

MEETING THE ECOTOURISM CHALLENGE THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR A BROADER MANDATE: A CASE OF ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Parul Rishi*, Bal Krishna Upadhyay**

Abstract *Organisational structure of any organisation plays an important role in keeping their employee performing. An organisational structure is always designed to meet the mandate of the organisation and the objectives that it is supposed to achieve. Keeping the above in mind, the task of organisational restructuring of EDB included studying the present organisational structure of the EDB and identifying the gaps, and proposing a proper organisational structure for the board along with proposing the roles and responsibilities of the divisions/ departments at EDB. A unique organisational model was used to help EDB structure their enterprise to create accountability for results and an environment for learning. The analysis provided useful implications for making planned congruent changes in structure of the EDB for developing more and more driving forces about ecotourism institution and reducing the strength of restraining forces at organisational, individual as well as at community level, since sustainability of the ecotourism activities are also dependent upon the local people.*

Keywords: *Organisational Restructuring, Organisational Structure, Ecotourism, Organisational Behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

The Ecotourism Challenge

Tourism sector has developed as a major industry in recent times, and there has been an increasing trend to bring more and more new areas under its reach. In recent years, the trends in tourism in India have shown variation in terms of both economic and socio-cultural values. With changing lifestyles and economy, there has been a change in the attitudes and perceptions of people toward travel and tourism along with an increase in environmental awareness and pressure of urbanization. Nature-based tourism or ecotourism is increasing throughout the world. Ecotourism is considered as a “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” (TIES, 1990). Thus, a walk through the forest watching birds and wildlife is not considered as ecotourism unless that particular walk benefits that environment and the local people who live there, raises awareness and funds to help protect the environment and the local resources along with generating some kind of income for local people and motivating people to restrict their activities affecting the ecology of the area.

The co-operation and participation of local community is of great significance to all industries especially tourism industry

since it deals with the people of different regions, languages, cultures etc. Ecotourism also preaches the understanding and respecting various cultures and customs of people living in the area in order to conserve and improve the places where people make their visits (WTTO & IHRA, 1999). It has a vital role to play in sustainable development in India and in creating a framework for the inclusion of the marginalized non-urban communities, excluded from the economic growth currently being witnessed. But it is equally difficult to elicit the encouragement, co-operation and support from the local community in developing ecotourism effectively. The impact of internationalisation, information technology, total quality and diversity has led to a paradigm shift in the field of ecotourism and resource management too. Today forest policies and international forestry scenario has different boundaries requiring new and different behaviour, i.e., shifting from the *Bureaucratic paradigm* to *Participatory paradigm* to be successful in effective management of Natural resources (Parul, 2007). This also requires a shift in attitudes from regulation and control to empowerment of communities, from patronage to people-environment partnership, and from linear government-led organisational structures to alliances with multiple stakeholders. It can be achieved by a well articulated partnership policy that cascades into a viable eco-business planning having clear mission statements and strict monitoring and evaluation system.

* Faculty of HRM, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, India. Email: rishiparul@rediffmail.com

** Faculty of HRM, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, India. Email: bkupadhyay@iifm.ac.in

As a result, the Government of India initiated the 'new ecotourism policy' which deviates from its previous principle of 'for conservation only' and aims at increasing tourism by creating more services and facilities for the visitors to the protected areas. Thus, national parks and sanctuaries have emerged as the favourite destinations for people interested in nature tourism (Subramaniam, 2008).

Structuring the System

In view of the upcoming ecotourism challenge, there is a need for matching the system with an appropriate organisational structure. An organisational structure is always designed to meet the mandate of the organisation and the objectives that it is supposed to achieve. The structuring of jobs in ecotourism needs to be matched by an appropriate design of organisational systems and an appropriate managerial style. The purpose of structure is the division of work among members of the organisation, and the co-ordination of their activities so that they are directed towards the goal and objectives of the organisation (Cross and Laurence, 2002). It is a pattern of relationships among positions in the organisation and among members of the organisation and creates a framework of order and command through which the activities of the organisation can be planned, organised, directed and controlled. It also defines tasks and responsibilities, work roles and relationships, and channels of communication therefore, it is clearly important for any organisation, whatever its size. However, in the smaller organisations, there are likely to be fewer problems of structure, the distribution of tasks, the definition of authority and responsibility, and the relationship between members of the organisation can be established on a personal and informal basis. With increasing size, there is greater need for a carefully designed and purposeful form of a formal organisational structure. There is also need for a continual review of structure to ensure that it is the most appropriate form for the particular organisation, and in line with its growth and development (Audia et al., 2006; Burton et al., 2006).

