


Subject: Human Resource Management

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Paper 15 Human Resource Development Through Community Engagement
Module 16 Quality Education and Community Engagement



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QUALITY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Items	Description of Module
Subject Name	Human Resource Management
Paper Name	Human Resource Development through Community Engagement
Module Title	Quality Education and Community Engagement
Module Id	Module no.-16
Pre- Requisites	Community Engagement: Meaning, Process & Principles
Objectives	To understand the role of community engagement in ensuring quality education
Keywords	Community Engagement, School, Parent Teacher Association, participation

Module 5: Quality Education and Community Engagement
1. Learning Outcome
2. Introduction
3. Relevance of Community Engagement in Education
4. Context of community
5. Community Engagement: Types and Patterns
6. Existing initiatives of School-Community Engagement
7. Ways to Enhance Community Engagement in Education Provision
8. Summary

1. Learning Outcome:

After completing this module the students will be able to:

- Understand the role of community in ensuring quality education
- Identify the existing initiatives of educational services in seeking community engagement
- Provide suggestive interventions to enhance community engagement in guaranteeing quality education

2. Introduction:

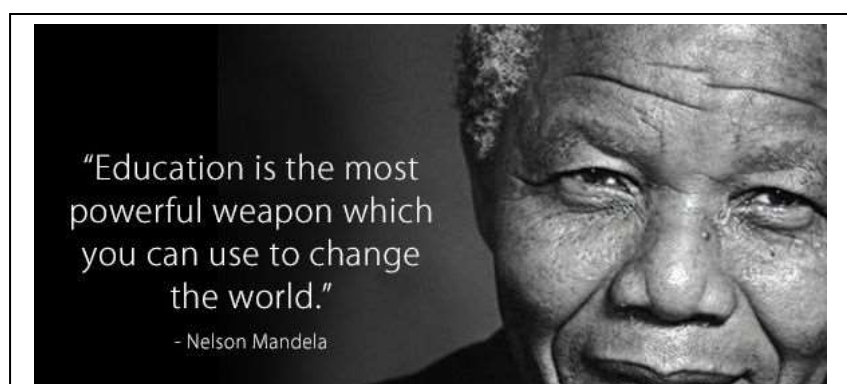
Community engagement has been recognized as one of the vital strategies for attaining the goal of education for all at the national and international levels. Community participation and support ensures greater accountability and transparency from the educational system and more accurately able to highlight the local needs and challenges that act as bottlenecks in provision of quality education. In fact participation of the community including parents in the education process is a necessary pre-requisite. Across the globe, innovative experiments and best practices have undoubtedly shown that community

participation plays a crucial role in ensuring quality education. Sociologists maintain that the idea of community engagement in education is not new to the Indian society. Since ancient times, educational institutions in the forms of ‘gurukul’, ‘pathshala’ and ‘madarsa’ existed as community based/initiated institutions. However, during British colonial administration, schools representing the modern formal education system were established without the involvement of local community members. This formalization of education led to weakening of linkage between schools and community and the gap gradually widened.

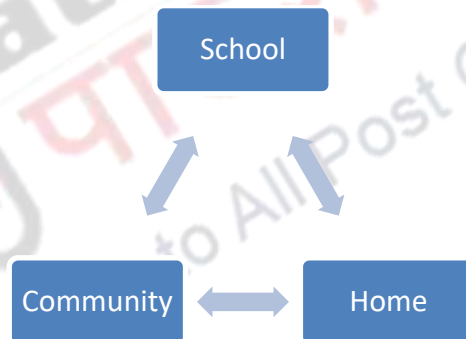


3. Relevance of Community Engagement in Education:

According to Nelson Mandela, “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. It signifies the vital role of education and importance of schools or educational institutions. The National Policy on Education (1986) provides the mission of education in the following words, “education is essentially for all. This is fundamental to our all-round development, material and spiritual. Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit – thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution”.



Unquestionably, education system is an integral part of the community and also a tool to make the community egalitarian and its members empowered. Education system cannot function in isolation. To be effective educational institutions like schools need to respond to socio-cultural specificities of the community. Education is a socialization process, which should ideally be seen as a partnership among students, schools/teachers and parents/ community. The purpose of schooling is the transmission of cultural ethos of the community that promotes social justice, human rights and democratic values to its children. As one of the most stable and formal socializing agent, the school is expected to both train the individual for practical occupations and skills and to provide with basic societal values, like respect to elders, obeying civic norms, etc.



