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# ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL EFFICIENCY THROUGH CAPACITY-BUILDING: A TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF MINISTERIAL STAFF IN TRIPURA'S PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

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**ABSTRACT**
*This research explores the critical need for structured capacity-building interventions for ministerial staff working within the Rural Development (Panchayat) Department in Tripura. Through a methodical Training Needs Assessment (TNA), the study aims to diagnose performance gaps and propose targeted training programmes to augment organisational efficiency. A mixed-method approach was employed, incorporating structured and semi-structured interviews across seven districts. The study reveals that despite their pivotal administrative role, ministerial staff have largely been deprived of formal skill development opportunities. Key findings highlight issues such as deficient procedural knowledge, lack of technological fluency, ambiguity in job roles, and motivational deficits. The study proposes a three-tiered training module inclusive of foundational, functional, and digital competencies. Statistical and thematic analysis collectively affirm that training initiatives, if contextually designed and regularly implemented, could substantially elevate performance outcomes. This research not only informs administrative reform but also aligns with the decentralisation and digitalisation objectives articulated in India's e-Governance policies.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Capacity Building, Training Needs Assessment, Rural Development, Ministerial Staff, Tripura, Panchayati Raj Institutions*

## INTRODUCTION

Capacity-building through targeted training is a cornerstone of modern public administration, particularly within decentralised governance structures like India's Panchayati Raj system. Effective training fosters not only individual competence but also institutional resilience (Berger, 1993; Sung & Choi, 2014). For ministerial staff—comprising clerical personnel such as Lower Division Clerks, Upper Division Clerks, Typists, and Head Clerks—training assumes even greater importance, given their role in maintaining administrative continuity and supporting policy implementation at the grassroots level.

In the context of Tripura's Rural Development (Panchayat) Department, ministerial staff are stationed across District Panchayat Offices, Zilla Parishads, and block-level institutions, functioning as vital links between community-facing programmes and higher-level bureaucratic mandates. However, over time, the operational landscape has evolved dramatically, with increasing demands for digital record-keeping, procedural compliance, financial accountability, and real-time reporting (Hartoyo, 2017; Elbadri, 2001). Despite these evolving demands, ministerial staff in Tripura have rarely received structured or role-specific training beyond basic induction.

This study undertakes a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) to systematically identify knowledge and skill gaps among these staff members and to design contextually relevant training interventions. The central inquiry revolves around diagnosing areas of deficiency—ranging from file handling and budget preparation to the use of digital tools such as PFMS and HRMS—and evaluating the staff's readiness and willingness to undergo capacity enhancement programmes. This research is situated within the broader policy framework of India's National e-Governance Plan and the Human Resource Development objectives outlined by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

By focusing on Tripura as a case study, this paper seeks to illuminate the structural and operational deficiencies that hamper administrative efficiency in rural governance. It also argues for the institutionalisation of periodic training cycles and the creation of decentralised learning platforms tailored to the evolving roles of clerical personnel. Through this approach, the study aspires to offer policy-relevant insights for sustainable human resource development in the rural public sector.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of literature affirms the pivotal role that Training Needs Assessment (TNA) plays in enhancing organisational effectiveness. Karve and Aggarwal-Gupta (2018) explored TNA in a government regulatory agency and highlighted that younger personnel often lacked functional and managerial acumen, while senior staff were reluctant to share knowledge—a

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dual gap that TNA helped to bridge. Ludwikowska (2018) similarly found a strong correlation between TNA, knowledge transfer, and performance improvement within social service institutions, suggesting that pre-training diagnostics enhance long-term employee efficiency.

Chahal (2013) underscores the significance of development-based training strategies, particularly in sectors characterised by rapid environmental and technological change. Her study in Indian banking institutions indicated that structured training directly contributed to behavioural change and performance enhancement, especially among male employees—a demographic often more available for extended training due to social dynamics.

Sarkar (2015) critiques the ad hoc nature of training selection in many Indian organisations, where training often becomes a compliance measure rather than a genuine developmental opportunity. Her work emphasises the necessity for systematic, competency-based needs assessment that aligns with job functions and performance goals. Daniels (2003) adds to this by proposing that strategic training planning ensures better return on investment (ROI) for public and private institutions alike.

