

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

Community participation

“An emphasis on participation has links with the interest in democracy in community organization and in self-help and political incorporation in the community developmental aspects.”

Though most states in India have held elections for the local bodies, the involvement of the panchayat in the functioning of the school system seems to be limited. “In most cases, panchayats have been responsible for constructing, repairing, and the maintenance of school building only, and the lowest tier of panchayats hardly has any say in educational matters of children and in the functioning of the local school.”

Such initiative in Andhra Pradesh to involve community members on a large scale through programmes such as ‘**Chaduvula Panduga**’ (festival of education). Another example is ‘**Alokar Jatra**,’ from Assam, a programme whereby local communities are involved in conducting a household survey, resulting in ‘a local-level database on the educational status of children with positive impact on access and enrolment.’

Community Participation for Quality Education

Since the declared policy of the government in the field of education has been to provide equal access to quality education and to improve the management and planning of education. Nevertheless, improving the quality of education has remained undoubtedly a challenging task. As an example Nepal does not have long history of development of education, after the political change in 1950; people had a new spirit and zeal for all round development of the country. Thus, people started opening new schools in their own initiations. A growing trend in expanding of education facilities was observed. The government had not given funds from the government treasury to the school. The community people did not wait for the government to take initiative to establish new schools and hire teachers in their areas. Most schools at the initial stage were community initiated schools which received different kinds of contributions from the community e.g. land, funds, volunteer teachers, labours, construction materials etc. From the point of expansion of education, it was a very good time to achieve reasonable level of progress with the direct involvement of the community.

As the community people initiated to schools, they were responsible for their management as well. The community managed schools were introduced successfully at that time. The modality of the community managed school was simple in the sense that community did things such as establishing the school in a location as agreed by the people, building a house for classroom purpose as per their financial situation, hiring and firing teacher and getting their salaries and

other benefits. Most of the educationist all over the world seems to be argued that the community participation plays vital role in promoting education in terms of quality and quantity; and it is assumed that community participation and empowerment has the potential to make major contribution in educating people and enriching their quality of life.

Political, social and cultural life is becoming an issue of critical importance because there are various aspects which are directly and indirectly related to education. Day to day the world is becoming complex. The transformation of the macro-political landscape, the promise of expanded democratization, the threat of narrow nationalism and fundamentalism, the increasing risk of environmental degradation and endemic disease all of these challenges call for the more effective development of human resources and thus for a greater demand for, and supply of, education of better quality.

A final, and perhaps most important doubt, concerns the narrowness of the traditional vision of what 'good' education is and what it is meant to achieve. It can be argued today that good education, must be defined not only in relation to the extent to which school is well-housed and well supplied, teacher literacy, job skills, and facts for life; and facilities an effective teaching-learning process. Education of good quality must also by definition:

- Encourage a more integrated view of how the world operates and how development does (or does not) occur,
- Make students more critically aware of how their actions, individually and collectively, will hinder or help the world to meet future challenges; and
- Help to mobilize and empower people with the knowledge and skills to participate more actively, more democratically, and more collectively in the development process.

Policy makers, educators and others involved in education are seeking ways to utilize limited resources effectively in order to identify and solve problems in the education sector and to provide quality education for children. Their efforts have contributed to realizing the significance and benefits of community participation in education and have recognized community participation as one of the strategies to improve educational access and quality. In preparing and implanting any efforts to promote community involvement in education, it is important to understand the whole picture of community participation how it works, what forms are used, what benefits it can yield, and what we should expect in the process of carrying out the efforts.

A deeper understanding of this issue is important since we line between community involvements in quality education. In the educational history of education community participation in education is not new. Before discussing the ways of community participation in education, it is important to discuss what community is in terms of educational points of view.

- ❖ Communities can be defined by characteristics that members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class and race.

- ❖ Some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous and some united while others conflictive. Some communities are governed and managed by leaders chosen democratically who act relatively autonomously from other levels of government, and some are governed by leaders imposed from above and represent central authorities.
- ❖ Community participation in education viewed as an effective means of promoting education both in quantitative and qualitative terms.
- ❖ Community is a group structure, whether formally or informally organized, in which member's plays roles which are integrated around goals associated with the problems from collective occupation and utilization of habitudinal space, second, members of the community have some degree of collective identification with the occupied space. Lastly, the community has a degree of local autonomy and responsibility.
- ❖ The third one is communities based on shared family or educational concerns, which include parents association and similar bodies that are based on families shared concern for the welfare of students.

The term participation can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context that clarifies different degrees or level of participation, and provides possible definition of the term, including:

- Involvement through the mere use of a service (such as enrolling children in school or using a primary health care facility);
- Involvement through contribution (or extraction) of money, materials and labors;
- Involvement through 'attendance' (e. g. At parent meeting at schools), implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others;
- Participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors;
- Participation as implementers of delegated powers; and
- Participation in 'real decision making at every stage', is including identification of problems, study of feasibility, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Activities that Involve Participation

Further provides some specific activities that involve a high degree of participation in a wider development context, which can also be applied in the education sector, inducing:

- (1) Collecting and analyzing information,
- (2) Defining priorities and setting goals,

- (3) Assessing available resources,
- (4) Deciding on and planning programs
- (5) Designing strategies to implement these programmes and dividing responsibilities among participants,
- (6) Managing programs,
- (7) Monitoring progress of the programs; and
- (8) Evaluating results and impacts.

