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Community Participation in School Education : A Case Study of Kangumajhiguda Project Upper Primary School, Nabarangpur district

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Abstract: *Community participation is an important aspect of school education. The sustainability of the school depends upon the support of the community. As education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within society. Since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education, there must be efforts to make a bridge between them in order to maximize the contributions. Schools are built only for the community and when the community does not own the school it cannot be declared as a good school. Therefore the involvement of the community in various activities of the school is important for the development of the school. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Community participation in education viewed as an effective means of promoting education both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Sometimes the spontaneous activity of some communities has been seen as a valuable contribution to children's educational progress. In this paper an attempt has been made to present various initiatives of one community for the development of their school with live examples from the field.*

Keywords : *Community, Participation, Intervention, Initiatives*

Introduction

A school that has strong constructive relations with the immediate community where it works. The school is considered and perceived as a public asset which can be improved and cherished with the support of the community. The sustainability of the school depends upon the support of the community. Nowadays schools are well developed with the help of the various funds received from state and central governments. But only funds cannot make a school a real school. Schools are built only for the community and when the community does not own the school it cannot be declared as a successful school. Therefore the participation of community in each and every activity of the school is important for the development of the school. Schools are

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established for the proper and systematic development of the human resources of the community. Therefore the participation of the community cannot be ignored in school activities.

Community participation in school education is not a new concept. In India from the Vedic period community plays an important role for the education of the children. Community is a great resource for the education of children. It is a great truth that if community participate in the school education the pupils can maximise their potential from schooling with the support from their parents. It is anticipated that parents should play a role not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but more broadly in school improvement and the democratisation of school governance. We need to acknowledge that the school belongs to the greater community and welcome the resources of the community to realise the mission and goals of the schools. And those goals should go beyond the academic development of students to incorporate other aspects of a young person's development: health, social and emotional growth, and civic responsibility.

In this context it is important to understand the whole picture of community participation and explore the ways and means of community participation in education. This paper attempts to summarize these issues, by turning to existing literature and live examples from the field.

What is a community ?

Community is a group structure, whether formally or informally organized, in which member's plays roles. It is a social, religious, occupational or other group sharing characteristics or interests perceived or perceiving itself as distinction some respect from the larger society within which it exist. A group of people living in the same defined area sharing the same basic values, organization and interests (Rifkin et al, 1988). An informally organized social entity which is characterized by a sense of identity (White, 1982).

Communities can also be defined by characteristics that the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class, and race. As Shaeffer (1992) argues, some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and some united while others conflictive. But in the present context of the paper community represent all communities living in a locality, community leaders, women's groups, youths, elected local bodies, like PRIs, SMCs, PTAs/MTAs etc. and other civil society members.

Why community participation?

For generations, an individual's community served a vital role in terms of offering camaraderie and acting as a support system. As individuals we can play limited, but critical roles. Working in a purposeful and organised manner with all stakeholders, a community is able to enhance quality and access to all kinds of services. Further, it is important for the community to raise its concerns regarding the quality of service and products. The community needs to make sure that its interests as customers, consumers, clients and voters are not compromised. For our

inputs we expect good outputs and outcomes. The communities' role is to act as a watchdog and ensure that services for the people with its active participation.

In the present context due to faster development of life, busy schedules, maintenance of life with a detached manner and growth of technology the feeling of the sense of community is harder and harder. The idea of community may simply come down to supporting and interacting positively with other individuals who share a vested interest. That vested interest may be for the well-being of the neighborhood or extends to the well-being of the global community, but it demands attention for the community action. A strong community benefits the individual, the community as well as the greater society. People of all ages who feel a sense of belonging tend to lead happier and healthier lives, and strong communities create a more stable and supportive society. Lastly, the community has a degree of local autonomy and responsibility. The communities based on shared family which include parents association and similar bodies that are based on families shared concern for the welfare of the families and students. The term participation can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context that clarifies different degrees or level of participation. This participation of community can be extended to any sector of life depending upon the welfare of the community at large.

Community Participation in Education

Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within society. Since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education, there must be efforts to make a bridge between them in order to maximize the contributions. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and educating of their children. Community participation in education viewed as an effective means of promoting education both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Sometimes the spontaneous activity of some communities has been seen as a valuable contribution to children's educational progress. It is also assumed that community participation and empowerment has the potential to make major contribution in educating people and enriching their quality of life.

In the past communities contribute a lot for the overall functioning of the school like paying teachers' salaries, teaching learning materials, gardening, and other recurrent costs. They were also responsible for their management as well. Schools/ Pathashalas were the 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. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, parents, and communities

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. Improving quality of education is very essential to achieving goal of Universal access to education. Without active involvement of the community in school management quality improvement is not possible. Community is the foundation of this approach. Providing the facts, feeling and experiences and resources of the community people to the students & the schools could be the best help in the overall development of the students. Community people can play as an actor of promoting quality education in this sense.

