



## Role of local community in universalization of elementary education in India

Sambhu Sankar Deep

Consultant in Education Curriculum Development and Evaluation Center (CDEC), PSS Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSSCIVE), NCERT, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

### Abstract

The success of an integrated programme like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan can be ensured if and only if there is an active participation of the Community. The main objective is to strengthen community participation in elementary education with the ultimate aim of community ownership of schools and involvement of women's Group, School Management Committees (SMC) members, and members of Panchayati Raj in fulfilling the objectives of UEE. Our main tasks are to enable the persons in the community, who still believe that issues related to access, enrolment, retention and quality education depend largely on Govt. machineries and teachers, for realizing the actual situation and to motivate them for performing their specific tasks to reach the social target through SSA. Involvement of the community under SSA is through broad strategies such as community ownership, community-based monitoring with complete transparency, habitation as a unit of planning, accountability to community, priority to girls education, focus on special groups, pre-project phase, role of teachers and district elementary education plans.

**Keywords:** community, Elementary, Management, realizing

### Introduction

The Declaration on education for all emerged from the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), which was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. It stated that: National, regional and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary: partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education, Partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families. Genuine partnerships contribute to the planning, implementing, Managing and evaluating of basic education programmes. When we speak of 'an expanded vision and a renewed commitment', partnerships are at the heart of it.

Community participation in education is not a new concept in India. In the early years after independence, it was viewed and promoted as part of the liberation rhetoric. In Gandhi's scheme of education, a school or any kind of educational setup was an integral part of the community. With the virtual governmentalisation of primary education, schools become totally alienated from the community they served. Then again, community participation becomes a major agenda of discussion in the country in the mid-1980 when decentralization began to be recognized as an important component of educational reform and change processes. The National policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and 1992 recommended not only promoting participation of the community in primary education but also a movement towards empowering the local community to make major management decisions in this regard. The subsequent 72<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendments passed in both the houses of parliament gave further fillip to this move towards decentralization and community empowerment in

management of education. Community participation and empowerment for Elementary education is gradually acquiring a place of importance not only in education management discourse, but also in political reorganization measures in the area of public administration.

Participatory Management of Schools involving the communities has been recognized as crucial at policy level. In most of the cases, the community participation in school improvement is being obtained through involvement of Parent Teacher Association. On the other hand, there are non-parent public who represent various sections of the society, have stake in the improvement of the school and willing to contribute their ideas, time and resources for the welfare of their own school.

### Concept of Community Participation in Indian Context

The term "community participation and empowerment in elementary education" is a comprehensive one and encompasses two important principles. On the hand, it can be constructed as the total participation of the community in the system to facilitate the achievement of the goals of UEE. On the other hand, complete community participation could be considered as a tool for self-development and empowerment of the community. "Community" is obviously not a homogenous notion. "It is either various communities unequally placed". Pre-modern or primary communities have set social forms, very intense, by which people are classified as similar or different. More importantly, these are communities which are not formed on account of the "convergence of interest" that underscores the identity of the other form of community. In contemporary discourse, the interest-bonded communities are those that are being structured and encouraged to participate in the development process. "Community participation" is perhaps the most misused and misunderstood word in development jargon today.

Community in itself has no meaning –it is like saying “India” or “Orissa”.

When we speak of community participation in primary education, again it is the involvement of parents and community leaders as partners in supporting educational activities that contributes to improvement in their own lives. Participation is an experience felt differently by different people in different circumstances, even in similar situations. This is because the benefits that flow from participation may not be same for all.