School-Community-Home Continuum



Despite various degrees of responsibilities taken up by each actor (school, parents and community), none can be solely responsible for a child's education. Other than parents and families, community too has the potential to influence a child's upbringing, socialization and education. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, parents and communities.

4. Context of community:

In a common parlance, community is considered as a homogeneous entity where all the members have more or less similar experiences of life events and perceptions on social issues. However, the reality is starkly different. As every individual is different, so is every community. These differential aspects of the community profoundly influence the access and availability of quality education for its children. For instance, in rural India, children belonging to lower caste groups, invariably, do not enjoy the same privileges in accessing education in contrast to those belonging to upper caste groups. Caste discrimination is a harsh reality. Despite being outlawed, caste based untouchability still exists in the contours of social fabric of Indian society. Dalit children are often not allowed to sit along with upper caste people, they are discriminated during provision of mid day meals and experience corporal punishment more frequently than other children. Urban children, represent a heterogeneous group – slum children do not receive quality education with the same ease as their counterparts coming from well-off families. Street children who struggle for two meals a day, working children who are the only earning members in the family, girl children who need to forego education as they may have to care for their

¹ The Hindustan Times

younger siblings, children with disability may remain out of school due to lack of disabled-friendly infrastructure have to encounter different kinds of challenges to access education.



Migrant families in urban areas have different sets of problems and challenges in contrast to the people of a community often live in the low line areas and face submergence of their house every year. Children infected and affected with HIV/AIDS are denied education due to associated stigma and discrimination with the infection. Several communities in Tamil Nadu, Kerala inhabit left behind families of international migrants. They largely survive on remittance. Absence of a parent poses different kind of problems for children and their educational attainments.

The communities in India are at different stages of socio-economic development and educational attainment. Despite over six decades of planned development, a quarter of the populations in India still remain illiterate. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate in the country is 74.04 percent. This includes 82.14 percent among males and 65.46 percent among females. All the studies have identified that incidence of low enrolment and high dropout rate at the elementary stage is a matter of serious concern particularly for the girl child education. The second major concern is the quality of education. However, the nature and extent of the problem varies from state to state, region to region and from community to community. Due to differential socio-economic background, the communities respond to education and developmental programmes differentially.

Thus, it is clear that needs and challenges of each group of children differ significantly in terms of accessibility, availability and affordability of schooling. Unless educational programmes initiated by the government or other non-state actors do not address this variability in the community context, they are bound to fail to achieve their aim of quality education to all. Only creating school buildings and appointment of teachers do not automatically ensure educational attainment to every child. The socio-cultural milieu of the community may pose hurdles despite existence of physical infrastructure of schooling system. This makes engagement with the community a must for rightful quality education for every child.

5. Community Engagement: types and patterns

The level of community engagement is dependent on the kind of intervention need in a certain socio-cultural context of that particular community. It may range from creating awareness about significance of education in life to advocating for the rightful admission of children belonging to marginalized community into the school system. Shaffer (1994) has classified community engagements into seven degrees or levels, described as follows:

1. Involvement through mere use of a service (say, enrolling children in school)
2. Involvement through the contribution (through providing money, materials and labour)
3. Involvement through 'attendance' (like parents' meeting with teacher and passively accepting of school's decisions/feedback on child)
4. Involvement through consultation on a particular issue (for instance, the school may consult parents on a matter related to mid-day meals)
5. Participation in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors (say, staff recruitment)
6. Participation as implementers of delegated powers (say, making school disable friendly or initiating inclusive education system)
7. Participation 'in real decision making at every stage' (like identification of land for school, developing indigenous literature, decisions on teachers' appointment, monitoring, evaluation, etc.)

