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DISTRICT INSTITUTES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THREE INDIAN STATES

**Funded by the Department for
International Development, UK**

Caroline Dyer



Rationale and purpose of DIETs

Rationale for establishing DIETs (MHRD 1989: 3-4).

- 'Addition of a third – district level – tier to the support system' which would be 'closer to the field, and therefore more alive to its problems and needs'.
- 'Part of a larger strategy to achieve national goals in the areas of Elementary and Adult Education. [...] DIETs cannot...afford to view themselves in isolation, and must faithfully discharge their role of supplementing and complementing other parallel initiatives'.

Purposes of DIETs (MHRD 1989: 8)

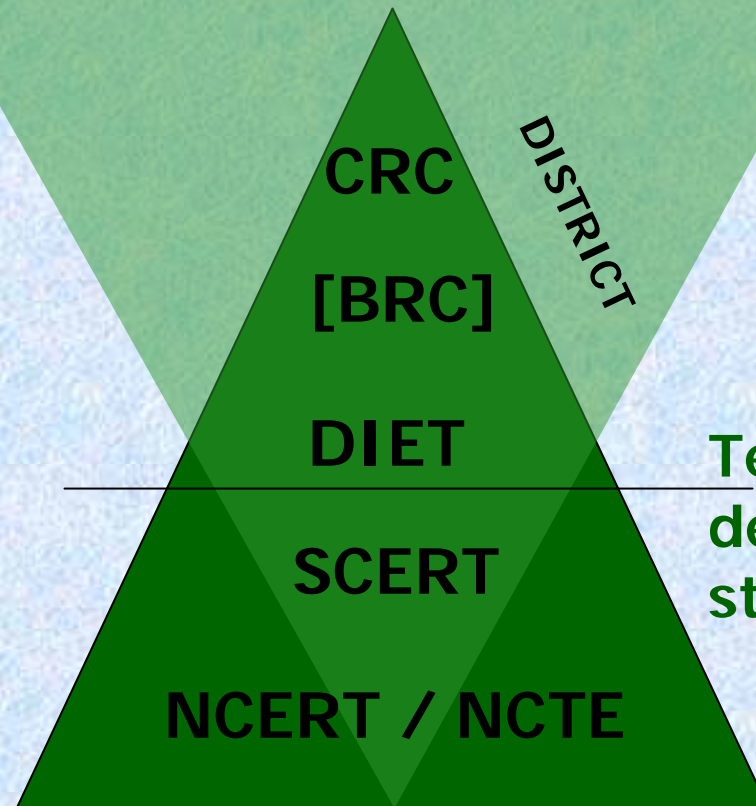
- 1 Training and orientation of the following target groups: elementary school teachers; Head Masters, officers of Education Department up to Block level; NFE and adult education instructors and supervisors; members of District Boards of Education and Village Education Committees, other community volunteers; resource persons who will conduct suitable programmes ... at the centres other than the DIET.
- 2 Academic and resource support to the elementary and adult education systems in the district in other ways...
- 3 Action research and experimentation to deal with specific problems of the district in achieving the objectives in the areas of elementary and adult education

Support structures for quality education

Systemic growth in 1990s – supports SSA policy goals



Achieving learners
Competent teachers



Teacher development strategy ?

The DFID-funded study

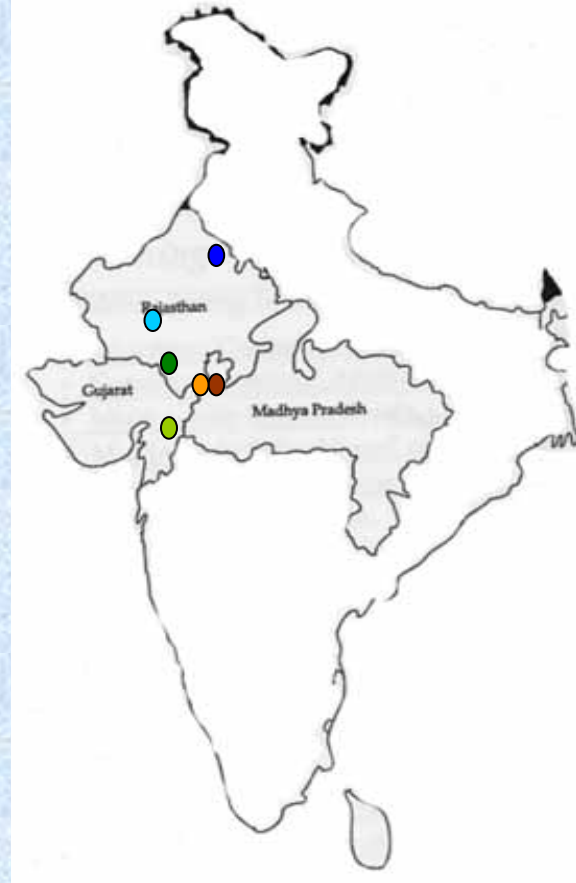
Two years ethnographic research aiming to inform and guide policy making and practitioner development (completed 2001)

