
Academic Monitoring Versus Academic Support: Examining the Changing Role of CRC/BRC Personnel in India**Swati Mishra¹ ; Dr. Chandan Shrivastava²****DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23424269>****Review: 11/09/2026****Acceptance: 12/09/2026****Publication: 17/10/2026**

Abstract: Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) constitute an important middle-level institutional architecture within India's school education system. Originally conceived under the District Primary Education Programme and subsequently strengthened through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Samagra Shiksha, these structures were intended to decentralise academic support, facilitate teacher professional development, provide on-site mentoring, and connect schools with district-level academic institutions. In practice, however, the role of Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCCs) and Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCCs) has increasingly involved monitoring, compliance reporting, data collection, programme implementation, and administrative coordination. This article examines the resulting tension between academic monitoring and academic support and explores how the role of BRC/CRC personnel is changing under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Samagra Shiksha, competency-based education, foundational literacy and numeracy, digital monitoring and continuous professional development (CPD). The article adopts a qualitative conceptual-review and policy-document analysis approach. Evidence is drawn from the National Education Policy 2020, Samagra Shiksha implementation documents, UDISE+ data, NCERT guidelines, and empirical literature concerning teacher mentoring and resource-person systems. The analysis suggests that monitoring and support should not be treated as mutually exclusive functions; rather, monitoring becomes educationally productive when it generates reliable evidence that is converted into context-specific feedback, mentoring, demonstration, collaborative problem-solving, and follow-up. Conversely, monitoring becomes counterproductive when it is reduced to inspection, compliance, documentation, or surveillance. The article proposes a Support-Centred Monitoring Model in which BRC/CRC personnel function primarily as instructional mentors, data-informed facilitators, professional-learning leaders, and connectors between schools and teacher-education institutions. The paper concludes with implications for role redesign, capacity building, workload rationalisation, digital systems, accountability structures, and future empirical research.

Keywords: Academic Monitoring, Academic Support, BRC, CRC, Teacher Professional Development

Introduction

India's school education system operates at an extraordinary scale. UDISE+ 2024–25 records approximately 1.47 million schools, 246.93 million enrolments, and 10.12 million teachers across the school education system. The scale and diversity of this system make intermediate institutional structures essential for translating national and state-level educational policies into classroom practice. Among these intermediate structures, Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) have historically occupied a distinctive position. They were designed not simply as administrative offices but as academic resource institutions located relatively close to schools and teachers. Their intended functions included teacher training, school visits, classroom support, development and dissemination of teaching-learning resources, professional interaction

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among teachers, community mobilisation, and academic monitoring. The original rationale was therefore developmental rather than purely supervisory. Government guidelines described BRCs and CRCs as critical units for providing training and on-site support to schools and teachers. Earlier frameworks also expected coordinators to undertake regular school visits and provide academic support based on teachers' needs.

Over time, however, the institutional environment surrounding these personnel has changed. School education has become increasingly data-driven. UDISE+, online monitoring platforms, school inspection applications, learning-outcome assessments, programme dashboards, digital teacher training, foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) initiatives, and multiple centrally and state-sponsored interventions have expanded the range of information that must be collected, interpreted, verified, and reported. This creates a central paradox. The same BRC/CRC functionary who is expected to act as a teacher mentor and academic facilitator may simultaneously be expected to monitor attendance, verify implementation, collect data, submit reports, monitor schemes, document visits, support training, and respond to administrative directions. The issue is not that monitoring is inherently undesirable. Effective education systems require reliable monitoring. The more fundamental question is What is monitoring for? If monitoring is used primarily to identify non-compliance, it can create an inspection-oriented relationship between the resource person and teacher. If monitoring is used to identify instructional problems and initiate professional support, it can become a mechanism for teacher learning and school improvement. This distinction provides the central conceptual problem of the present article the transition from monitoring teachers to supporting teachers through evidence-informed monitoring. The article consequently examines the changing role of BRC/CRC personnel in India and proposes a framework for reconciling accountability with professional support.