### **Village Education Committees (VECs) as School Governing Bodies**

Though it is a constitutional mandate to create elected panchayat bodies at local levels, within the federal structure of the country, it is for the state legislatures to decide on actual powers and responsibilities that the panchayat bodies will be vested with. Most of the state governments have been slow to act in this direction. However, several states have created village Education committees (VECs) to specifically oversee the functioning of elementary education at the village level. “ A Village Education Committee, comprising not more than 15 members with representatives from parents, panchayats, co-operatives, women, scheduled castes, tribes, minorities and local development functionaries will be constituted to look into the overall management of all educational programmes at the village level”. The programme of Action 1992, felt that the major responsibility of the VECs should be operationalization of micro-level planning and school mapping in the village through systematic house to house survey and periodic discussion with parents. The powers of the VEC, visualized by the CABE committee included: visits to schools, checking of attendance and other registers, recommending annual budget, undertaking maintenance and repair of building, etc. in many states, village education committees have been constituted. The experience in this case is mixed. While some VECs function effectively, many tend to become dysfunctional in course of time. A major problem seems to be lack of a programmatic frame work for their functioning on a regular basis. Also, local community members do not seem to fully understand the ways in which they could influence decision making at local levels.

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan strives to universalize School education with community participation, has tried to achieve community participation through School Management Committee (SMC). Majority of the SMCs are not aware of their roles and responsibilities and they are not functioning on their own. In many panchayats, the local people are not aware of the existence of SMC in their villages. The resulting effect is lack of sense of owning on the local school by the local community.

The RTE Act stipulates that 50% of the parents in the SMC will be women. However, for these women to function effectively and for them to be able to address and monitor gender issues and to include them in school development plans, capacity building inputs being provided to them should include a strong element of gender sensitization. Raising issues of discrimination in a community context where social, gender and caste hierarchies operate at many levels is a difficult task and persons entrusted to do so will have to be empowered and supported in this process. Similar training programmes can be thought of for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

In the context of community participation, it is important to underline the significance of the teacher as a key partner in planning and implementing community participation strategies. In fact participation for RTE implies a mutually supportive and collaborative partnership among teachers, pupils, parents, community and civil society. It is an established fact that teachers perform better and with enthusiasm if they get wholehearted parental and community support. The integrated scheme assigns special importance to decentralised planning and implementation with active involvement of community members, teachers, parents, local bodies including Panchayati Raj Institutions, Municipal Bodies, and other stakeholders in the management of school education through establishment of multi-member SMDCs. Every school may constitute a SMC/SMDC at the school level which will include representatives of local authorities, academicians, subject experts, officials, representatives of disadvantaged groups, women and parents/ guardians of student. The SMCs/SMDCs are expected to co- exist with and leverage on the Parents Teachers Association. Meetings should be planned and conducted on a regular basis.

### **Functions and powers of School Education Committees India**

1. Determine school calendar and times
2. Monitor attendance of children and teachers
3. Periodical review of children’s performance
4. Create and maintain infrastructure
5. Implement school nutrition, mid-day meal, health care and immunization
6. Sports activities
7. Science exhibitions
8. Cultural activities
9. Recruit, appoint and fix service conditions and emoluments of teachers and disciplinary control over them
10. Sanction leave, transfers and disciplinary action against staff and teachers
11. Promote activities including enrolment drive, parents’ meetings, and measures to reduce dropout rate
12. Undertake and monitor adult literacy and non-formal education programmes
13. Train local teachers, PEC members and volunteers
14. Oversee the functioning of teachers’ centers
15. Accord permission to start new schools
16. Levy education fees
17. Manage the education fund and prepare accounts
18. Prepare budget
19. Prepare annual school report
20. Prepare annual Education for All report
21. Plan schools and other types of education in the district
22. Recommend suspension of ration cards of parents who do not send their children to
23. Administer high schools and evaluate their performance
24. Arrange distribution of textbooks
25. Review the school calendar
26. Oversee implementation of vocational and audio-visual education

### **Capacity Building of Community level Institutions**

SSA provides for training/capacity building of members of Village Education Committees, School Management Committees, and Parent Teacher Associations etc. The

norms provide for training of four persons in a village plus two persons per school for two days in a year- preferably women at the rate of Rs. 30 per day per person. The VEC/SMC etc. and community are generally sensitized and oriented on their role and functions in the light of various interventions of SSA like gender, civil works, procurement procedures, Inclusive Education etc.

