

NEWSLETTER

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Community Participation in School Management

As all member institutions are aware, the Third Annual Meeting of the Network held at NIE, Colombo, Sri Lanka in December 1998 suggested that the ANTRIEP should initiate a collaborative project in the area of improving school management. As per the request, the IIEP, Paris in consultation with the Focal Point prepared a draft proposal and sent it to member institutions for their comments. I am happy to inform the readers that we received a number of valuable comments.

Based on the comments, the proposal was revised and now we are seeking funding support from various agencies to implement the project activities. A brief write-up on the project is included in this issue of the Newsletter as Box item (see p18).

Based on the interest shown by the member institutions in the Third Meeting, to host the next meeting of the Network, IIEP, Paris contacted SIHRD, Shanghai, China to finalise the venue and date for the next meeting. We are happy to inform you that now it is finalised to organise the next meeting in September, 2000 in Shanghai, China. The box item on the ANTRIEP proposal contains information on this.

As suggested in the Third Meeting, the present issue of the Newsletter focuses on 'Community Participation in School Management'. We had requested the member institutions to contribute articles on the theme based on their experiences in the respective countries. The responses have been prompt and positive. We have received articles from BRAC (Bangladesh), KEDI (Korea), NIE (Sri Lanka), CERID (Nepal) and NIEPA (India).

The paper from Bangladesh highlights that communities play an important role in location of and provisions in schools, recruitment of teachers and identification of students in BRAC Education Programmes. BRAC has succeeded in developing a partnership with the community to implement its programmes.

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The article on Nepal elaborates on development of community participation in the form of School Management Committees. It highlights the dwindling role of community and parents in school management. The paper suggests some measures for strengthening the community participation in school management.

The paper on India discusses several initiatives to promote community participation in school management. The paper presents some of the recent innovative programmes in which participation of communities has helped in improving the school management.

In Korea, School Management Committees were established in all the schools in 1995 to ensure school autonomy and to improve school effectiveness. The paper discusses the composition, role and functions of the committees. It suggests a few measures to improve effective functioning of the Committees.

The paper on Sri Lanka describes different strategies adopted for community participation. The

School Development Boards failed to be effective and were abolished. The recent innovative educational projects and School Based Management System have special measures for improving Community Participation.

The papers indicate that all the countries seem to have recognised the importance of Community Participation for improving the performance of schools and have also initiated different strategies. However, the extent of community participation in school management, in general, remains weak in most of the countries. The innovative projects show some scope for better participation of the community in decision making process.

We continue to receive encouraging responses to the Newsletter from various individuals and institutions. We express our gratitude to the contributors to this issue of the Newsletter and to all the readers for their encouragement.

We wish Very Prosperous and Happy New Millennium to all our member institutions and readers.

Community Participation in Improving Non-Formal Primary Education in Bangladesh: A BRAC Experience

The Context

Illiteracy in Bangladesh is widespread. The school performance in rural Bangladesh is poor: about one-third of the poorest children never attend school, and less than half of the children who enter primary school, pass through the system uninterrupted. Despite a 51 per cent literacy rate, Bangladesh spends only about 2 per cent of its GNP on education, compared to an average of 3.2 per cent for other low income countries and 6 per cent for high income countries. Due to socio-economic and cultural factors, along with poor educational management, millions of children in Bangladesh are left out

of school. Educating all children of Bangladesh is an immense task, but one that is crucial to the development of the country.

To enable the under-served children to attain basic education and literacy, BRAC initiated the Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programme in 1985 with 22 schools where parental and community participation was taken up as one of the guiding principles. Over the last 15 years, the number of schools has increased to over 34,000 with over 1.1 million students - a number that testifies the success of the programme.

The BRAC School Model

BRAC has developed two different school models directed at two different age groups. The NFPE is a four-year schooling system for children who are 8-10 years old, and who have never attended a school or have dropped out in the first grade. The aim of NFPE schools is to provide primary education with the hope of bringing back the children to the formal school system. The Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) is another model for children aged 11-14 years. The BEOC school system is of three years duration but it covers five academic years of curriculum. This is possible since the students are older and are more able to grasp the material. The BEOC model is designed to provide basic education to students who have already crossed the age for enrolment in primary schools. The basic difference between the NFPE and BEOC models is that the BEOC curriculum contains more 'life skills', including awareness on health, nutrition and some other social issues. Seventy percent of the students in BRAC schools are girls, 97 per cent of the teachers are women and the schools are convenient in timing and distance. The schools have no fees and all learning materials for the students are provided by BRAC.

Community Participation in Education

The effectiveness of an educational system depends on effective delivery system and creation of demand for education within the society. The effectiveness and demand in turn are largely dependent on the school and parent/community relationship. Where schools are closer to the parents and the community, the parents seem to be more responsive about sending their children to school. When the parents are more responsive in terms of their children's education, the delivery systems automatically improve to a certain level. Moreover, active community participation in planning and managing basic education activities infuse vitality and spirit into the educational efforts and unleash the enthusiasm and energy of people.

The nature and dimension of this community participation in improving educational management vary widely from country to country and depend on respective socio-economic and cultural variations. For example, in England, the idea of community partici-

pation has been changing over time, depending on the government's priority and commitment to education. In Bangladesh, the school management committee and the parents are officially responsible for sending all the school-aged children to primary schools, but the schools are under no legal obligation to obey the community directives in improving the quality of education. This parental and community support is essential for effective implementation and management of education, particularly in the rural areas where the problems grappling with the quality of education are mainly socio-economic.

There is a wide range of views about the responsibility of the community regarding educational management. In the recent past, some education specialists have accentuated the role of parents in classroom teaching process as a help to the teacher. In some developing countries, this parental and community help has been able in developing skills among the learners with the assistance of professionals of that community. Here parents and community participation in education can be viewed as a partnership between education provider and the customer. This partnership is helpful from both instructional and management point of view.