Historical and Institutional Context of BRCs and CRCs

The emergence of BRCs and CRCs needs to be understood within India's wider movement towards decentralisation and universal elementary education. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and subsequently Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) created institutional mechanisms closer to schools to compensate for the limitations of highly centralised teacher-support systems. The CRC was conceived as the closest academic support structure to the school. The BRC provided broader block-level coordination, training, resource mobilisation, and support to CRCs. The institutional logic was particularly important because teachers working in geographically dispersed schools often lacked regular access to teacher educators, subject experts, professional learning communities, and demonstration classrooms. BRCs and CRCs were intended to bridge this distance. Government guidelines subsequently emphasised that coordinators should be selected on the basis of experience, qualifications, and aptitude for training and research, while continuous skill enhancement and stronger linkages with DIETs and district resource groups were also recommended.

The architecture therefore contained an important principle Academic Decentralisation. However, decentralisation does not automatically produce professional support. The actual institutional role depends upon how the functionary's time, authority, workload, competencies, reporting relationships, and performance indicators are structured. Research conducted by Azim Premji University in Uttarakhand found that CRCs and BRCs had sometimes functioned more as another administrative layer between schools and district management than as fully realised professional-support institutions. At the same time, the same study demonstrated the potential of cluster-level meetings to become forums for professional exchange and teacher learning. This contradiction remains central to understanding the contemporary role of BRC/CRC personnel.

From Resource Person to Monitoring Functionary: The Changing Role

The role of BRC/CRC personnel has never been exclusively academic. Monitoring has always existed alongside teacher support. What has changed is the relative weight and nature of these functions.

Period/Policy Orientation	Dominant Institutional Emphasis	Typical role of BRC/CRC
DPEP/early decentralisation	Access and teacher support	Resource person, trainer, school visitor
SSA expansion	Quality and universalisation	Training, monitoring, school support, community linkage
RTE implementation	Entitlements and quality	Compliance monitoring plus academic support
Samagra Shiksha	Integrated school education	Monitoring, teacher development, programme implementation
NEP 2020 period	Competency, FLN, CPD, holistic education	Mentor, facilitator, data-informed academic leader
Digital Education Environment	Evidence and real-time reporting	Data collector, monitor, technology-enabled support provider
Emerging role	School improvement and professional learning	Instructional coach, mentor, facilitator, system connector

Table 1-Broad Evolution of BRC/CRC Roles

The changing role is particularly visible in official Samagra Shiksha provisions. The current framework explicitly describes BRCs/URCs and CRCs as academic resource centres and states that coordinators provide in-service training and on-site support. It also calls for improved selection, continuous skill enhancement, stronger linkages with DIETs, and development of resource persons into teacher mentors-cum-educators. The framework further envisages support across the schooling system from pre-primary through Class XII. Thus, at the policy level, there is a clear movement towards mentoring and academic facilitation.

At the operational level, however, monitoring remains significant. Samagra Shiksha provides for regular school visits, monitoring and supervision, reporting through digital systems, and performance-oriented mechanisms for BRCs and CRCs. The NEP 2020 explicitly emphasises continuous professional development and expects teachers to participate in at least 50 hours of CPD annually, including areas such as foundational literacy and numeracy, formative and adaptive assessment, competency-based learning, experiential learning, and related pedagogies. Consequently, the BRC/CRC functionary cannot remain primarily a compliance inspector. The role requires pedagogical competence.

Evidence from the Indian Context

The Indian evidence presents a more complicated picture. A major World Bank study examining teacher mentoring and monitoring systems in Jharkhand surveyed 196 resource persons—164 Cluster Resource Persons and 32 Block Resource Persons—and collected data from approximately 350 primary and upper-primary schools, including teacher, student, classroom observation, and resource-person data. The study reported substantial learning challenges and found that high self-reported effort by resource persons did not necessarily translate into effective teaching activities. It also identified contractual, demographic, qualification, and relational asymmetries as factors affecting mentoring effectiveness.

This finding is particularly important because it challenges a simplistic assumption:

More school visits ≠ Automatically better academic support.

The quality of interaction matters. The study's implications included strengthening the qualifications and training of resource persons, giving greater attention to mentoring, improving independent monitoring, developing better data systems, and building digital competence. The Indian policy system has subsequently moved towards strengthening these capacities. NISHTHA, for example, was designed to build the capacities of teachers, school heads, SCERT/DIET faculty, BRCCs and CRCCs, and was subsequently extended across educational stages and thematic areas.