The objectives of the proposed structure may be the economic and efficient functioning of ecotourism development boards (EDB) and the level of resource utilization, monitoring the activities of EDB, accountability for areas of work undertaken by groups and individual members of EDB, co-ordination of different functional divisions of the EDB and different sites of ecotourism, flexibility in order to respond to future demands and developments, and to adopt to changing environmental influences as well as the social satisfaction of members working in the EDB. These objectives would provide the criteria for structural effectiveness. Structure, though, is not an end in itself, but a mean of improving organisational performance.

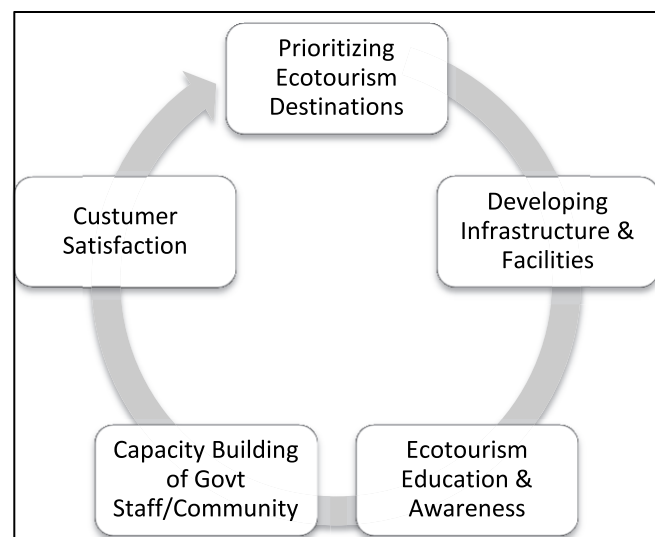
EDB - AN EXISTING APPRAISAL

The existing EDB of the MP forest department has grown over the years in a manner which now requires pre-planned strategy to cope with the role it is expected to play. EDB is facing an unprecedented human resource crisis and it is absolutely essential that a proper re-engineering of the organisational structure is carried out in order to realize the vision of sustainable forest management and the mission of mainstreaming ecotourism in forest management. The overall effectiveness of EDB will be affected both by sound structural design and by the individuals filling the various positions within the structure through appropriate human resource planning. Management will need to acknowledge the existence of the informal organisation which arises from the interactions of people working in EDB. The operation of the organisation and actual working arrangements will be influenced by the style of management, the personalities of members and the informal organisation. These factors may lead to differences between the formal structure of the organisation and what happens in practice.

EDB - TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

Building an organisation involves more than concern for structure, methods of work and technical efficiency. The hallmark of many successful business organisations is the attention given to the human elements, to the development of a culture which helps to create a feeling of belonging, commitment and satisfaction. Structure in EDB must be designed, therefore, so as to maintain the balance of the socio-technical system and the effectiveness of EDB as a whole. Attention must be given to the interactions between both the structural and technological requirements of the

Figure 1: Ecotourism - Roles and Functions Ahead



forestry organisation, social factors and the needs and demands of the human part of the organisation.