What is community participation in education? Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Despite the various degrees of responsibilities taken by each group, none can be the sole agent to take 100 percent responsibility for educating children. Parents and families cannot be the only group of people for children's education as long as their children interact with and learn from the world outside their families, communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and education of their children.

Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate by equipping them with skills important in society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities society. Many research studies have identified various ways of community participation in education, providing specific channels through which communities can be involved in children's education.

(a) research and data collection, (b) dialogue with policy makers; (c) school management; (d) curriculum design; (e) development of learning materials; and (f) school construction.

Community participation in Teaching Learning Process

- ✓ Setting of teaching standards, recruitment, teacher training, teacher's salary, condition of service, promotion and discipline are important factors that always comes under debate. Involvement of community in selection of teacher can play vital role in the selection of excellent teacher as per their need. The teacher selected by the community shows the responsibility towards the children of the community. Teacher salary is one of the factors that affect the performance of teachers and teacher's performance directly related to the quality of the education. Thus, the salary and condition of services could be shared by the community. Role of Community in Pedagogical Supervision and Support. Quality education system is one that succeeds in meeting its own goals, one that is relevant to the needs of children, communities and society; and that fosters the ability of children to acquire knowledge and critical learning skills.

- ✓ Global campaign for education stated that high dropout rate in school is not only result of poor quality, but if effective learning is not taking place in school, parents are more likely to withdraw children school early or not sent them at all. Improving quality of education is therefore essential to achieving goal of Universal access to education. Without active involvement of the community in school management quality improvement is not possible. Project work in community could be one of the good pedagogical approaches in teaching learning process in school. Community is the foundation of this approach. Providing the facts, feeling and experiences of the community people to the students could be the best help in the teaching learning process for to increase the deeper understanding of students while at project work.
- ✓ Community people can play as an actor of promoting quality education in this sense. Successful schools build connections to parents and communities as a way to strengthen relationship in support of the students, and as a way to better understand students so that teaching can be tailored to them as individuals communities offer a wide range of resources that are valuable to school and the families they serve.

Power to Community Members

- While increased community participation has been advocated as a way to improve the quality of public projects and services, evidence from randomized evaluations provides very mixed results about its effectiveness. While it is clear that the details and context matter for this type of program, some common themes about what works are beginning to emerge. Programs where the community had more direct control over service providers tended to work better.
- Community involvement is more effective when people are given specific tasks and training: Training of school committees improved how these committees handled teachers accountable to them, in India a program that trained local volunteers to directly intervene in child learning was very successful.
- The program that compared community participation to centralized monitoring through audits found centralized audits were more effective in reducing corruption.
- Government programs have long incorporated mechanisms for local oversight, but there is little evidence on the effectiveness of these programs. Found that 92% of villagers in rural Uttar Pradesh India were not even aware of the existing Village Education Committee (VEC), which supposedly monitored teachers and administrators.

- Working with the community on monitoring tools that revealed just how little children were learning at school, and informing the community of their rights to push for change prompted no increase activity by the community, no increased teacher effort and no improvement in education outcomes.

Researchers and educators have long agreed that when parents get involved in education, children try harder and achieve more at school (e.g., Epstein, 1995). Parents who help and encourage their children to learn at home, and who help develop positive attitudes toward school, contribute to the personal growth and academic success of their children.

Various approaches have been developed to help schools gain greater parent involvement. These approaches have several features in common: programs that focus on parenting skills and the development of home conditions that support learning; school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children's progress; the use of volunteers at school or in other locations to support the school and students; and participation by families in decision-making, governance, and advocacy (Bauch, 1994; Davies, 1991).

These approaches, however, were not developed with rural communities in mind. Rural communities differ from urban and suburban ones, and they also differ from one another (Flora, Spears, & Swanson, 1992). Parent involvement programs for rural communities work best when they respond to particular features of the communities they serve.

Beneficial Program Features

Taking into account both the opportunities and challenges posed by conditions of rural life, educators can work to involve parents by setting up programs that include features with well-documented, positive results (see, e.g., Bauch, 1994; Davies, 1991; Hinson, 1990; Swick, 1991). Among the features most often recommended are:

- parent enrollment in adult education and parenting education programs;
- cooperative strategies for extending the school curriculum beyond the school walls;
- efforts to help parents provide learning experiences at home;
- home visits by personnel trained to facilitate home-school communication;
- in-classroom involvement of parents, business leaders, and citizens;
- summer enrichment programs for both parents and children;
- community-based learning;
- use of school facilities for community activities; and
- university participation in an advisory and supportive role.

Programs that combine these features are indeed extensive, recognizing both strengths and weaknesses that parents may bring to partnerships with their children's schools. Such programs recognize that parenting improves when parents feel effective in a variety of adult roles. But they

also take into account the fact that schooling improves when a variety of adults share their talents and model successful strategies of life management. Moreover, when community and business organizations have a visible presence in classroom life, students are more likely to see a meaningful connection between their studies and their eventual success in the workplace.