Depending on these ideas, community participation can take various forms. The parents and community members can encourage all potential learners to participate in learning activities. The community organisation can ensure effective school functioning, regular attendance of teachers and students and so on. The parents and community can also help identify people in the community to take up part-time teaching assignments in non-formal schools and encourage them to perform better. At the same time, they can help define learning needs in relation to developmental needs and prospects of the locality.

Community Involvement in BRAC Schools

Most studies point to poverty as the main reason for children not enrolling in, or parents withdrawing them prematurely from school. There is also a wide range of gender disparity in enrolment, retention, absenteeism, repetition, academic and educational attainments. The problem of better educational management, therefore, cannot be solved

solely by creating some more new schools or by improving delivery system. Rather, parents ought to be given the opportunity for involvement in their children's education, and their views given consideration on what is to be taught, and how to encourage local contributions of ideas, resources, and management. Keeping this in mind, BRAC has devised its education programme with enough scope for parental and community involvement.

Community participation in BRAC schools has a feature that differs from formal primary school system. Each school has a management committee consisting of four parents, a community leader and the teacher, who are together responsible for smooth running of the school. This school management committee represents the community and meets whenever necessary. On the other hand, parents' meetings are held once a month in each school which are meant to encourage the guardians to play an important role in the education process. To understand the significance and importance of parental and community participation in BRAC schools, it is necessary to comprehend how their involvement is indispensable in the programme. Parents and the community people perform the following special tasks related to the school improvement process.

a) Students Selection

The NFPE programme targets the rural children most likely to be left out or to have dropped out of formal primary schools. Selection of eligible children according to age, sex and literacy status is a complex and delicate matter to deal with by the NFPE programme. Due to better performance and flexible implementation policy, BRAC schools are gaining popularity in rural Bangladesh. Therefore, many well-off households are also getting interested to enrol their children in NFPE schools, which creates some problems in some areas in selecting learners. Some parents also try to enrol their primary school aged children (5-7 years) in these schools by concealing their real age. There are some extreme cases where the parents purposely do not send their children to formal schools so that they may become eligible for next cycle of BRAC schools. Parents are also interested in enrolling their irregular and inattentive children in the NFPE schools who are already continuing their education

in formal primary schools. All these issues regarding student selection are dealt with by prospective parents and the community at the beginning of the programme. It is impossible for any BRAC staff to resolve all these issues without the help of local community.

b) Teacher Selection

Attitude of teachers of BRAC schools is another important factor in effective implementation of the programme. Teaching in BRAC schools is not well paid. It is rather a 'para profession' where the sense of responsibility in educating rural poor children is felt as a social responsibility. Therefore, in selecting teachers, parents and the community prefer the kind of person who they think would be more caring for their children's schooling and with whom no class conflict would arise between the parents and the teacher.

c) School Room Selection

School room selection is an important issue in NFPE programme. It was found in the early stages of the programme that acceptance of a house from a wealthier household tended to increase the number of non-target students from better-off households. To serve the poorest families' educational needs, the programme now prefers houses from the poorest people. The parents and the community make an important decision as to which room will be most suitable, considering physical facilities and distance.

d) Vacation and School Time Fixation

As per the needs of the society, BRAC designs its curriculum and administers it according to the convenience of rural poor children. In doing so, BRAC adopts a short class duration and flexible school hours depending on the students' involvement in different economic and household activities. As BRAC is determined not to subjugate the total contact hour to the concise class timing, so it proscribes long vacations and encourages parents and community members to fix short vacations at their earliest convenience.

e) Mat Replacement

In BRAC schools, there are no benches for students to sit on. Rather they squat on the unfurled mats on the ground to make the class more com-

municative, participatory and effective. BRAC supplies the mats for the first time and exhorts the community to replace it whenever they wear out. This is the only pecuniary decision the community has to make and contribute towards that.

f) School Supervision

The parents and community have been ascribed with some responsibilities to make the schools transparent and accountable to the community for creating a congenial school environment. BRAC schools are usually situated within that part of the village where most of the students reside. Therefore, it is expected that the parents and the community play an important role in supervising the opening and closing hours of the school, attendance of the teachers and students, cleanliness of the school premises and removal of the onlookers.

g) Conflict Resolution

In some places, BRAC schools and parents have to face some obstacles from the wider community. For example, in many places, religious fundamentalists brand BRAC schools as anti-Islamic as these introduce some such cultural activities as singing, dancing, clapping, physical exercise, and others to make schools attractive to children. In some cases, these religious extremists who spread rumours blaming NFPE schools for converting the poor children into Christianity had burnt some of the schools. To protect the schools from this type of social problem it is necessary to involve the community and the parents in the school management and implementation process so that they can clearly understand what is being taught and how, and the significance of introducing such activities.

h) Attendance in the Monthly Meeting

Parents' meetings are held once a month in each school which are meant to encourage the guardians to play an important part in the education process. Constant reminders are needed to promote the view amongst community members that the education of their children has benefits for themselves and for their communities. In the meetings, the parents and teachers discuss children's progress, attendance, cleanliness and hygiene, the responsibility of parents towards their children, and other social problems requiring parental attention. Through all these

activities, parents and the community get involved in BRAC school management process and ensure quality education to outreach poor children of Bangladesh.

Community Participation and Improved Educational Management: Some Empirical Evidences

Parental and community participation is a social aspect of education. It plays an important role in effective implementation of BRAC's NFPE programme where effectiveness lies in enrolment, retention, attendance, academic and other educational achievements. A recent study on parental and community participation and effective implementation of BRAC schools reveals a positive correlation between community participation and effective running of the school. The school which enjoys the highest degree of parental and community participation in management-related activities performs better in selecting learners, reducing drop-outs, ensuring attendance of learners and teachers, and enhancing academic achievement. Many other studies had looked into the matter and came up with the evidence that vouches the idea of community participation and improved educational management. There is also ample evidence that corroborates higher basic competency of BRAC students compared to the students of other government or non-government managed primary schools. Strong parental and community involvement in education policy can potentiate a sound school environment to ensure children's higher educational attainments.