### Training programmes

- Nagaland: Utilization of the funds and preparation of utilization certificates; maintenance
- Of accounts, banking etc.
- West Bengal: Role of community in monitoring attendance of students and teachers and
- Identification of out of school children.
- Bihar: Participation of disadvantaged section of the society including SC, ST and women in
- The school management.
- Kerala: Convergence with Local Self-Help Groups and NGO sector towards effective
- Education system.
- Madhya Pradesh: Training of PTAs on micro planning.
- Uttaranchal: Utility of Educational Mapping and usage of local resources.

### Material developed by states

- Almost all states have developed manuals, handbooks, and training materials for master trainers and VECs/SMCs/MTAs/PTAs etc.
- *Gujarat*: Module on gender awareness and girls' education.
- *Uttaranchal*: Manual on financial Guideline to VECs, handbook on role of VEC to educate
- Children with special needs.
- *Madhya Pradesh*: Training module for PTAs including posters and charts based on the
- Content.
- *Rajasthan*: Sang Vidhan Patra and rules for constitution of SDMC; MTA folders, Community
- Mobilization folder and SDMC training module.
- *Bihar*: 'Abhiyan'-one day orientation module for VSS members, 'Pahal'- two days training
- module for community leaders, 'Pahal'- one day training module for community leaders on
- Inclusive Education and 'Samvad'- Half yearly block level orientation module.
- *Jharkhand*- Handbooks on rights and duties of VEC developed and distributed to all VECs.
- Training material in the form of display card developed to make training effective.
- *Orissa*- Developed three different modules for training of VECs; handbook on role of VECs;
- And categorization format to assess the performance of VECs.

### Initiatives/ advocacy campaigns

- '*Mother Sammelan*', '*Meena Week*' and '*International Women day*' at school, cluster,
- block, district and state level to promote the girl child- Himachal Pradesh
- '*Haat- Bazaar*'- Awareness campaigns about the Govt. scheme for women and children in
- Tribal areas of Gujarat.
- '*Literacy Campaign*' for illiterate mothers- Gujarat.

- *Special enrolment drive* and *Jati Mahasabha* in tribal pockets. – Orissa *Enrolment drive* for out of school children- West Bengal
- '*Mukhyamatri Shiksha Sambal Maha- Abhiyan*- Campaign to improve the academic and
- infrastructural status of the education system- Rajasthan
- *Bal Melas*- Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Delhi
- *Maa Beti Mela*- Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat
- *Puppet shows*- Kerela, WB
- *Kalajathas*- Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Manipur
- *Street plays*- Kerela, Bihar, WB, Delhi
- *School Chalo Abhiyan*- Uttaranchal
- *Melas*
- Awareness of SSA-Haryana
- Pravesh Utsav Mela- MP
- Holi Mela- Gujarat
- School Melas- Kerela

### Linkages of local bodies/ communities with panchayati raj institutions

A number of steps have been taken in all States/UTs to decentralize powers to Village Education Committees/Panchayat/Urban Local Bodies through legislation or State Government Executive orders. The interface of grass root level bodies with Panchayati Raj Institutions is detailed below:

1. **Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** The local bodies are PRI institutions duly elected by the people directly whether in urban or rural areas.
2. **Andhra Pradesh:** At Gram Panchayat Level, Sarpanch is the chairman of Panchayat Education Committee. At Ward Level, the Chairperson of the Municipality or Mayor of Municipal Corporation is the chairman of Municipal Education Committee. At District Level Chairman of Zilla Parishad is the chairperson of District Education Committee. At Mandal Level, Mandal Parishad President is the chairman of Mandal Education Committee. These committees are the specific mechanisms by which the two set ups co-ordinate at elementary education. Since Head of Local bodies are the Chair Persons of the Education Committees at various levels, coordination exists between these two set-ups.
3. **Arunachal Pradesh:** PRI is an essential part of elementary education. But PRIs are not yet fully involved in educational activities.
4. **Assam:** The Gaon Panchayat President is the ex-officio President of GPEC and other Gaon Panchayat members of that GP which are President of VECs are the members of GPEC. Gaon Panchayat member of the village is the ex-officio President of VEC and in case of TGEC, the GP member of that area is the ex-officio member. In case of SMC, the GP member of that area is the ex-officio member. Concerned ward member of the ward is the ex-officio President of WEC. Regarding above, it can be mentioned that these committees i.e. GPEC, VEC, TGEC, CEC, SMC are neither the part of PRIs nor any sub committees. But there are some powers and functions which have been given to these committees, which help to coordinate/ implement the activities of PRIs.
5. **Bihar:** Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti are PRI Institution. Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti is a Sub-

- committee of Sukh Suvidha Samiti of Gram Panchayat. The Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti functions under the direction of Sukh-Suvidha Standing Samiti of Gram Panchayat Constituted under section 25 (i) (iii) of the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act, 1993.
6. **Gujarat:** The local bodies/ communities are part of PRI system.
  7. **Haryana:** Two members of Panchayati Raj Institutions have been taken as members at each level i.e. district, block, village, Municipal Corporation, nagarpalikas, ward committees. The local committees are neither PRI Institutions nor a part of sub system/committee of PRI system. However, these committees work as an arm of Panchayati Raj System and are complementary to each other.
  8. **Himachal Pradesh:** In the rural areas the chairman of the school committee is Pradhan, Gram Panchayat, Vice Chairman is Up Pradhan, Gram Panchayat and 3 elected members of Gram Panchayat are also the members of the School Committee. In urban areas the Chairman of the school committee is president, Nagar Panchayat, Vice Chairman is Vice President, Nagar Panchayat and 2 elected members of Nagar Panchayat are also members of the School Committee.
  9. **Jharkhand:** The local bodies at various levels are the part of PRI institutions itself.
  10. **Karnataka:** The Zilla Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and Village Panchayat are responsible for the Elementary Education in the rural / urban areas. Rural schools civil works are exclusively taken up by ZP/TPs/VPs. Sometimes the civil works in urban areas are taken up by ZP/TPs. □ The urban bodies look after civil works in urban areas. Municipal Corporation in Bangalore runs primary schools. But in other Municipal areas the Municipal bodies cooperate in civil works and provide uniforms to the weaker section.
  11. **Kerala:** Postings, transfers and payment of salary and allowance are met by the State Govt. PRIs look after the welfare measures of the Govt. schools. There are Standing Committees on Education in the Panchayats, Municipalities, and Corporation & District Panchayat Levels. The District Planning Committee coordinates and is headed by the District Panchayat President, Purchase Committee is headed by the Standing Committee Chairman.
  12. **Maharashtra:** The Zilla Parishad is a Panchayati Raj Institution. □ Panchayat Samiti is a part of Panchayati Raj Institution itself. Committee of sarpanchs is separate from the Panchayat Samiti but functions as an interface between Panchayat Samiti at Block level and Gram Panchayat at village level. Gram Panchayat itself is a part of Panchayati Raj Institution. Village Education Committee is not a part of Panchayati Raj Institution. It has a separate existence and is constituted to control and monitor the primary education: regular schools and alternative schooling. Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat is the chairman of the Village Education Committee and thus serves as an interface between Panchayat Raj Institution and VEC.
  13. **Manipur:** · The bodies/committees are the interface of the PRI, since the members from the PRI are included in the constitution of these bodies/committees.
  14. **Madhya Pradesh:** Zila Panchayat, Janpad Panchayat, Gram Panchayat are PRI Institutions. PTA is a unit of PRI. PTA is accountable to Gram Sabha. Education Committee of Gram Sabha has the supervisory role and guides PTA regarding Elementary Education.
  15. **Orissa:** Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat/VEC are part of PRI System itself constituting elected representatives of the people.
  16. **Punjab:** At the Village/School level there is a good interface of rural and urban committees with the PRIs as in most of the cases Sarpanch is the Chairman of Village Education Department Committee. At the district level Collector plays an important role in ensuring convergence of the two bodies.
  17. **Rajasthan:** The bodies, which are controlling elementary education in rural areas, are PRIs itself. Staff of education department working or supervising elementary education in rural areas is completely controlled by these PRIs.
  18. **Sikkim:** Zilla Panchayat is PRI institution and School Management Committee is a part of PRI system.
  19. **Tamil Nadu:** The local bodies are part of Panchayati Raj Institution. The Block Education Committee is headed by the chairman of the Panchayat union and the Village Education Committee is headed either by the president of village Panchayat or by a ward member of the Panchayat.
  20. **Uttar Pradesh:** President of the Village education Committee is the head (Pradhan) of village Panchayat. In rural areas. In urban areas, president of the Ward Education Committee is the elected counselor of the municipal corporation municipalities.
  21. **West Bengal:** At District level- a) There is a permanent education committee in which D.I of schools (P.E), D.I of schools (S.E), DPSC chairman are members. b) In DPSC, there are Zilla Parishad representatives: One person from each sub-division. S.I of schools (P.E) is the ex- officio secretary of the education committee. A Panchayat member is the VEC President. There is a Panchayat Nominee in every School Managing Committee.