International studies also support these assertions. Elbadri (2001) identified a widespread lack of pre-training diagnostics in Polish organisations, contributing to training inefficacies. In a Malaysian context, Arshad et al. (2015) revealed that companies with formal TNA processes had better employee engagement and higher training ROI. Bucalo (1984) argued for an operational rather than academic approach to TNA, promoting alignment with immediate organisational objectives.

Taken together, these studies provide both the conceptual foundation and empirical validation for undertaking a structured TNA exercise in the RD (Panchayat) Department of Tripura. This study builds upon the aforementioned insights and attempts to localise best practices within the sociopolitical and administrative realities of rural India.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The core objective of this research is to assess the training needs of ministerial staff under the RD (Panchayat) Department in Tripura to design a comprehensive, scalable training framework. The specific objectives are as follows:

1.To identify skill and knowledge gaps among ministerial staff in administrative, technical, and digital domains.
2.To examine the perceptions and preparedness of ministerial staff for capacity-building initiatives.
3.To develop a structured training module tailored to the operational realities of the Panchayati Raj system in Tripura.
4.To recommend policy-level interventions for institutionalising periodic and decentralised training cycles within the department.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design underpinned by a mixed-methods approach to provide both statistical insight and contextual depth. Primary data was collected from 90 ministerial staff members across seven districts in Tripura, selected through purposive and convenience sampling to ensure coverage of diverse geographical and administrative contexts. Data was gathered using a combination of structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Quantitative responses were analysed using frequency distributions and cross-tabulations to determine common patterns in training needs, while qualitative responses underwent thematic coding to extract recurring insights. The methodological triangulation of both data types enhances the reliability of the findings (Chiu et al., 1999).

The scope of the research extends to clerical personnel such as Lower Division Clerks, Upper Division Clerks, Head Clerks, and Typists, who are integral to the administrative workflow in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The data collection process included site visits to Zilla Parishads, Block Development Offices, and Panchayati Raj Training Institutions.

Ethical protocols were adhered to throughout the study. All participants were briefed about the study's purpose and provided informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly maintained.

### Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the assessment of capacity gaps among ministerial staff operating within the Rural Development (Panchayat) Department in Tripura. These staff members form the administrative backbone of local governance, undertaking critical clerical duties such as record maintenance, financial transactions, coordination of government schemes, and management of legal and HR documentation. Given their role in translating policy into action at the grassroots level, any deficiency in their skills or knowledge directly affects service delivery and institutional performance.

By evaluating their current competencies and identifying deficiencies, the study provides a roadmap for designing targeted, job-specific training modules. This research also offers insights into the broader implications of administrative capacity-building,

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thereby contributing to debates on public sector efficiency, decentralisation, and inclusive governance in rural India. The study is especially relevant in light of the Government of India's push toward e-governance and digitisation of rural administration (Gomez & Lorento, 2004).

## DEFINITION OF AREA AND JOB ROLES

The study was conducted in the state of Tripura, covering ministerial staff posted in District Panchayat Offices, Zilla Parishads, and Block Development Offices across seven districts. The scope included employees holding posts such as Lower Division Clerk (LDC), Upper Division Clerk (UDC), Head Clerk, and Bengali Typist. These individuals are responsible for multifaceted clerical functions such as:

- File and record management
- Preparation of service books and official correspondence
- Handling of accounts, billing, and fund allocations under government schemes
- Maintenance of cash books and other financial records
- Processing pension and leave-related documentation
- Ensuring compliance with audit protocols

Despite the essential nature of these duties, many staff members operate without adequate orientation, formal training, or digital literacy. This research thus aims to highlight the pressing need for systemic training interventions to strengthen institutional performance and public service outcomes.

## PROPOSED TRAINING STRATEGY

In order to address the identified skill gaps and knowledge deficiencies among ministerial staff in the RD (Panchayat) Department, a modular training strategy has been formulated. The programme is designed to be both intensive and inclusive, spanning over three days with a blend of theoretical lectures and practical exercises. The training sessions will be hosted at the Panchayati Raj Training Institute, Agartala.