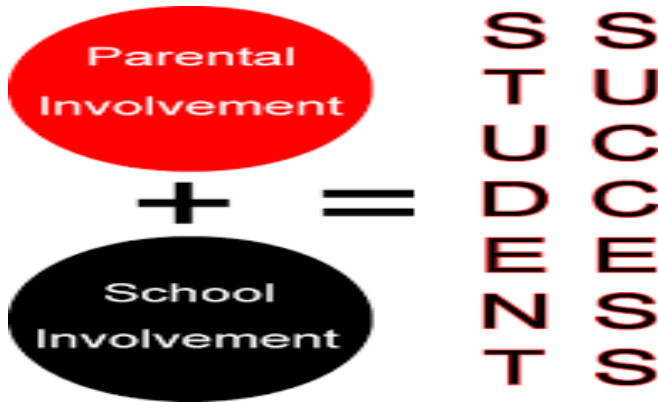
Shaffer asserts that the first four levels with usage of the word involvement largely connote passive collaboration, whereas the last three levels with the word participation implies a much more active role.

Another categorization of community engagement may be in the following ways:

5.1) Active or Passive Participation: In passive participation, community people are merely informed about the educational programmes, and participation is at rudimentary level. On the contrary, community people may actively participate in decision-making, planning and execution of various activities related to school functioning.

5.2) Participation can be legislated or self-mobilized: When legal or constitutional backing is provided to participatory structures, it is legislated. For instance, 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have recommended setting up of local bodies and for their involvement in providing educational and other services. On the other hand, sometimes people participate by their own initiatives, independent of any external system or change agents and such self-help initiatives would fall under this category.

5.3) Participation by providing information or material contribution: Further, sometimes people participate merely by providing information such as in research and at times, participation is through contribution in the forms of labour, cash or kind. In various programmes, community contribution is sought in the form of matching grants.



With the advent of modern and formal education system, role of family and community has shrunk considerably. Moreover, in India, we do not have common school system. There are private schools and government owned and government aided schools, each type having its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Government schools, largely caters to children coming from economically weaker sections and these schools encounter challenges like frequent school drop-outs and in maintaining quality education. School social workers often have to deal with problems like lack of motivation among parents, absence of conducive home environment for studies, resistance in sending girl children to school, first generation learning and such others (Gandhi, 1990). In private schools, with the government’s inclusion policy, an increased level of heterogeneity is seen among the pupils of same class and school social workers may encounter problems like bullying, drug addiction, familial problems impacting academic performance, emotional and sexual problems, adjustment with peers from different cultural backgrounds, and so on.

In the absence of school, home and community liaison our education system suffers from number of impediments, specific among them are – high dropout rates, mental health problem, adjustment problems,

biasness in favor of children from higher socio-economic strata and schools catering for the elite group having no touch with social realities.

Social workers work directly with the pupils having problems in adjusting in their social environment, coping with studies, anxiety, issues related to developmental tasks, scholastic backwardness, truancy, school phobia, and such others which may have root causes embedded in the family and community. They play wide range of roles – preventive, management, supportive, promotive, mental health intervention, crises-management and support services. They also facilitate community involvement in the schools while advocating for student's well-being.

Educationists have stressed that for optimum development of children there should be strong inter-linkage between the school system and parents or families and the community. School, home and community are the three pillars of education system, concerted and collaborative efforts of which can result in the goal of quality education for all. In India as well as in other countries, experiments have shown that wherever community has taken ownership to oversee the functioning of schools, there have been significant improvements in quality education coupled with high retention rate of children in schools.

6. Existing Initiatives of School-Community Engagement:

The community participation in education can be understood by examining existing community structures and their functions in education. After Independence, there have been constant efforts in terms of new policies and programmes for promoting community involvement in education. The National Policy on Education (1986) recommended the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework at the district and sub-district levels, such as, District Board of Education and Village Education Committees (VEC) for greater involvement of local community members in the management of elementary education. Furthermore, through the 11th Schedule, the 73rd and 74rd Constitutional Amendments have entrusted roles and responsibilities to the Panchayati Raj bodies in management and control of education including primary and secondary school, technical training and vocational education, adult and non-formal education, library and cultural activities.'

Community participation has been translated into reality with the creation of various grassroots level structures of community's engagement and participation such as, Village Education Committees (VEC), School Management Committee (SMC), Mother Teacher Association (MTA), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Mothers Associations and Women Motivator Group (WMG). The VECs and PTAs, having representations from both the school and the community, are the participation structures set up mainly for improving functioning of schools. Community participation (parents, community as well as local elected

bodies) was visualized as one of the basic components of all major Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) projects which were initiated in pursuance of NPE, 1986 recommendations like Bihar Education Project, U.P. Basic Education Project, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish, etc. In DPEP, decentralization and community participation are being put into practice on a very large scale. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which is the latest nation-wide programme formulated by the Government of India to universalize elementary education also lays emphasis on community ownership of the school system. The SSA works on a community based approach to planning and monitoring the system of elementary education. It envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRIs.