Epilogue

This discussion reveals that community participation plays an important role in effective implementation of BRAC's education programme. The nature and dimension of this participation are changed over time depending on the intent, commitment, and flexibility of the programme and the needs of the community. As a learning organisation, BRAC is experimenting with various approaches in educating the poor children. In the light of the experiences, BRAC has made necessary changes in the curriculum and management process, evaluating the local resources and socio-economic condition of the populace. BRAC is constantly trying to identify new areas of community participation in achieving better management capability to reach the outreach

poor children and improving quality of education.

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School-Community Relations : Some Facts About Sri Lanka

The Early Times

The source of patronage and help for learning in the early years of the history of Sri Lanka was the king. It was he who bestowed lands and resources on the monasteries and fostered and cherished religion and education. However, when the western powers arrived in Ceylon, royal patronage ceased and the government and private agencies substituted the king.

From the latter years of the Nineteenth Century, however, with the expansion of public education, building up of schools was encouraged. At first, it was the private agencies who promoted the education of particular groups that they were interested in. Individuals were also encouraged to donate land, buildings, or money for schools and religious institutions.

At the turn of the century, the government tried to enlist the support of the local bodies through legislation. District School Committees were set up on which the local bodies had representation to make provision for education within the areas under their control. But the support hoped for was not realised. Local authorities, however, were apparently not in a position to help the Central Government in other ways than by serving on these committees.

Since independence, with the formation of Rural Development Societies under officials appointed by the Government (the Rural Development Officers), the people at large have been brought into closer touch with the needs of the various districts to which they belong. This had had a direct bearing on education in rural areas, for through the efforts of the Rural Development Societies amenities like playing fields, games materials, minor repairs to school buildings, and even the school buildings themselves have been constructed and handed over to the Gov-

Old Boys' Associations

In the middle of the century in the more prestigious schools more and more Old Boys' Associations came into being. These consisted of those who had received their education in these schools and felt that the welfare and well-being of their alma mater should be fostered and cherished. Such schools had built up traditions that seemed to belong to a number of social groups and these groups tended to band together to help the schools.

Parent-Teacher Associations

One important aspect of the community support for education was the constitution of the Parent-Teacher Associations in most of the well established schools. Most parents have realised that education of their children could not be confined to the school environment alone, and that life at home had an abiding influence on the education at school. Hence, the co-operation of the school and home in the all-around education of their children was fully recognised by many enlightened parents.

School Development Boards

School Development Boards (SDBs) were established by a Parliament Act in February 1993. The Boards were to have twelve members. Their composition was to be as follows:

- (a) The principal (Chairman);
- (b) The deputy principal;
- (c) Three teachers (elected by secret ballot by the teachers of the school – in a school where the number of teachers are less than three, the rest may be elected from among the parents, pupils, past pupils or well-wishers);

- (d) Three parents of pupils presently studying in the school (elected by secret ballot by the parents at a meeting of such parents);
- (e) Three past pupils of the school (elected by secret ballot at a general meeting of the past pupils association or when such an association is not there, elected by secret ballot at a meeting of the past pupils called by the principal for this purpose); and
- (f) A person elected by the members of the Board to represent the well-wishers.

The members of parliament, provincial councils, local authorities and contractors registered in the MEHE or in the provincial education ministries to undertake contracts for buildings or supply of equipment were disqualified from being elected or nominated. Even the parents, spouses, brothers and sisters of such contractors were disqualified from being elected or nominated to the SDBs.

The Boards were to meet at least once in two months and the quorum for a meeting was seven. The functions of the Boards were to advise and assist the principal in the following areas:

- To assess and assist in the current needs and performance of the school, to recommend relevant improvements to academic curricula and modes of teaching to the National Institute of Education, and to promote greater collaboration among parents, teachers and students of the school;
- To promote sports and recreational, literary, aesthetic, social, vocational and other extra-curricular activities in the school;
- To promote cultural, religious and moral activities in the school;
- To assist in the development and maintenance of the infrastructure of the school;
- To assist in the improvement and expansion of facilities of the school, with regard to libraries, educational equipment and other aids to learning;
- To ascertain requirements of the school for textbooks, mid-day meal stamps, student uniforms and to effect the distribution thereof;

- To foster and strengthen the welfare activities of the school community, with a view to preserving its identity and traditions;
- To interact productively with the media so as to engender a cohesive relationship between the school on the one hand and the community and the religious institutions on the other;
- To assist in the maximum utilisation by the school, of state allocations and contributions from the community, and take up necessary steps for the proper disbursement thereof; and
- Assist in the development of the personality of the pupils of the school with a view to inculcating in them, a spirit of caring for, and sharing with the members of the school community, teamwork and organisational ability.

Though School Boards were established by a Parliament Act, they were abolished in February 1995. There is no evidence to show that there was enough assessment done to measure the impact of School Boards before they were abolished. However, several studies reveal that School Boards did not exist in most primary schools. In schools where they existed, the major emphasis was on generating resources. People have understood the Boards to be fund raising bodies. Though the Act had suggested democratic election procedures, what had taken place was the nomination of members by the principals. In certain schools most members hardly attended meetings. The teachers were not involved in the decision-making process.

School Based Management

The Reforms in General Education (1997) stresses the need to adopt School Based Management (SBM) to make school functioning more effective. "School based management has been accepted as an effective tool in the management of schools. It should specifically state the power, authority and responsibilities of the principal and the senior management group of the school. There shall be a Council of Management for each school comprising the Principal, representatives of the staff, parents, past pupils and well-wishers and a departmental nominee to assist the Principal in the formulation of policy and preparation of development plans and monitoring the implementation thereof."

Efficiency and productivity have become over-riding priorities for Sri Lankan institutions and schools are no exception. Restructuring the education system in order to improve public spending by monitoring outputs against inputs has become vital. If services are to be made more responsive to those who use them, then decision-making has to be decentralised. To improve the quality of education, it is necessary to move from the 'classroom teaching level' to 'school-organisation level'. The main objective of SBM is to improve the performance of schools. It is based on the underlying assumption that autonomous schools offer a clear vision for the future and are prepared to release the energies of their staff by empowering them to take professional responsibility for raising educational standards. The need for School Based Management in Sri Lanka springs from several factors. One of the main factors is to obtain higher participation of the community in school improvement.