Concept to Practice: Case Study of Kangumajhiguda PUPS, Nabarangpur District

All communities value education for their children. Education as one of the public goods, therefore, must not only be valued by the community and the people, but must be advanced and protected or preserved. In this background the present school whose case study has been presented as an ideal for the authorities, teachers and communities of other schools.

The Government Kangumajhiguda PUPS is established in the year 1961 and is situated at a distance of about 15 Kms. from its block headquarters Papadahandi of Nabarangpur district. The school has a beautiful infrastructure, including sufficient number of classrooms, boundary wall, kitchen shed and garden with varieties of decorative plants etc. There are four teachers working in the school, including the Headmaster. All the teachers are also dedicated and strongly motivated for the development of the school. The substantial infrastructure, beautiful garden, learning environment, commitment of teachers, community members and children often attracts the attention of authorities, visitors and parents towards the school.

The most significant feature of this school is that the community of this school is prepared to invest their own time, hard-earned money and energy in its development. A school that has strong constructive relations with the immediate community. The historical success of the schools is constantly motivating and spurring stakeholders and role players to associate themselves with the schools in the interest of education.

Major initiatives of the Community Members

All the Community Members of this school joined together for the overall development of the school as well as children. Some of the major initiatives taken by them are as follows :

Advocating Enrollment

Before the beginning of each academic session community members conduct a meeting with their members, parents and teachers and identify the numbers of eligible children of their village for admission in a particular year and prepare their parents for such activity. After few days they conduct a Mela kind of activity in the school and on that day each parent come to school with their children and enroll their children in the school

Table-1: Student Enrolment in Kangumajhiguda U.P School by Caste/Tribe and Sex

Class I-VIII										
SC		ST		OBC		GEN		Total		Grand Total
B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	
0	0	54	68	34	19	1	0	89	87	176

Ensuring Retention of all Children

After enrolment of the students weekly two/ three community members visit the school to check the regular attendance of the students. During that visit they note the names of the irregular students and consult their parents and ensure their proper attendance. The matter also find a place in the monthly review meeting of the community members & teachers.

Raising Corpus Fund for Schools

The community members also collect a few amount of money from the villagers based on their financial conditions as well as from the teachers and other employees of different departments working in the village. They have a corpus fund for the immediate expenditure of various activities of the school.

Making Decisions about School Infrastructure and Activities

In each and every year the community members prepare a brief and workable school development plan for the school. The plan covers some of the important aspects of the school like infrastructure, student attendance, learning achievement and school functions. The community members supports the teachers to execute the plan and provides necessary resources (material and human) for this purposes.

Ensuring the Quality of the MDM Programme

The most important contribution of this community is ensuring the good food to the children as per the norms of the government. Sometimes community members also contribute from the corpus fund for the good quality of the MDM programme. Every day one of the community members attend the school during the distribution of MDM and taste the food before serving to the children. The community has also received a seal and certificate from the district administration as recognition for this great deed.

Cleanliness and Hygiene Practices

As like other activities community has also expressed its interests towards the cleanliness of the students and school environment. The entire school environment has been cleaned and maintained properly by the community members themselves on free of cost. Community members and teachers jointly also ensures the cleanliness of the students.

Contributing in Labor, Materials and Funds

The major contribution of the community members is their time and labour they spend for various activities of the school like, school visit, meeting, gardening, participating in school

functions and children's activities, cooking, observing school activities and learning performance of the students etc

Kitchen Garden

Another major contribution of the community of this school is the kitchen garden. Most of the community members involve themselves on their own in this activity and this kitchen garden also supports for MDM programme of the school.

Preparation of Teaching Learning Materials

The school has one Art teacher who takes the support of the community members and children and prepares most of the Teaching Learning Materials of the school. Community provides various kinds of resources, including raw materials for the TLMs of the schools.

Preparing Children's to enjoy the School

The community members by participating in various play activities of the school encourage the children and teachers.

Classroom Environment

All the classes, i.e. classes I to VIII, are held in separate rooms. There are reading and TLM corners in all the rooms. The school has gained name and recognition for successful implementing all the interventions e.g school environment, classroom environment, teaching-learning process and evaluation, school-community relationship required for the overall development of the school and children. Now the major challenge before the school is the learning achievement of the students. Due to lack of sufficient teachers the school is not able to ensure proper learning levels of the students. However the district level authorities promised to provide sufficient teachers to the school to enhance the quality of education in terms of the learning achievement of learners.

Conclusion

Community participation is the most important strategy to ensure good and quality education, particularly in elementary education. It is a process which facilitates the realization of improving educational quality and the promotion of democracy within society. Communities are also expected to ensure. Communities or people have to take part in defining and shaping their education. Community or civil society should advocate and lobby for life-long education that conserves or promotes basic human values for a rapidly changing social and economic environment and concomitant challenges.

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