Getting to Organisational Restructuring

The in-depth examination of existing organisational structure in view of the functions of the MP ecotourism development board and the proposed general and special tasks suggested by management reveals that the EDB is having limited human resources to meet the present and future challenges. The existing workforce is just sufficient to handle basic administrative, financial, and managerial roles and responsibilities. However, if they want to extend their scope beyond the basic areas of functioning like prioritizing ecotourism destinations and developing their infrastructure and facilities to ecotourism education through public-private partnership (PPP) and capacity building of government staff, community, and other stakeholders, they have to enter into institutional collaboration with partner organisations in government as well as non- governmental sectors to enhance their skill sets in this field. However, the effectiveness of any proposed structure will depend on how effectively organisation is able to

- Assess the impact of internal and external factors causing change on the ecotourism strategy.
- Address the changes in forest acts, bye laws/ regulations, market demands of tourists etc and at the same time committed to the ecotourism policy.
- Determine the impact of organisational restructuring on EDB. This will include the impact of process

changes on existing roles and responsibilities of staff and at the same time define the ‘gaps’ in existing roles which will make any structural changes effective.

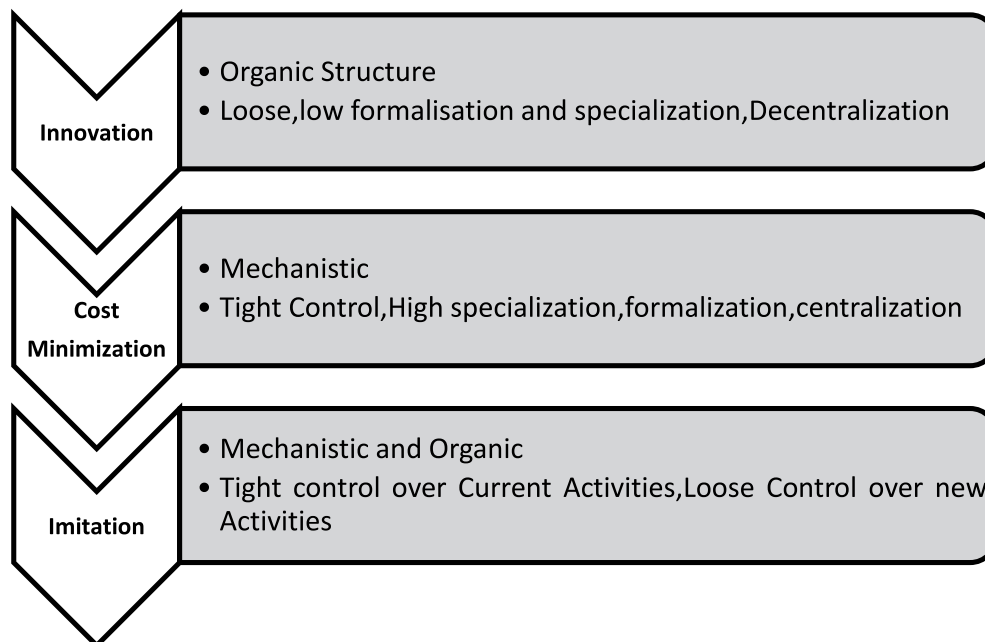
- Design/ align roles to support the changes in the structure of EDB.
- Develop and execute an organisational change management plan to address and define the drivers of any structural change, as well as the impact on the ecotourism options.
- Understand the cost of organisational restructuring.

Balancing Creativity and Efficiency

Mechanistic vs. Organic Designs: Any structural change is closely linked to in built organisational designs. If the coordination between the two lacks, the efficacy of structural change cannot be guaranteed. Organic designs facilitate flexibility, interaction among members, and creativity but they tend to be inefficient. Mechanistic structures, in contrast, are efficiency machines. They can provide standardized goods and services at lower costs than their organic counterparts. One of their major drawbacks, however, is that they stifle creativity. There are three major strategies in every organisation as narrated in the following model:

Organic structures increase cohesiveness among members and more closely align their authority with the responsibility for completion of a particular assignment (Cape, 2002; Young, 2010). To maximize employee performance and satisfaction, individual differences should be taken into

Figure 2: Organisational Strategies in Line with Structure



account. Individuals with a high degree of bureaucratic orientation tend to place a heavy reliance on higher authority, prefer formalized and specific rules, and prefer formal relationships with others on the job. These people are better suited to mechanistic structures. Those individuals with a low degree of bureaucratic orientation would be better suited to organic structures.