Two interwoven strands of activity:

1. Ethnographic data generation in DIETs and their contexts (DIETs in relation to other educational institutions in systemic context of decentralisation)
2. Collaborative action research for professional development with teacher educators.

Key finding

Unresolved tensions of decentralisation hamper DIET emergence as autonomous institutions knowing and responding to teachers' needs in the District.



6 sites: 2 DIETS @ in Gujarat, MP, Rajasthan

1 + external intervention (DPEP/LJ)

1 'regular' govt. DIET

DIET: staffing and decentralised working

- **Staffing**
 - Qualifications and their relevance
 - Role understandings: a) DIET and b) own role in DIET
 - Perceptions of primary teachers and primary teaching
 - Competence and capacities?
- **Leadership?**
 - The importance of 'the chair'
 - Direction setting - autonomy or dependence?
- **Pedagogical authority?** How to influence teachers?
- **Continuing professional development** for DIET staff?
- The **training model**... DIET as a postbox or innovator?

The capacity of the training model

Low ecological validity of transmission / banking approach with a pronounced focus on content

Training has acquired a poor reputation among teachers and officials – and even trainers!

Challenges: help teachers make links between pedagogical processes, classroom contexts and student achievements – i.e. focus on children's learning – not on delivery of teaching.

DIET educators need to have 'soft' pedagogical skills themselves – to know about

- differentiation between learners based on learning needs not social labelling
- linguistic heterogeneity and how to address it
- first generation learner needs
- relating children's knowledge to curriculum content

Decentralisation in detail

Vertical and horizontal links (I)

SCERT- DIET – support or control?

In the **District**

DIET dependent in various ways – how does DEO see DIET?

- Deputing of teachers done by DEO
- DEO office may have poor impression of DIET and relevance of its training
- Block officers + inspectors feed back on training needs / impact – but have an inspectoral / admin orientation

Proactive DIETs have worked to establish DIET within the District. They underline the continuing relevance of the DIET idea.