There is enough research evidence to show that school improvement is related with the community factor. The in-school staff is often planted from outside and the support and encouragement of the parents and community leaders motivate the in-school staff and in fact most initiatives need to come from the community. SBM guarantee the involvement of the community in school planning and in resource management. The following steps have been completed in order to introduce SBM in a group of selected schools:

- Running of several workshops on the theme SBM;
- Development of a Handbook for Principals;
- Development of a Training Manual for training of Principals for SBM;
- Training of provincial trainers to train Principals for SBM; and
- Initiate work on the revision of circulars to facilitate SBM.

Specific Projects

In the recent past, several projects carried out in the country had concentrated on positive school-community relations. The 'Institutional Develop-

ment, Capacity of Disadvantaged Schools' and the 'Secondary School Development Project' (SEDP) are specific examples. The main objectives of the first project were: to develop among each of the participating schools the necessary skills; to establish close links with the community; to draw resources from the community; and share school's resources with the community. This project considered the school as the focal point of any development. The internal capacity of the schools for self-renewal can only be achieved with the conscious effort of the internal members of the school and the local community. The project considered that the central factor of school effectiveness lies in the school's capacity to effectively accommodate educational goals and curriculum objectives designed at the central level after careful analysis of the school's needs and other organisational and environmental factors.

The SEDP project had made a concerted effort to develop a group of selected secondary schools from all the provinces. A group of senior staff from 5 to 8 schools would meet in one of the schools and engages in activities that help school improvement. One of the areas considered for improvement was school-community relations. The unique feature in the project was the key-participation of parents. Certain provinces made their own initiatives like 'shramadanas' where parents and old pupils constructed parapet walls, repaired furniture etc. Schools had obtained much support in physical resources from the community.

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka, one of the significant roles of the school beyond its boundaries is to strengthen the interface between the school and the community. For this to happen, there is still the need to give more meaning to school-community relations. There has to be more collaboration between the school and the community, where both sides become equal partners in moulding school policy and decision-making.

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Community Participation in School Management in Korea

The Context

Korean education has made remarkable progress in quantitative terms, and elementary and secondary educations have been universalised. In spite of impressive quantitative expansion, school education in Korea is yet to improve its quality. All the elementary and secondary schools have little autonomy in making important decisions regarding school administration and academic matters due to the centralised education system and lack of participation by parents and the community in the decision-making process. In view of these problems, the Educational Reforms for New Education System introduced in 1995 has conceptualised the 'school community' as a means of maximising the autonomy and effectiveness of schools by holding teachers, parents and community leaders accountable for the operation of schools in their area. The concept of 'school community' has been envisaged to introduce educational autonomy with each school exercising full control in providing education that is relevant to the needs of the region it serves. 'School Management Committees' (SMCs) have been proposed to be established in all the elementary and secondary schools in order to operationalise the 'school community' concept.

The School Management Committees (SMCs)

The School Management Committees were constituted as a pilot project in Korea during the second half of 1995 with the objective of establishing linkages between schools, teachers, parents and community leaders. Given the success of the pilot project, the scheme was extended to all elementary and secondary schools in the country.

A School Management Committee in Korea comprises of 7-15 members, representing parents, community leaders, alumni, teachers and the principal. While the parents and teachers are directly elected to the committee through electoral college made up of their respective bodies, the community leaders are nominated by a body consisting of the president

of the committee and the representatives of parents and teachers elected for the committee.

Functions of the SMCs

Although the SMCs are involved in a variety of activities ranging from financial management to planning co-curricular activities, the specific responsibilities of the SMCs can be broadly classified as financial, academic, administrative, executive and miscellaneous. The financial responsibility of the committee refers to the deliberation on bills and budgets and the settlement of financial accounts. The academic function involves preparation of proposals for elective courses and other educational programmes. It also decides on the types of programmes to be offered after school hours and the financial implications of these programmes. One of the important roles played by the SMCs is the consideration of school charter and regulation, which comes under their administrative and executive jurisdiction. Recently, another important role has been added to the SMCs, namely the right to nominate the representatives of the electoral colleges for the election of the Superintendent and the members of the Board of Education. This has substantially enhanced the power of the SMCs. In addition, it has been proposed to further increase the role of the SMCs in the area of appointment of principals and teachers, and by entrusting the power to manage the school development fund, from collection to utilisation of various contributions made to the school. The SMCs are responsible for looking after the diverse academic needs, selecting right teachers and principals, supervising and monitoring the teaching-learning process, and managing the financial and other resources to improve the school effectiveness and autonomy. In order to function effectively the SMCs constitute sub-committees for specific functions. The functioning of SMCs show mixed results in terms of their impact on improving school effectiveness and autonomy. In some cases where they are operating in smooth and effective manner, the schools have become democratic, au-

onomous and effective.

Effectiveness of the SMCs

However, the SMCs vary in terms of their effectiveness and impact. In fact, many SMCs are functioning rather mechanically, and have been the proverbial rubber stamp thereby perpetuating the authoritarian and monopolistic acts of principals resulting in school ineffectiveness. It is this problem which needs to be rigorously approached.

The reasons for the ineffective functioning of the SMCs are many and have multiple causes. There are structural, organisational and financial difficulties embedded to the constitutional and operational aspects of SMCs. The problems of SMCs are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Overlapping of functions and lack of coordination between the committees and the existing school organisations, like the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and other school committees etc. are the major hindrances in the proper and effective functioning of the SMCs. Further, the emphasis on the uniformity in type and functions of the SMCs have made them devoid of the capacity to reflect diverse backgrounds of the schools and their contexts.