Following model may help to decide upon the organisational design in line with different organisational dimensions:

Table 1: Mechanistic vs. Organic Structure

Dimension	Structure	
	Mechanistic	Organic
Stability	Change Unlikely	Change likely
Specialization	Many Specialists	Many Generalists
Formal Rules	Rigid Rules	Considerable Flexibility
Authority	Centralized in a few top people	Decentralized

As per the vision and mission of EDB, and their roles and functions ahead, EDB is proposed to move from mechanistic to organic design of functioning in order to give space to flexibility of operation, accommodate changing ecotourism/forest policy, expanding roles with stakeholders' participation, educational and awareness oriented mandate as well as demands of the tourists for better facilities and infrastructure (Figure 3).

A Need for Structural and Process Oriented Changes

To achieve the multilevel interface of the EDB with local people and the visitors for ecotourism management, there seems to be a need for change in top down organisational structure of forest department as well as the attitudes, perceptions and leadership styles of top authorities to fit

in the proposed role model based on vision and mission of EDB. There is a need for delegation of authority on one hand and developing positive attitude on the other.

Structural and Process Oriented Constraints

Figure 4 depicts some of the functional challenges of operation of EDB as a spearhead developmental organisation, which might constraint their efficacy to a considerable extent.

As there is a massive investment in ecotourism sector, it is imperative that natural resources are managed efficiently and effectively in terms of economic returns, social good, quality of service and technological advances. The achievement of above requires professionalism on part of the EDB. Professionalization of management especially in forestry organisation has some critical process issues like:

- Need for positive work attitudes in favour of professionalism.
- Harmony between preaching and practice.
- Willingness on the part of employees to accept and exercise the delegated authority.
- Leadership-style–matching with the policy demands and level of motivation of people being led.
- Optimal time-lag between conceptualization and implementation.
- Process of involvement of people from the conceptualization stage to motivate people and generate positive attitudes right from the implementation stage of any new ecotourism policy.

The above process oriented constraints clearly show that professionalism is a very challenging and demanding task especially when one has to function within the limitations of government/ semi-government system which has limited autonomy, motivation, synergic work culture and is marked with the psyche following age old operational styles and