#### Initiatives by Community for achieving UEE

##### Assam

- Substituting teachers as per necessity.
- Motivating parents of disabled children for their enrolment in schools.
- Mobilization of fund for the development of the school.

##### Bihar

- Sanctions and supervision of incentive allowance to students for regular attendance.
- Construction work based on cost effective technology.

##### Dadar & Nagar Haveli

- Provision of drinking water facility.
- Shala Pravesh Utsavs (Enrolment drives)

##### Gujarat

- Community contribution of approx. 2.6 crore rupees during the Enrolment drive celebration.
- Education materials like aasanpatta books, note books, pen-pencils and snacks to children in Alternative schooling system.

### **Jharkhand**

- Social audit by organizing Aam- Shabha (General meeting) Quarterly.
- Substitution by local teachers in absence of regular teachers to facilitate smooth running of the school.
- Constitution of child cabinet to promote interaction among students.
- Identification of CWSN for enrolment in schools.

### **Madhya Pradesh**

- Updation of VER.
- Appointment of volunteers for Non-Residential Bridge Course, Human development center in urban slums and shishu Shiksha Kendras.

### **Manipur**

- Appointment of education volunteers in EGS/AIE centers.

### **Mizoram**

- Preparation of Habitation plans.
- Maintain Village Education Registers.

### **Nagaland**

- Disbursement of salaries of teachers- following the principle of "No Work No Pay"

### **Orissa**

- Mobilize parents for regularity of students.
- Initiatives for enrolment of girls.
- Identification of out of school children and their enrolment.
- Temporary arrangements in case of shortage of teachers in school.

### **West Bengal**

- Development of educational plans for children in preprimary, primary, upper primary schools, within their jurisdiction.
- Maintenance the micro level database for the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.
- Maintenance of accounts (vouchers, cashbooks, reports etc).

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that SMC are an important role in universalisation of elementary education in India. Without community participation it is impossible to universalize elementary education to a great extent. It is the SMC members who are motivating both parents and children towards school. It is also clear from survey by some Indian investigator that some SMC are functioning where as some are dis-functional in course of time. So there should be such provision that village people could understand the value of village education committees in the village and their role in universalisation of elementary education. So there should be awareness, sensitization and training programme by government, So that the villagers could understand their role and function clearly helps to achieve the vary goal of universalisation of elementary education.

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