Lack of rationality in the selection procedures, particularly of the parent members, is closely associated with the ineffectiveness of the SMCs. This has not only restricted the choice of members among a few but also is responsible for obstructing the entry of many and at times the best available persons. Another important problem is the poor understanding of the role and functions of the SMCs among the committee members and also among the public. The members also lack training about the rules, regulations, powers, privileges and responsibilities of the SMCs.

At the functional level, there are two obvious problems namely, irregular meetings of the SMCs and their inadequate durations. The problem gets complicated further in the lack of consensus due to poor participation and consultation among the members. The performance of sub-committees appointed under the supervision of SMCs are also found to be unsatisfactory. Finally, the SMCs lack appropriate administrative and financial support.

Measures to Improve the Effectiveness

of SMCs

Given the nature and functioning of the SMCs in the country, the following measures need to be taken to improve the effectiveness of the SMCs:

- At the level of constitution of the committees, the number and composition ratio of the committee members should be decided on the basis of background of each school, viz. the type of the school, number of students and region etc;
- In order to guarantee the fair and impartial selection of SMC members, 'Selection Management Committee, should be set up in each school;
- The qualification requirements for the committee members should be divided into two categories: common and special. The qualification criteria of the members should be specified;
- The power and authority of the committees should be expanded gradually and they should have decision-making power on all matters pertaining to the functioning of the school;
- The existing school organisations should be restructured to have close relationship with the SMCs;
- Each region should establish self-regulatory system for deciding the duration and number of meetings to be held in a specified time period;
- In a bid to bolster the system and to make it fool proof, it may be suggested that each Regional Board of Education should be rearranged to support the activities of respective SMCs, administratively and financially; and
- Finally, the financial needs for running School Management Committees should be met from the direct government budget. In addition, the school based budget system should be established to expand the school principal's autonomy for the financial management of his or her school thereby facilitating establishment of the school based management system.

Reference

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Community Participation in Improving Educational Management in Nepal

The Background

Community participation is one of the major agenda of educational development and school improvement in Nepal. It is reflected in the national development plans as well as in the national projects, such as the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP). Currently, all schools must run under School Management Committees (SMCs) represented by parents and local community leaders. Provisions are made for running primary schools by Village Development Councils (VDCs) and Municipalities. There is also provision for running private schools by individuals or groups. Communities are free to develop and manage their own non-formal education programmes and to seek help of NGOs. Such liberal approach to development of education in Nepal has come after about five decades, reflecting the various political changes since 1950 and their consequences in educational management and development.

In the history of school education in Nepal the political uprising in 1951 stands as a landmark. The social and the political activists engaged in freedom movements had adopted educational development as a mode of bringing revolution. Many people, particularly the intellectuals, came forward to support development of school education in different ways in which they could, such as volunteering to work as teachers, providing space and houses as well as raising fund, etc. In many areas, people organised themselves to form committees to help in the management of schools in their areas. After the political change, the new government supported people's initiatives for the development of education.

Until 1971, school education in Nepal remained basically initiated, managed and financed by the local people. The National Education System Plan (1971-76) shifted the responsibility relating to schools to the government. It also curbed the community participation in educational matters, but ex-

pected greater local participation in terms of financial assistance for the development of physical facilities and for teaching-learning materials.

The School Management Committees

After the Decentralisation Act of 1982, a new resolution was passed in 1992 in which the provision for the VDCs and the Municipalities to run the primary schools with the government support was incorporated. At present, the government has made provisions for delegating both managerial and financial responsibilities to people. In order to ensure this the 'School Management Committees (SMCs)' have been formed. The role and functions of the SMCs include the monitoring of teachers regularity, the teaching-learning processes and other aspects of school management, viz. physical development of the school. Most of the members for the SMCs are from the nominees of political party in power.

However, community participation in educational management and resource mobilisation continues to be the major concern in Nepal. However, on the one hand, people feel that education is the responsibility of the government, and at the same time, they doubt the sincerity and commitment of the public authorities for development of education. On the other hand is the skepticism of the government authorities and personnel over the capabilities of the community to manage schools. As a result of such mutual distrust, the SMCs have become ineffective in school management, particularly in providing good supervision and monitoring and in helping in the physical development of the schools. Such a development is also related to a situation where though the community owns the government funded schools through School Management Committees, the government still controls the school through the teachers' recruitment and payment of the teachers' salary.

School education up to secondary level is free in Nepal ensuring that legally schools cannot even

raise funds from the parents through school fees of any kind. This has further reduced the chances of community participation. Apart from this, most of the public schools are reeling under the influence of various groups including the politicians, teachers' unions and the bureaucracy, making it extremely difficult to maintain the earlier status regarding school activities and student achievements. In this regard the SMCs have also proved ineffective. They have very limited power to take on the errant teachers. This has two reasons, first, the members of the SMCs are nominated, and secondly, they have political affiliations.

In such circumstances, the establishment of private schools is gaining momentum. More and more private schools have come up with better physical outlook and rigors to make the students pass in the annual examinations with high scores. As a result, increasing number of parents who can afford are sending their children to private schools. The present system of private schools functions more as individual centered commercial ventures rather than altruistic and social welfare measures from the individuals or groups. The growth of private schools has not been able to fulfill the aspirations of the majority of the people or the goals identified by various educational commissions since 1956. In other words, the development of community based schools or the schools run by trusts, are still not forthcoming.

Reflections on the Community Participation

During the freedom movement in Nepal, efforts to improve educational access and opportunities for common men were prioritised. People who took the initiatives in those circumstances were motivated by larger political changes as well as by unleashing of totally new possibilities. The purpose, commitments and zeal of the activists in such challenging endeavour might have created an environment where community participation was serious and committed. How to ensure effective community participation in educational development in Nepal in the present context? The question remains difficult to answer in the context where people are free to take decisions regarding education of their wards, but at the same time they lack resources and support. The difficulty gets compounded by the fact

that the majority of the people live in rural communities, and that most of the adults in the rural areas are illiterates and do not have experience of modern developmental activities.