Figure 3: From Mechanistic to Organic Design Option

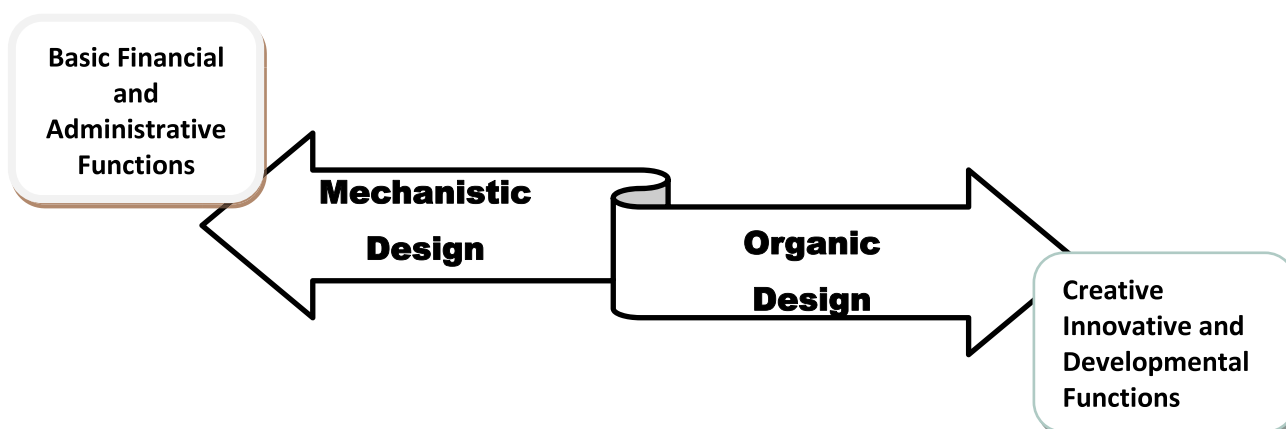
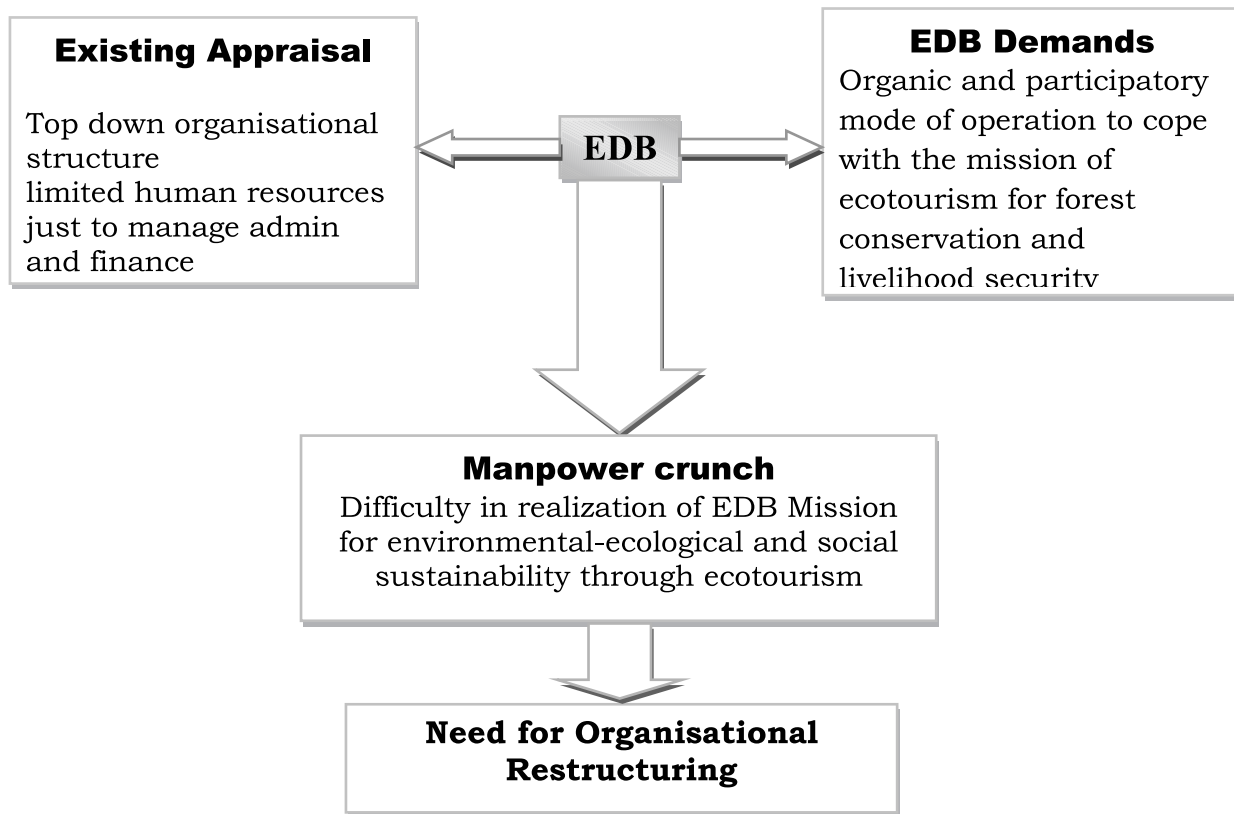


Figure 4: Functional Challenges to EDB



Source: Adapted from Parul, 2007.

processes. The case of MP EDB is not different than above. The job of the board is to manage the entire ecotourism effort in the state. To do so, it needs a well placed system for delivering the services as reflected in the vision and objectives of the board.

PROPOSED DEPARTMENTALIZATION

In the line of the ecotourism activities to be taken up by the board, there is a need for comprehensive structural modification incorporating innovation oriented strategy. The key functional areas were proposed as personnel and accounts, education research and training, marketing and business development, and site management.