**Duration**: 3 Days
**Timing**: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM
**Methodology**: Classroom lectures, hands-on exercises, group discussions, and mock simulations
**Participants per batch**: 40
**Training Materials**: Manuals on office procedures, software guides, and departmental policies
**Resource Persons**: Panchayat Resource Development Officers (PRDOs), IT specialists, and subject-matter experts
The training will be categorised into three major domains:

1. **Administrative Functioning** – Handling files, service book preparation, legal compliance
2. **Financial Literacy** – Budget preparation, billing procedures, PFMS interface
3. **Digital Competence** – Basic computer operations, use of HRMS, e-procurement systems

### Training Budget Estimation

To ensure cost-effective implementation without compromising quality, a detailed cost estimation has been proposed for a single batch of 40 participants per day.

**Table-1: Budget Estimation**

| Expense Head | Cost per Person (INR) | Total Cost for 40 (INR) |
|---|---|---|
| Breakfast | 45 | 1,800 |
| Tea & Snacks (2 Sessions) | 20 | 800 |
| Lunch | 110 | 4,400 |
| Dinner (if residential) | 120 | 4,800 |
| Training Materials | 100 | 4,000 |
| Stationery & Kit | 60 | 2,400 |
| Resource Person Honorarium | 500/hr × 4 hrs = 2,000 | 8,000 |
| **Total Per Day** | | **26,200** |

Source: Author's Own Work-prepared from self-made questionnaire.

For a full 3-day session and a total of 7 batches (to cover approximately 280 staff), the estimated budget stands at:
**26,200 × 3 days × 7 batches = INR 5,49,600**

This budget ensures basic hospitality, resource materials, expert facilitation, and logistical support, making it viable for integration within departmental training allocations.

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## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Following data collection through interviews and questionnaires with 90 ministerial staff across multiple administrative tiers, recurring patterns were identified that signified distinct performance deficits. These insights were categorised into training and non-training interventions based on root cause assessment.

**Table 2: Categorisation of Performance Gaps and Intervention Types**

| Identified Performance Issue | Suggested Intervention |
|---|---|
| Inadequate file management and documentation skills | Training |
| Poor record-keeping among newly inducted staff | Training |
| Deficient understanding of financial documentation | Training |
| Lack of clarity on service rules and pension-related matters | Training |
| Digital illiteracy among middle-aged staff | Training |
| Unreliable infrastructure (computers, printers, internet) | Non-training |
| Excessive workload and multitasking expectations | Non-training |
| Unclear job roles among junior recruits | Non-training |
| Low motivation and poor morale | Training + Non-training |
| Perceived mismatch between effort and reward | Non-training |

**Source: Author's Own Work-prepared from self-made questionnaire.**

The categorisation aids in streamlining resource allocation for intervention planning. Not all performance issues stem from knowledge gaps—some relate to organisational design and require structural changes.

**Table 3: Thematic Issues Identified from Qualitative Responses**

| Theme | Frequency (Approx. %) | Representative Insight |
|---|---|---|
| Need for practical skill training | 78% | "Theoretical sessions are not enough—we need demos for software and paperwork." |
| Lack of basic digital proficiency | 66% | "We are expected to use HRMS but never trained on it properly." |
| Role ambiguity | 52% | "I joined as a clerk, but I handle 4–5 types of jobs with no clear guidelines." |
| Motivation and recognition issues | 48% | "There's little appreciation even if we go beyond our roles." |
| Infrastructure inadequacies | 61% | "Often we wait to share a computer—sometimes no printer for days." |

**Source: Author's Own Work-prepared from self-made questionnaire.**

This evidence supports the recommendation for differentiated training that includes foundational (orientation), functional (role-specific), and digital (IT and system operations) components.

To further strengthen training design, participants were asked to rank their top five training priorities. The following table consolidates ranked themes based on weighted frequencies.