Reframing the BRC/CRC Role

The role should not move from monitoring to support by eliminating monitoring; it should move from monitoring -as- surveillance to monitoring-for-support.

Traditional Emphasis	Reframed Emphasis
Check whether the teacher complied	Understand the teacher's instructional challenge
Inspect lesson records	Observe teaching-learning processes
Collect data	Interpret data for instructional decisions
Report deficiencies	Develop improvement strategies
Conduct training	Facilitate professional learning
Distribute materials	Help teachers use materials effectively
Visit schools	Build sustained school-based support
Verify programmes	Examine programme implementation and impact
Submit reports	Use evidence for feedback and planning

Table 2- Reframing the BRC/CRC Role

Professional Competencies Required for the New Role

Cluster meetings should provide structured opportunities for teachers to examine classroom problems, discuss student work, share pedagogical strategies, and reflect on the outcomes of instructional interventions. A meeting might focus on a specific issue, such as early reading comprehension, mathematical reasoning, formative assessment, or inclusive classroom practice. Teachers could present evidence of the difficulty, discuss possible explanations, examine alternative approaches, and return at a later meeting to share their experiences. This model would be more consistent with the professional-learning purpose of decentralised academic structures than meetings dominated by announcements and routine administrative instructions. Research on professional learning emphasises the importance of connecting teachers' learning to evidence about students and the instructional practices that shape their learning opportunities (Timperley, 2007)

International research provides a useful conceptual foundation for understanding how BRC/CRC personnel might strengthen their academic role. Kraft et al. (2018) synthesised evidence from 60 causal studies of teacher coaching and reported positive average effects on teachers' instructional practice and student

achievement. However, the authors also found that effects were generally smaller in larger-scale effectiveness studies than in smaller efficacy studies. Their findings therefore support both the potential of coaching and the need to attend to programme design, implementation quality, and institutional conditions. Timperley (2007) similarly emphasised the importance of professional learning that is connected to evidence about teaching and student outcomes. From this perspective, professional development should not be treated as the simple transmission of information from an expert to a teacher. It should involve identifying learning needs, examining evidence, developing new professional knowledge, adapting teaching practices, and assessing whether these changes improve student learning. Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) further argued for reframing teacher professional learning around valued outcomes for diverse learners. This perspective is relevant to BRCs and CRCs because academic support should ultimately be judged by its contribution to the learning experiences of children, including those whose educational needs are not adequately addressed by routine classroom practices. These studies emerge from different educational contexts and should not be assumed to demonstrate identical effects in India. Nevertheless, they provide a defensible theoretical basis for developing a mentoring-oriented model that is responsive to local institutional conditions.

If BRC/CRC personnel are expected to function as academic mentors, their competency profile must change. The requirement for these competencies is particularly important because policy frameworks increasingly expect BRC/CRC personnel to contribute to teacher development, FLN, competency-based education, assessment reform, digital learning, and wider school improvement.

Competency domain	Required capability
Pedagogical	Knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
Mentoring	Coaching, questioning, feedback and reflective dialogue
Assessment	Interpretation of formative and learning-outcome data
Digital	Use of education technology and data systems
Research	Basic action research and evidence interpretation
Leadership	Facilitation of teacher professional communities
Communication	Collaborative rather than inspection-oriented communication
Inclusion	Understanding diverse learners and inclusive pedagogy
Resource development	Adaptation and curation of contextual learning resources
Reflective practice	Self-evaluation and continuous professional learning

Table 3 -Competency Framework for Contemporary BRC/CRC Personnel

Conclusion

BRCs and CRCs occupy a strategically important position in India's school education system because they operate close to teachers, schools, and local educational realities. Their institutional proximity offers opportunities to connect educational policy with classroom practice, identify instructional difficulties, facilitate professional

exchange, and support continuous improvement. However, these opportunities depend on the extent to which their academic mandate is supported by appropriate competencies, organisational arrangements, and professional time. On one side is the accountability state, which requires data, verification, monitoring, reporting, and measurable outcomes. On the other side is the professional learning system, which requires trust, experimentation, reflection, feedback, collaboration, and time. The BRC/CRC structure sits precisely at the intersection of these two systems.