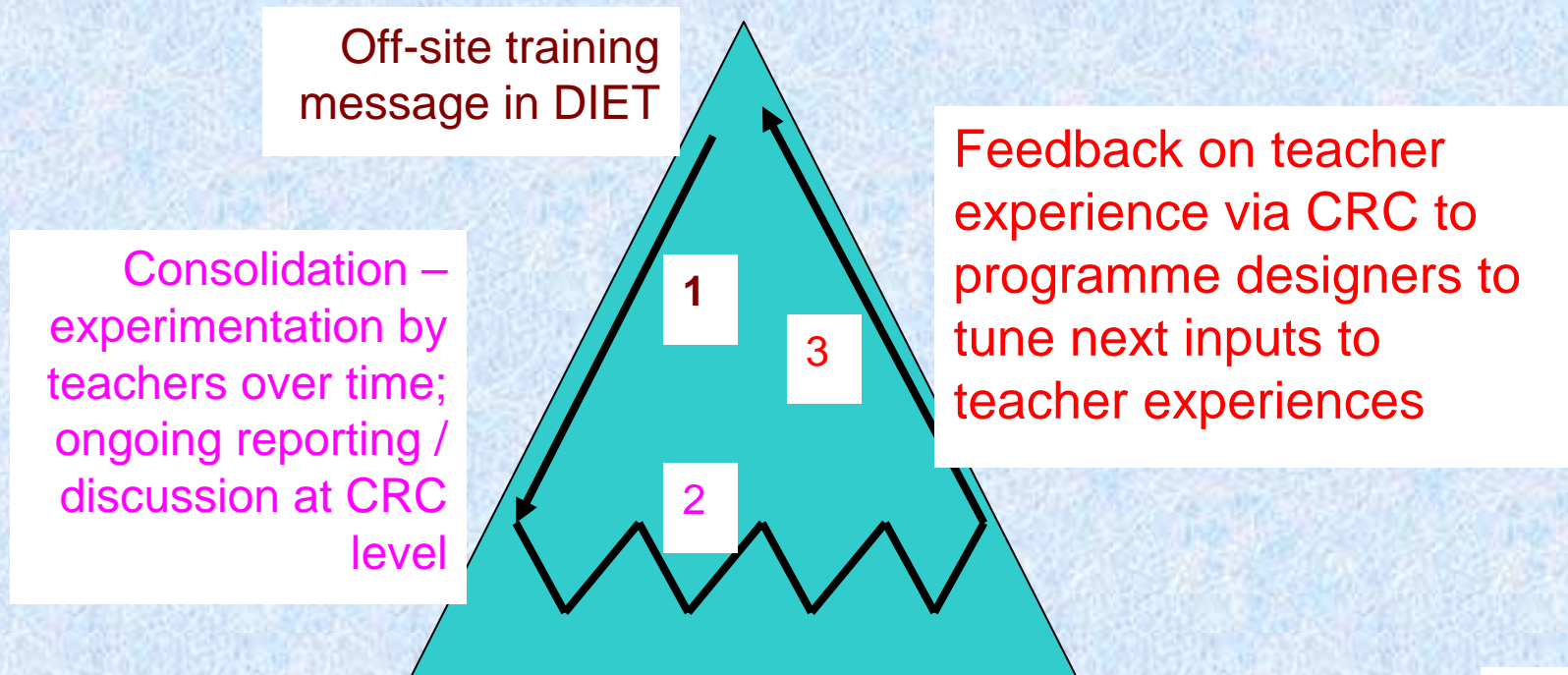
Decentralisation in detail

Vertical and horizontal links (II)

Potential of the CRC: close to practices and provide a platform for teacher-driven reform agendas

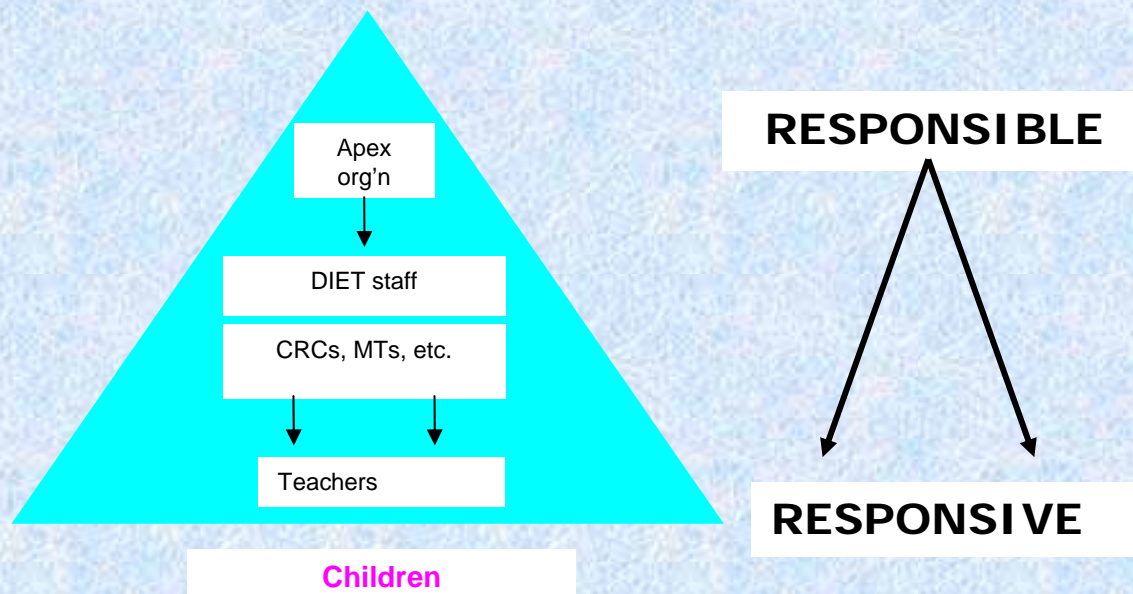
Important role in consolidating off-site training input

