (10)	64.3 (9)
	No	77.3 (17)	86.4 (19)	28.6 (4)	35.7 (5)
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note : (1) Total N = 72 (44 elected members and 24 officials)

(2) Figures in the parenthesis indicate N of respondents in each category.

The above Table presents a very interesting position so far as the responses of the elected members from both the Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts are concerned. A significant majority of the respondents (77.3 per cent) from Jalpaiguri and (86.4 per cent) from Cooch Behar district held the view that the Zilla Parisad did not have the power

to make any alteration in budget of the lower tiers. Only 22.7 per cent from Jalpaiguri district and 13.6 per cent from Cooch Behar district responded positively but the officials from both the districts pointed out that Zilla Parisad had the necessary powers to make alteration in the budget of the lower tiers. 71.4 per cent from Jalpaiguri and 64.2 per cent from Cooch Behar district held this opinion that Zilla Parisad has the necessary power. On the other hand, not very large number of respondents in the category of officials subscribed to this majority view. Only 28.6 per cent from Jalpaiguri and 35.7 per cent differed. To them Zilla Parisad had no power to alter the budget of the lower tiers.

In this Table, the over all opinion of the respondents, if we take both the elected members and officials in view, we can conclude that 37.5 per cent of the respondents were of opinion that Zilla Parisad could exercise the power to change the budget of the lower tiers. On the otherhand, 62.5 per cent of the respondents were of opinion that Zilla Parisad did not have any such power to modify the budgets of Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis.

A possible reason for this kind of reflection of views was that, under the present Panchayati Raj system, the concept of democratic decentralisation has gone deep into

the soil any kind of action on the part of the Zilla Parisad which was not conducive to the steady growth of the local self-Government Units, was taken very seriously by the respondents in favour of Zilla Parisad's power limitation.

In conclusion we can say that the Zilla Parisad has established itself as a social instrument of decision making with local autonomy, administrative capability and planning expertise. Under the present system, all the developmental departments and programmes including the anti-poverty programmes and minimum needs programme which are vital to rural development comes squarely under the Zilla Parisad with non-official leadership for integrated and harmonised functioning. To this end, our study revealed that in achieving the goals of development under democratic decentralization, the functions of the Zilla Parisad has proved to be well co-ordinated and the leadership of the organisation has been accepted in the entire gamut of rural development administration in West Bengal.

Thus our research questions which were put to the respondents of both the categories viz., elected members and government officials of the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar received the positive answers, thereby proving

our contention that Zilla Parisads in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar have become the main vehicle of rural development and Zilla Parisads have brought about a qualitative and quantitative change in the rural areas of North Bengal. Moreover, Zilla Parisads in the two districts have created a dynamic and responsible leadership and made the Panchayati Raj system more democratic than ever in West Bengal.

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