In the event of such attitudes, there is a need to reflect on these issues and dilemmas and work out a realistic approach for making school a community centre, owned and managed by the community. For this, there is a need for formulating a mechanism of community ownership and responsibility, for identifying the potentials and utilising them for the development and running of the schools, and for evolving a system that stimulates and allows initiatives from the community for continuous process of change and development. The provisions and regulations for community ownership of the school certainly needs an extra benevolent approach in such circumstances to enable the people get the benefits of the new provisions and the possibilities.

Prospects for Better Community Participation

Recently, an analysis of the experience of BPEP has been prepared to generate future direction for development of basic and primary education. Perspective plan for secondary level education has already been developed, and for the higher levels of education, it is being restructured and developed with long-term future perspectives. The future development plans of Nepal have laid emphasis on quality education by improving the mode of programme implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation. The concept of community participation and its contribution to education are emphasised in order to foster people's responsible participation to improve quality of and finance in education. These developments show the commitment of the government for better changes.

Most importantly, several NGOs are now actively working in various fields, including education to mobilise people and help them in the development process. This includes making people aware of their rights and responsibilities. Similarly, in Nepal, development of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) is taking place at phenomenal pace. There are now such organisations as Mothers Groups, Human Rights Groups, Organisations for Oppressed Communities, Local Youth Clubs, etc. These organisations are taking new initiatives in the awareness education as well as other life related skills

training and services in the areas like health, family planning, fund raising. In some areas, Mothers Groups have taken initiatives to undertake simple monitoring activities, such as checking the teacher regularities with a very encouraging impact on the school environment. These emerging groups have potential of taking collective ownership of the schools along with the other concerned bodies.

In view of these new possibilities and provisions, coordinated efforts at local level to ensure efficient management of schools can be made in Nepal. From the structural point of view, there are now several local level organisations, such as the Village Development Committees, NGOs, and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). These organisations should be brought together to ensure community participation, and should be given responsibility and authority for facilitating educational development and management.

For the success of such schemes, there is however need for changes in the perspectives and attitudes of the people to overcome the inertia of the past and to venture to take new initiatives. Such letting of the inertia should come from all the concerned – government and community. The government agencies should provide assistance that includes basic financial support, professional and technical support, such as training, instructional material, supervision and monitoring. People should take the full ownership and responsibility of the management and development of the school.

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Community Participation in Improving Educational Management in India

Introduction

Community participation is now accepted as a significant component of any policy designed to improve educational performance in a country. Apart from the fact that increased partnership between the school and the community leads to autonomy and flexibility in decision making which in turn produces higher levels of productivity and accountability. It is also now widely believed that community participation leads to greater levels of retention of children in schools and makes unwilling parents to send their children to school. In a country like India, where both the problems of attracting children to school and retaining them once they have joined it still persist in great measure, devolution of educational management and devising strategies to mobilise local support for universalising education become even more important.

The purpose of this brief note is to describe some of the initiatives that are being undertaken to depart from a system of educational management which has been traditionally state-centered and upward looking in India. The concern is in the fact that while after independence schools and teachers have multiplied, educational performance in terms of enrolment in primary schools or in terms of literacy rates has not shown concomitant results. It is being increasingly recognized that this has happened because the approach towards education has not been learner-centered and has not been able to involve the community in spreading education. Due to this realisation the country has gone to the extent of amending the Constitution to provide space for new initiatives to take place. An exhaustive list is not being presented but some illustrations are being cited to show how government and non-governmental organisations are using the newly created space.

New Initiatives

India has moved deliberately and boldly to decentralise educational management by amend-

ing its Constitution and encouraging state governments to promote innovative schemes in the new framework. Reforms under the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution seek to transfer greater powers and resources to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (elected local bodies) in the area of local educational management. These local institutions were established much earlier in 1959 during the time of Nehru but had neither been adequately empowered nor seen as instruments of spreading education in the country. The amendments have helped to rejuvenate them by delegating statutory powers and providing financial resources through State Finance Commissions, which will not be dependent on the whims of political parties or individual leaders.

Introduction of these Panchayati Raj reforms have created a new environment of community participation and accountability. It has made available considerable space for a decentralised set-up to design institutions through governmental as well as non-governmental initiatives to suit the new framework. At the village level, for example, in many states, Village Education Committees, Parents-Teachers Associations and Panchayat Standing Committees on Education have emerged under the Panchayati Raj reforms. Performance of these institutions varies a lot across states and villages. It has a lot to do with democratic functioning of the Panchayat itself and the extent of participation in it. But what is important is that village education committees have provided institutional opportunity for participation of women or the dalit classes in the management of their schools. Not only many NGO's have utilized them but the government initiated District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) has mobilised community participation in school construction etc. through activating these committees.

Community Schools

Many innovative experiments trying out community centered schools have been tried in the recent past. In some of the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh state, community schools called 'mabadi' (our schools) were established in 1991. These schools are managed by the community, which contributes towards the construction of buildings and salary of teachers. The community participates in their selection too. The government's Tribal Welfare Department provides matching grant for the salary of teachers and supplies the reading and other incentives to children. There are now 1200 such schools in existence. They have come as part of the tribal development plan rather than as separate education scheme and that is the reason why the Tribal Welfare Department supports them.

Education Guarantee Scheme

The State Government of Madhya Pradesh has taken inspiration from these tribal schools and has recently pioneered a community-centered, rights-based initiative to universalise primary education, called Education Guarantee Scheme. Introduced on January 1, 1997, the scheme guaranteed the provision of a teacher, her or his salary, training of the teacher, teaching-learning materials and contingencies to start a school within 90 days wherever there was a demand from a community without a primary schooling facility within 1 kilometre, provided this demand came from at least 25 learners in case of tribal areas and 40 learners in case of non-tribal areas. The community that made the demand could also suggest the name of a suitable local resident to be a teacher and who would be called a 'guruji.' The Gram Panchayat (Local Self Governing Body) is then authorised to appoint such a *guruji* as a teacher after the block administration had verified his qualifications etc. The training of this teacher would be organised by the district administration, which would also credit the amount of salary to the account of the Gram Panchayat. The local community or the Gram Panchayat was expected to come up with the space for teaching-learning. Thus in this scheme, the government ensured the critical basic inputs for transacting primary education (here defined as the teacher, his or her salary, training, teaching-learning materials, contingencies and academic supervision), the community shared the task of universalising primary education by its contribu-

tion to creating the demand, identifying the teacher and providing the learning space.