Development through peer reflection / sharing rather than expert input



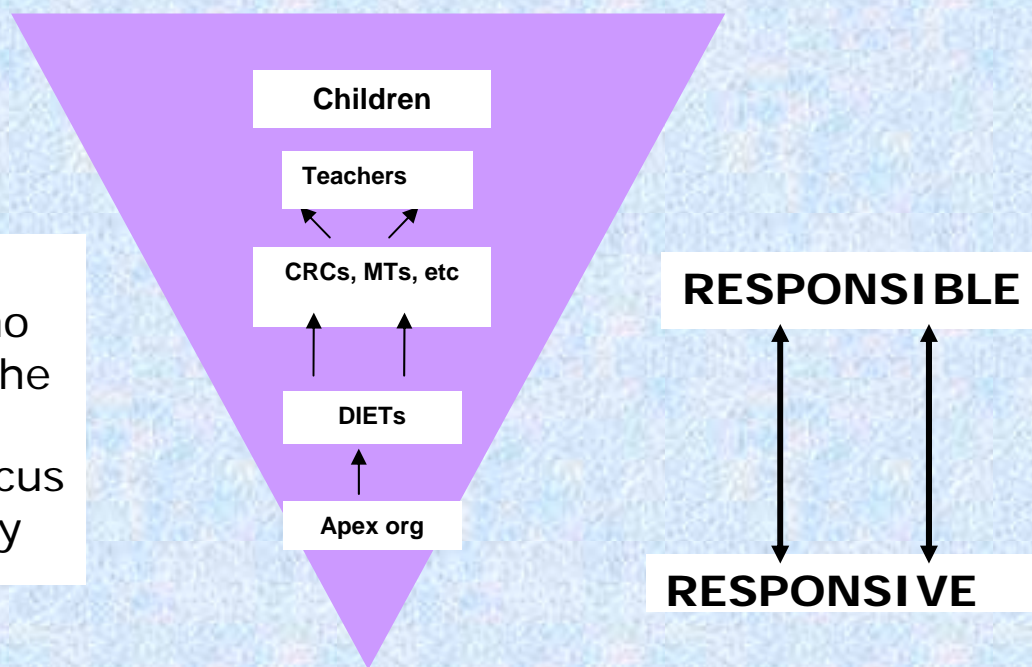
A centralised model

Energy flows remain internal, and are not directed towards children's learning needs. Accountability flows upwards.



A responsive, decentralised model

Energy is put into supporting all those who will have contact with the children so that those children become the focus of organisational energy



Understanding decentralisation through collaborative action research

Acting on the empirical evidence

DIETs needed support in understandings why AR is needed and to develop their capacity to undertake it. AR was a vehicle to help DIET staff develop meaning in relation to their / the institute's roles.

AR processes

- identifying actionable concerns
- relocating accountability
- engaging with the local context
- developing technical capacity
- taking responsibility for acting on findings - ?

Outcomes

Research demystified; technical skills developed with research team support

Emergence of a sense of agency – and concerns about space to act on findings. Decentralisation ?

Does the wider context support development of practitioner autonomy and agency?

Making decentralisation work: teacher educator development

- Being a teacher educator is a specific form of professional expertise, not a transferable job
- What competencies / capacities are needed?
 - Skills, competencies and attitudes expected of educators need to be defined and could be used as recruitment criteria
 - more relevant than subject-based paper qualifications
- Teacher educators have continuing professional development needs; a strategy to respond needed
 - Who is responsible for this?
 - Who has the capacity to respond?
 - How can it be meaningfully done?

Making decentralisation work: integrated teacher development policy

Needed: **Not a target orientation** 'numbers to be covered in x years' but an integrated teacher development policy with a strategic implementation plan for each DIET. Strategies need to focus on:

- generating and sharing *accountability* (teachers – DIET – officers) e.g. involving teachers in their own development, not deciding what should be done to them
- Recognising principles of adult learning: *adults learn not only from being told or by reading, but also by doing, reflecting and testing* –
- Drawing on that understanding, develop approaches that help teachers *engage* with bringing about change *in their own contexts* –ecologically relevant training
- Teachers' *needs are identified* so that developmental activities *engage* them and *training makes a difference*
- *Developing a plan for capacity development of DIETs*, making use of resources within and beyond the District

Making decentralisation work: a sharper focus on roles and relationships

- What roles could and should DIETs play in relation to improving teacher development processes, broader education policy goals
- How do those roles link with those of other agencies?
 - Recognising that decentralisation draws on specific strategic advantages of agencies at different levels
 - Review as a shared undertaking between agencies at all levels, to help refine understandings of the purpose of each, and interrelationships?