Personnel and Accounts

Personnel and Accounts department will be performing both managerial and financial operative functions of management by providing assistance to top management including the CEO in deciding and framing the primary policies of the concern. It will also act as advisor to the CEO and line managers as a staff specialist in dealing with various issues

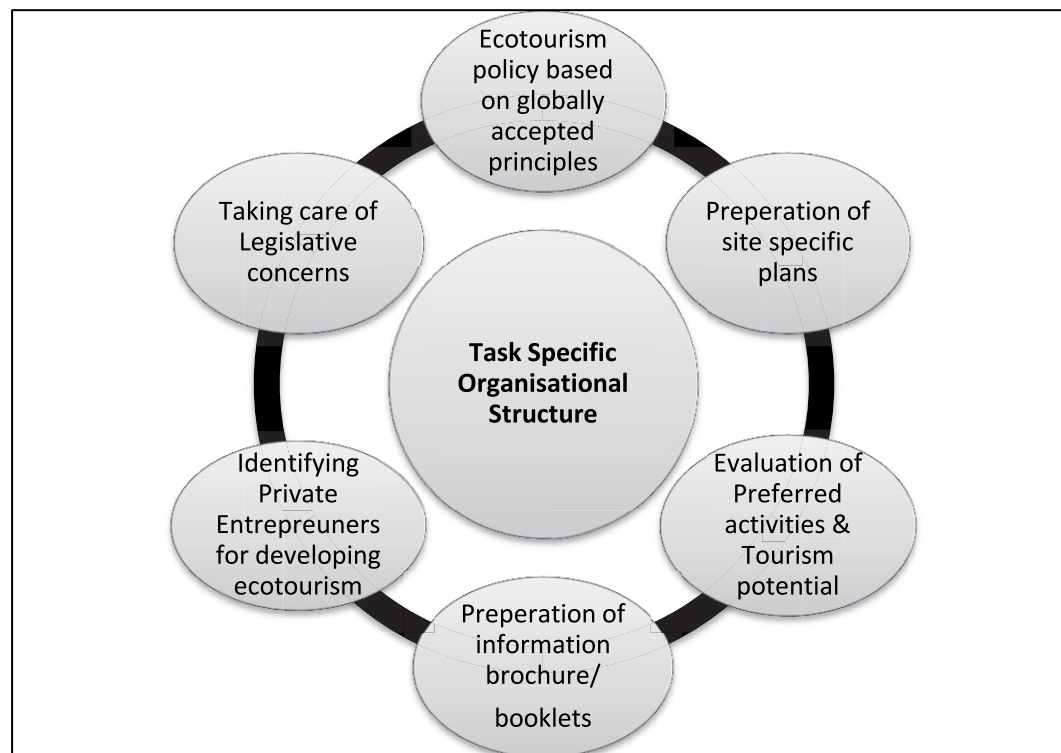
related to personnel and financial matters of the board. It will also work closely with various departments towards formulating and adaptation of various policies related to conservation and protection of natural resources, wildlife, local people interests etc.

The department is proposed to be in-charge of the entire personnel and financial issues of the board and coordinating the activities related to manpower planning, future recruitment and selection, training and development, finance and accounts management and disbursement as mentioned above.

Marketing and Business Development

It will be facilitating development of marketing goals and strategy, building brand value, researching the prospective consumers for the board, managing customer relations and organizing awareness campaign. This department may also be involved in researching customers' habits and identifying customers' needs and conducting the advertising campaign based on that research. Later on, it may analyse customers' reaction to advertising and get feedback from target audience. Based on the results of campaign it may suggest strategies so as to bring the tourists to the ecotourism sites, tracking

Figure 5: Future Roadmap of EDB



competitors' activity, if any and responsible for all internal and external fundraising for and by the Board.

As one of the main ecotourism promoters of the country, the MP EDB may like to get into partnership with all those people with a spirit of generosity and commitment towards development and conservation of the ecological diversity of the country and the state. The department will closely follow and identify prospective people who can help the board achieve its strategic goal.