The community was also involved in identifying the gaps in primary education in the state. A *Lok Sampark Abhiyan* or a door to door survey was jointly undertaken by Panchayat leadership, teachers and literacy activists in 19,978 Panchayats in the state for detailed identification of children not going to school. An enrolment drive and preparation of plans followed this up by the Panchayats. But the survey provided the first step in coalition building for primary education between the Panchayat leaders, teachers and literacy volunteers and created leadership roles for Panchayats in educational management.

In the first year of its operation, more than 15,568 schools came up in the state and over 600,000 children enrolled. Undoubtedly, the scheme has evoked overwhelming response, even though some apprehensions are being expressed about its ability to be absorbed in the mainstream of primary education.

Shiksha Karmis

Another community-centered and government initiated scheme that has gained popularity among many states is that of Shiksha Karmis. This scheme was initiated in Rajasthan in 1987 after the government launched an experiment with the assistance of a NGO, a Panchayat Samiti and State Council of Educational Research and Training. The experiment aimed at rejuvenating the primary education system, which had become ineffective in remote areas due to irregular attendance of the school teachers and the consequent extremely low enrolment of the children. As a first step, villages attempted to identify schools that had highest incidence of teacher absenteeism and then they identified suitable persons in the villages who could act as education workers. Once these education workers were chosen by the NGO, training was provided to them and they were located in schools. The training was repeated at frequent intervals to keep up the professional levels. These education workers were called Shiksha Karmis. They belonged to the village where the school was located, did not have high educational qualifications and, therefore, required continuous training and were paid much less than what a government appointed teacher would have been paid. Many states have

attempted to adopt this scheme after the Government of India itself commended it.

A recent independent survey accepts that Shiksha Karmis are potentially useful as a temporary, low cost supplement to the regular teaching staff. It also finds that in spite of their low formal qualifications and salaries, they sometimes work distinctly harder and with more dedication than regular teachers. However, the practice has dangers. This is related to the dual system of teachers that is being created and its possible impact on the educational system in the long run.

Democratising Educational Management

Another significant effort at democratising educational management is by an NGO, Lok Jumbish, in Rajasthan. An international agency, Government of India and Government of Rajasthan, have jointly funded this project from the time it was initiated in 1992. One of the main challenges faced by Lok Jumbish was to bring the village community, especially women, into the arena of educational management. The process of mobilisation of the village community involves a number of activities: the creation overtime a 'core group' which becomes an activating agency for the village; the creation of a village education map and register; the creation and consolidation of women's groups in the village and their involvement in decision-making bodies; and the involvement of male and female members of the village in school building design, construction and maintenance. A wide ranging participatory organisational structure has been created that runs the agency.

The technique of school mapping is the special contribution of Lok Jumbish to the task of mobilising people for education. The exercise becomes an occasion to interact with the people and have the proposals for new schools or improving the existing ones as a product of the involvement of all the community. It also becomes an important opportunity for capacity building of illiterate villagers. Along with school mapping, careful micro-planning at the village level makes it possible to monitor participation of every child in the school.

Lok Jumbish also stresses empowerment of women and promotes formation of *Mahila Samooh* (women's groups) in the village who then begin tak-

ing active part in the Lok Jumbish activities. Two-thirds of the workers of Lok Jumbish are women.

Total literacy campaigns in India have also provided opportunities where strategies to involve the learners have worked effectively. The NGOs have used varieties of learner-centered approaches to make their literacy campaigns successful. The Jan Vigyan Manch, Bihar, successfully focused on illiterate women who were convinced that literacy will help them get their due when working with contractors or transacting business with shopkeepers. The Dungarpur Literacy Campaign in Rajasthan employed the *akshar padyatra* (literacy march on foot) very effectively. In this march, a team of officials, teachers, village level functionaries of developmental sectors, members of voluntary agencies, social activists and community leaders went from door to door, meeting people and then organising meetings in the evening. The teaching was done by thousands of volunteers without any remuneration. The work of Kerala Sahitya Parishad is now well documented.

Conclusion

The country today is involved in various experiments, both sponsored by governments and voluntary groups, to mobilise people in raising the literacy levels and in universalising primary education. Much needs to be done to decentralise more effectively and strengthen specific institutions. But, as many commentators and others are pointing out, the real challenge is to achieve greater popular involvement in issues dealing with primary education and literacy. Government has a role to play but this needs to be supported by all groups in society.

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The Third Annual Meeting of the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP) was held in December 1998 in Colombo,

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Launching of an ANTRIEP Project on *Improving School Management in Asian Countries; Capacity Building for Head Teachers*

Sri Lanka. The participating representatives of the member institutions suggested that the Network should initiate a collaborative project in the area of improving school management. It requested that IIEP in consultation with the Focal Point prepare the draft proposal which can be finalised in consultation with member institutions.

The role of the head teachers in initiating school improvement programmes received considerable attention in the deliberations of the meeting. Many participants indicated that very little empirical research is conducted in the Asian region focusing on the role of head teachers and their impact on school improvement. Taking into account this concern, it was decided to initiate a project consisting of studies and capacity building activities focusing on the head teachers. Accordingly a draft project proposal entitled - *Improving School Management in Asian Countries: Capacity Building for Head Teachers* - was prepared. The draft project proposal was sent to all member institutions for their comments and observations. An overwhelming positive response was received and based on the comments, the proposal was revised and finalised.