**Table 4: Staff-Prioritised Training Areas (Weighted Response)**

| Training Domain | Priority Score (/100) |
|---|---|
| File management & documentation | 87 |
| Pension & Leave Rule Procedures | 78 |
| Use of HRMS & Treasury Systems | 84 |
| Audit compliance & budget prep | 74 |
| Computer basics & MS Office | 81 |

Source: Author's Own Work-prepared from self-made questionnaire.

These insights demonstrate a high demand for operational clarity and digital literacy. While foundational knowledge remains vital, digital enablement has emerged as a critical area of focus.

## KEY FINDINGS

The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) yielded several important insights into the professional landscape of ministerial staff within Tripura's RD (Panchayat) Department:

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1. **Lack of Structured Training**: Over 85% of respondents had not undergone any formal job-specific training post-induction. This has led to widespread inconsistencies in administrative procedures.
2. **Knowledge Gaps in Functional Areas**: Critical areas such as pension rules, budgeting formats, PFMS utilisation, and audit compliance were marked as poorly understood by over 70% of respondents.
3. **Digital Divide**: A generational divide exists in digital competency. While younger recruits adapt to software more readily, middle-aged and senior staff often lack foundational ICT skills, especially in using HRMS and e-Governance tools.
4. **Low Role Clarity and Morale**: Newly recruited staff expressed uncertainty about their responsibilities, often requiring regular assistance from seniors. Meanwhile, a lack of recognition and role stagnation led to motivational concerns among experienced personnel.
5. **Infrastructure Limitations**: Respondents from several blocks reported limited access to functioning computers, printers, or stable internet connections—hampering even basic operations.
6. **Overdependence on Senior Staff**: In the absence of standard operating procedures and decentralised training modules, junior staff heavily rely on experienced clerks, leading to inefficiencies and bottlenecks.

**Suggestions**

To address these findings effectively, the following actionable strategies are proposed:

1. **Institutionalise Periodic Training**: Establish a rotating training calendar with annual refresher programmes and onboarding modules for new recruits to ensure knowledge retention and consistent standards.
2. **Adopt a Modular Curriculum**: Segment training into Basic (e.g., service rules, file handling), Functional (e.g., budget preparation, procurement processes), and Digital (e.g., PFMS, HRMS, Microsoft Office) tracks.
3. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure**: Provide functional IT hardware and ensure reliable internet connectivity in all administrative units. Partnering with NIC or state IT departments may offer scalable solutions.
4. **Implement Role Rotation**: Encourage section-wise rotation every two years to develop well-rounded clerical experience and reduce monotony in job roles.
5. **Promote Recognition Mechanisms**: Introduce staff appreciation schemes and encourage peer-led training to foster morale and a culture of ownership.
6. **Bridge Digital Literacy Gaps**: Tailor training formats for different experience levels. For instance, hands-on labs and one-on-one mentoring can supplement classroom sessions for older employees.
7. **Feedback Integration**: Use post-training feedback forms to improve content relevance and delivery quality. Establish a helpdesk or learning portal for post-training queries.

These suggestions are aligned with national goals on e-Governance, digital empowerment, and decentralised administration as envisaged in the Digital India and HRD frameworks (Ministry of Electronics and IT, 2022; Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the urgent necessity for structured capacity-building within the clerical workforce of Tripura's Rural Development (Panchayat) Department. Despite occupying critical positions in administrative and financial governance, ministerial staff continue to face systemic barriers that restrict their performance—ranging from inadequate training to technological constraints and unclear job expectations. Through a methodical Training Needs Assessment, this study has diagnosed specific gaps in file management, digital literacy, procedural awareness, and workplace morale.

The findings suggest that performance inefficiencies are not merely due to individual shortcomings but are deeply rooted in organisational practices and policy neglect. A modular, context-specific training framework, supported by policy-level interventions and adequate infrastructure, is essential to unlock the latent potential of this workforce. Moreover, periodic refresher training, inclusive digital skill-building, and recognition-based motivation mechanisms are critical to ensuring sustainability.

If adopted, the proposed recommendations could not only uplift departmental functionality but also serve as a replicable model for decentralised capacity-building across other Indian states. This aligns with broader governance goals outlined under the Digital India programme and Human Resource Development strategies for public administration.

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