Research, Development and Project Management

This department is proposed to improve existing site, create new and better sites, improve service delivery methods and create effective processes in order to reduce costs, increase profitability and remain ahead of the present and future competition. In the line with the activities of the MP EDB, the department will be responsible for the identification of potential ecotourism sites and development and maintenance of the working and future sites. More so, suggesting the designs of the of the infrastructure for the ecotourism sites, will lend its expertise into development of appropriate interpretation centres, and other activities as mentioned in the by-laws of the board and as and when activities awarded by the CEO/GM.

The department will also develop project proposals and will provide coaching and mentoring to project staff, facilitate ongoing project planning sessions and ensure proper tracking and monitoring of project data and implementation of the same. It will also help in planning resources for the Board's activities and will work closely with the Marketing and Advertising department to study consumer trends by surveying and researching consumer demands, and service delivery methods. The marketing department will gather all the data, and make this information available to the department, which will take action in response to the findings and proceed to keep the board on top of current market needs.

Public Relations and Advertising

The public relations and advertising department is proposed to work towards promoting the ecotourism sites and the activities of the board to a larger mass through its strategic advertisements based on the results of the marketing and the R&D department. It will be responsible for press relations by creating and placing news worthy information in the news media to attract attention to people. It will also be required to publicize specific services rendered by the board at its various ecotourism sites. Further, building and maintaining national, international or local community relations along

with lobbying with legislators and government officials to influence legislation and regulation in the greater interest of the local people, the nature and the board will also be one part of its function. The department will work closely in guidance with the senior management to maintain public relations with donors of members of various civil societies and non-profit organisations to gain financial or volunteer support.

Ecotourism Site Management

Site management and specially managing ecotourism sites, involves a complexity of tasks. The position is like a touch pad stimulating the satisfaction of visitor's expectations. This department will be required to coordinate with all the functional departments of the MP EDB and will be directly related to all happenings at respective ecotourism sites. The ecotourism site manager will take care of asset management, setting appropriate limits of use, managing visitor risk and providing the appropriate level of access including incorporation of universal access requirements, if any. Book keeping and record management will be the main focus of the department with taking feedback of the visitors that will facilitate further development of the sites. Further, the responsibility of the department will also include assessing stakeholder benefits and challenges of public participation, addressing policy goals and management objectives, carrying capacity building exercises and related planning issues at site level. Assisting the board in developing strategic solutions to tourism management problems including promotion of ecotourism sites will also be required of it. The department will take the responsibility for ensuring that ecotourism site management are taken up as per the directives of the board in accordance to prevailing forest policies.

EDB - TOWARDS LEARNING ORGANISATION

Traditional organisation punishes mistakes, operates traditional working practices, sends employees on training courses and plays safe. In such organisations, managers monitor and supervise staff, discourage experimentation, command and control management and discourage staff suggestions. All the decisions are based on management 'hunches'. Work is within departmental boundaries which discourages questioning from work-force.

On the other hand, *learning organisation* learns from mistakes, adapts working practices, trains employees and takes risks (Griggs, 2002). Managers coach and develop staff, encourage experimentation, devolution of power, reviews routine activities, and encourage staff suggestions. All the decisions are based on empirical data and work is across departmental boundaries. It also encourages

questioning from work-force. Malhotra (1996) explains that a key ingredient of the learning organisation is in how organisations process their managerial experiences. Learning organisations/ managers learn from their experiences rather than being bound by their past experiences. Management practices encourage, recognize, and reward openness, systemic thinking, creativity, a sense of efficacy, and empathy.

Looking at the work profile and future mandate of EDB, it has been proposed to move towards learning organisation crossing the limiting bureaucratic boundaries to be effective. In this regard, there is a need for development of cross functional specializations with an overall coordination among them through effective human resource planning. Major options for meeting the ecotourism challenges include institutional collaboration with other Govt/ non-govt organisations, improving the skill set of existing staff, outsourcing for infrastructure and facilities, and recruitment for professional ecotourism site management.