The main objective of the project is to build capacities of school-heads in order to improve school management in selected countries of Asia, through ANTRIEP member institutions. The project will consist of a series of research studies, workshops and training activities spread over a period of 3 years and will be carried out in a collaborative manner by the member institutions of ANTRIEP. Efforts will be made to ensure that the findings of the research studies continually flow into the process of designing and developing training programmes.

The purpose of the *research* is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the policies and practices adopted in the region with regard to school management in general and to the roles and functions of head teachers, in particular. The research part of the project will have two components. The first component will consist of preparation of national diagnoses on head teachers while the second will concentrate on specific case studies on current practices and innovations in school management.

The development of the *training* activities of the programme will follow a bottom-up approach. ANTRIEP member institutions are already involved in running different training programmes for head teachers and some have developed substantial expertise in this area. The central idea of this co-operative programme is to build on this experience by stimulating exchange of knowledge and know-how in training between the participating institutions and by strengthening their research base to keep the training relevant and up to date.

It is planned that the first phase of the project consisting of national diagnostic studies on the roles and status of head teachers will be completed during the first half of the year 2000 and that its results will be discussed at the forthcoming Network meeting which will be hosted by SIHRD in Shanghai, China between 19 and 22 September 2000. In the meantime the Network has started contacting agencies that are interested in lending their support to the project. The IIEP and the Focal Point will be in touch with member institutions to provide further details about the project implementation and about the preparations for the next meeting.

* For further information on the project contact Focal Point or IIEP

News From Member Institutions

Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development (SIHRD) Shanghai, China

- A research project entitled **High Performing Schools: Using Measurement to Manage Improvement** is being implemented by SIHRD and sponsored by APEC-China Cooperation. The general objectives of the project are to facilitate efficient management of schools and to ensure better quality of teaching and learning by adopting school-based management and teacher-instruction centered. The project has covered more than 80 schools, mostly located in coastal areas, from 8 provinces/municipalities/autonomous regions. As a part of the project, a pilot study was conducted on measurement and application of data. Summary of the successful practices of high performing schools was prepared and a national level web-site was set up with state-of-the-art information on research information and research outcomes.

National Institute of Education (NIE) Maharagama, Sri Lanka

- NIE conducted a 20 days Induction Programme for 300 newly recruited officers of the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service. The training mainly focussed on management development, new international trends in education and educational reforms.
- The Institute successfully completed a nine-month Diploma Programme in School Management for 19 supervisors from Maldives.

Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) Seoul, Korea

- The KEDI-UNESCO PROAP Joint Resource Persons Meeting on Educational

Planning and Management for Member States in the Asia-Pacific Region was held in KEDI in October, 1999. The meeting mainly focused on Korean education and economic development. Country-papers were also discussed besides, a presentation on "aid for education and sector programming" by the expert from PROAP, UNESCO.

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) New Delhi, India

- A two-week UNESCO sponsored study visit for a ten-member delegation from Government of Bangladesh was organised by the Institute in December, 1999. The main mission of the group was to understand about Educational Planning and Management in India.
- A three-member delegation from the Ministry of Education, The State of Eritrea visited NIEPA in December, 1999 to explore the possibilities of NIEPA conducting training programmes for Eritrean education officers.
- A thirteen-member delegation from Government of Nepal, visited NIEPA in December 1999 to have discussions on capacity building programmes.
- The XVI International Diploma in Educational Planning and Administration will commence from February 1, 2000 at NIEPA, New Delhi. About 30 participants from Asian, African, Caribbean and Pacific countries are likely to take part in this programme.

**National Centre for Educational
Development (NCED)**
Bhaktapur, Nepal

- Centre organised a two-week training programme for 177 trainers of primary school teachers and for 4020 primary school teachers.
- Organised a management training programme for 20 district education officers and for 44 school supervisors.

**National Council of Educational
Research and Training (NCERT)**
New Delhi, India

- Conducted a study on **Evaluation and Review of Incentive Schemes to Encourage Girls Participation in Education at Primary Stage**. The study examines variations in State policy on incentives and identification of correlates of girls participation. A review of research studies on the efficacy of the incentive schemes was done followed by analysis of policies of the incentive scheme in each of the 32 states. A detailed study in two states, namely Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh is being conducted.
- Organised a workshop on the “Revitalisation of APEID Associate Centres (UNESCO-ACEID)” in May, 1999. The present and potential working areas of Associated Centres were discussed and inter-sectoral co-operation amongst different sectors of educations was recommended.
- An eight-member delegation from Government of Bangladesh visited NCERT in November-December, 1999 to discuss about Non-Formal Education and Alternative Schooling System in India.

**Bangladesh Rural Advancement
Committee (BRAC)**
Dhaka, Bangladesh

- BRAC has implemented the task of the First **Education Watch** with the guidance of advisory group. The data on efficiency indicators are presented in

the report according to gender, socio-economic status, ethnic composition and geographic reach. The Education Watch Report, 1999 was published jointly by CAMPE and the University Press Limited in August, 1999.

**Centre for Multi-Disciplinary
Development Research (CMDR)**
Karnataka, India

- A research study on **Community Participation in Improving Educational Management: A Case Study** was undertaken by CMDR and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. The study covering 70 educational institutions in Dharwad district made an attempt to examine the role of community in funding of education sector. The study shows that on an average the amount of resource to the institution increases with increase in the level of education. While the flow of physical resources increase with increase in the level of education, the human and financial resources flow, tends to be the highest at the primary level. It was found that more than 30 percent of the total receipts of educational institutes comes from the community, which seems to be quite substantial.

**Research Centre for Educational
Innovation and Development (CERID)**
Kathmandu, Nepal

- A Study on **Assessment of Learning Achievement of Lower Secondary Students** was conducted by CERID. The achievement level of the children is satisfactory only in Nepali language and, in science, it is low. Educational background of the family members, regular functioning of schools, qualifications of teachers, etc. have effect on achievement levels of children.
- Organised a workshop on “Interaction on National Programme for Basic and Primary Education” in December, 1999. The participants of the workshop included parliamentarians, high level personnel from the Ministry of Education, educationists, planners and policy makers.