This position creates both a challenge and an opportunity. If the resource person is perceived mainly as an inspector, teachers may become reluctant to reveal genuine instructional difficulties. They may present idealised classroom practices rather than discuss problems. Monitoring can then become less accurate precisely because the relationship has become evaluative. If, however, the resource person is perceived solely as a supportive colleague with no accountability function, important systemic problems may remain unidentified. The solution is therefore not to abolish monitoring. Instead, monitoring and mentoring need to be functionally differentiated while remaining institutionally connected.

For example, high-stakes administrative inspection can be separated from developmental classroom coaching wherever organisational conditions permit. The CRCC can collect evidence about teaching and learning, but the primary response should be professional support rather than immediate punitive action. According to the World Bank report from Jharkhand the resource-person effort alone did not guarantee effective instructional change and highlighted the importance of qualifications, institutional arrangements, relationships, data, and professional capacity. This suggests that the effectiveness of BRC/CRC personnel cannot be judged simply by counting school visits or reports submitted.

Implications for Policy and Practice

1. Redefine the job description: National and state guidelines should clearly distinguish between administrative monitoring, academic monitoring, mentoring, training, and resource development.

2. Reduce redundant reporting: Digital systems should be integrated so that the same information is not collected repeatedly through multiple applications and formats.

3. Establish mentoring competencies: Selection and professional development of BRC/CRC personnel should include coaching, adult learning, classroom observation, assessment literacy, communication, and data interpretation.

4. Strengthen DIET–BRC–CRC linkages

DIETs should not function independently of school-level realities. BRC/CRC personnel can provide DIETs with evidence about actual classroom challenges, while DIETs can provide subject expertise and research support.

5. Develop professional learning communities: Cluster meetings should become structured spaces for collaborative inquiry rather than routine administrative meetings.

6. Use monitoring data for support: very significant monitoring finding should lead to a documented support response where appropriate.

7. Create career pathways: BRC/CRC personnel who develop expertise in mentoring, research, pedagogy, and leadership should have opportunities for professional progression.

8. Evaluate quality rather than volume: Performance appraisal should not depend disproportionately on the number of visits, forms completed, or reports submitted.

BRCs and CRCs occupy a strategically important position in India's school education system. Their proximity to schools gives them a potential advantage that centralised teacher-training institutions cannot easily reproduce: they can observe local realities, understand teacher needs, connect professional learning to classroom practice, and facilitate continuous improvement. However, this potential is weakened when the resource-person role becomes dominated by inspection, compliance, data collection, and administrative reporting. The changing educational environment provides an opportunity to rethink the role.

The academic monitoring should be replaced by academic support. Rather, the two functions should be reconceptualised as parts of a single improvement cycle. Monitor to understand; understand to support; support to improve; improve to learn; and learn to monitor again. The emerging BRC/CRC professional should therefore be neither merely an inspector nor merely a trainer. The desired role is that of a data-informed instructional mentor and local professional-learning leader. Such a transformation would be consistent with the direction of NEP 2020, which places greater emphasis on continuous professional development, competency-based learning, formative assessment, teacher agency, and collaborative professional learning. Samagra Shiksha has already articulated several elements of this direction by calling for improved selection, continuous skill enhancement, stronger DIET linkages, regular school visits, and development of BRC/CRC personnel as teacher mentors-cum-educators.

The emerging BRC/CRC professional should be neither merely an inspector nor simply a trainer delivering predetermined content. The role should combine pedagogical expertise, evidence interpretation, collaborative leadership, and sustained instructional support. Such a reorientation is consistent with the broader emphasis of the National Education Policy 2020 on teacher professional development and improved educational quality (Ministry of Education, 2020). The challenge is now implementation. For BRCs and CRCs to fulfil their original academic purpose in the twenty-first-century Indian school system, monitoring must become a means rather than an end. The ultimate purpose of their institutional presence should remain the same as that of the education system itself: strengthening teaching, enabling teacher learning, and improving meaningful learning experiences and outcomes for every child.

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