WAYS AHEAD

The analysis provides useful implications for making planned congruent changes in structure for developing more and more driving forces about ecotourism institution and reducing the strength of restraining forces at organisational, individual as well as at community level, since sustainability of the ecotourism activities are also dependent upon the local people. Furthermore, there seems to be the need for a formal organisational structure so as to introduce various structural and cultural changes in the existing body which are in line with recent ecotourism/ forest policies and principles of sustainable forest management.

Managing various forest policy changes and building capacities for the specialized ecotourism activities requires commitment and sustained efforts through pragmatic HRD plans and their systematic implementation at every stage. This can be achieved through institutional collaboration with government/ non-government and other sectoral organisations exhibiting expertise in natural resource and ecotourism research and training activities.

It can be made possible only by following the specialist rather than generalist approach and retaining the officers on the same posting for a substantial time so that they can contribute the learning from their specialised trainings and experiences to build an institution.

Incorporation of the proposed structure and design as the process may synchronize the broader mandate of MoEF with state forest departments by creating an effective balancing of organisational mandate and individual needs and interests of all stakeholders. Development of well-knit and approachable system is also desirable in this regard involving participation

of community representatives, local non-government organisational representatives and forest personnel at large, to develop an effective ecotourism mandate that is directed towards protection and conservation and creating awareness about maintaining ecological balance besides generating livelihood options for local communities.

Creating a suitable climate and culture for sustainable organisational development will be the next task for EDB and the board is having substantial potential in this regard with the support of its collaborating organisations. The establishment of the EDB has created a strong likelihood that incorporation of above functional/process in the EDB will continue to further improve the effectiveness and acceptability of ecotourism activities which may ultimately lead to the accomplishment of common goal of stabilising forest ecosystems through collaborative effort. Only then the intended results in the form of high individual and organisational effectiveness can be obtained.

REFERENCES

- Audia, P. G., Freeman, J. H. and Reynolds, P. D. (2006). Organizational foundings in community context: Instruments manufacturers and their interrelationship with other organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(3), 381-419..
- Burton, R.M., Bo Eriksen, Håkonsson, D.D., and Snow, C.C. (eds.) (2006). *Organizational Design: The Evolving State-of-the-Art*. New York: Springer.
- Cape, G. (2002). *Growth, Change and Organizational Structure: The Evolving Relationship between Form and Function*". McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
- Cross, R. and Laurence, P. (2002). The people who make organizations Go - or Stop. *Harvard Business Review*, 104-111.
- Foxall, C. (1986). Cognitive style and consumer innovativeness. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 4, 26-46.
- Griggs, H.E. (2002). *Organisational Restructuring – the case of learning organisation: Contradiction or Necessity?*. Paper presented in the 3rd European Conference on Organisational Knowledge, Learning and Capabilities, Athens, Greece.
- Komin, S. (1999). The thai concept of effective leadership. *Management and Culture Values* [eds], Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.
- Malhotra, Y. (1996). Organizational learning and LO: an overview. Retrieved from <http://www.kmbook.com/orgl-rng.html>.
- Rishi, P. (2007). Strategic developmental organisations and bureaucratic psyche: A need for creating participative culture. *Management and Labour Studies*, 32 (1), 53-66.
- Subramaniam, P. (2008). Outlook for ecotourism in India. *In International Forestry Review*, 10 (2), 245-255.
- The International Ecotourism Society (1990). What is Ecotourism?" Retrieved from http://www.ecotourism.org/site/c.orLQKXPCLmF/b.483530_3/k.BEB9/What_is_Ecotourism__The_International_Ecotourism_Society.htm.
- World Travel and Tourism Organization and International Hotel and Restaurant Association (1999). Tourism and sustainable development: the global importance of tourism (Background Paper no 1). *Commission on Sustainable Development* (7th Session). New York.
- Young, R. A. (2010). Discussion of- Flattening the organization: The effect of organizational reporting structure on budgeting effectiveness. *Review of Accounting Studies* 15(3), 537-544.