Moreover, various educational programmes such as DPEP, SSA, delineated specific roles and functions of VECs and PTAs in elementary education. These are: ensuring enrolment of all the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years; monitoring school activities for retention and providing quality education; paying special attention to the educational needs of the girls and other disadvantaged groups; to improve facilities in the school, like compound wall, new classrooms, toilet facilities, repair and maintenance etc; and on the whole to involve community in the school management. However, wide variations are found in the nature and composition, roles and responsibilities of VECs and PTAs across the states and districts.

Village Education Committee that comprises of seven to fifteen members has the responsibility of promoting enrollment, assisting in smooth functioning of the school, and mobilizing resources for school improvement. VECs have been entrusted with the responsibility to check attendance, school functioning and accountability of teachers. To ensure their empowerment, training is imparted in the desired task they have to perform. Village/habitation being the smallest unit of micro-planning, the VEC has an important role in preparing educational plan and universalizing elementary education.



Like VECs, PTAs have been formed for ensuring co-operation of the parents of the children attending the school. In some states, along with PTAs Mother Teacher Associations (MTAs) have also been formed to seek co-operation of the mothers of the children attending the school. This is a smaller body as only parents of the enrolled children are the members. Some of the functions performed by the PTAs/MTAs are as follows: assisting teachers in conducting school activities; helping teachers in conducting door to door survey work; assisting teachers in motivating the parents of out of school children for sending them to school; and providing feedback to teachers about educational progress of their children. Besides, in some states like Madhya Pradesh, PTAs have been assigned larger responsibilities like that of construction, repair and maintenance of school buildings/classrooms.

On the whole, the VECs, PTAs and various other community structures have been created to forge and strengthen linkage between the community and the school. These also give adequate representation to the disadvantaged groups and look after the functioning of the schools. However the effectiveness of the VEC depends upon the awareness and motivation of the members and technical and resource support provided to them. Community support and participation can be enhanced through following measures.

7. Ways to Enhance Community Engagement in Education Provision

By now we have understood that the community **has the potential** to play a vital role in making education system efficient and effective and can contribute towards realization of the goal of universalization of quality education. Decentralization of educational governance has been articulated in the policies and efforts have been directed towards institutionalization of community's participation for education. This kind of community's engagement has been backed by the Indian Constitution through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Systems and structures like VECs, PTAs, MTAs, etc., have been created to ensure engagement of the community with education system. The community participation and support in the process of educating children becomes a necessity so that the education is more responsive to the local needs, reflects more accurately the local perceptions and produces a sense of ownership and responsibility.



It is apparent here that 'community is not a homogeneous, monolithic entity, but one that lends itself to varying interpretations. Community support and participation has to be perceived as a context specific expression. 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. However, mere creation of these structures is not enough. We need to provide necessary help and keep working to strengthen its functions. There exists several problems and challenges that need to be tackled so as to ensure community engagement in true sense. Some of the salient challenges are as follows:

Decentralization of educational governance is one of the major strategies for inducing greater community involvement in education. However, merely formation of local level bodies and handing over basic education to them cannot ensure community's participation. Until community realizes its ownership and actively engages itself in functioning, especially decision-making related to education, these local bodies remain paper-tigers. There are several reasons for ineffective functioning of local bodies formed for ensuring education:

A huge proportion of members of VEC, PTAs, MTAs, are not aware of their roles and duties. Majority of them, especially the poor, are illiterate or semi-literate. Their focus remains on earning two square meals a day. They even lack motivation to oversee the functioning of school. Even educated parents and well-aware community members generally do not show readiness in actively participating in school activities. Psychological preparedness is of crucial significance for engagement of community people in educational activities. However, traditional administrative system, initiated by the British, worked on bureaucratic principles of maintaining hierarchy, secrecy and rigid following of rules. Indian society too has had cultural values of 'conformity' due to which asking questions from authority is refrained from. Obedience and respect to the authority has been the normative practice in India. So, questioning or contesting a teacher or school has been difficult to even comprehend. And when educated parents refrain from confronting the school system, expecting a poor illiterate parent to be assertive in front of teachers has been unquestionable. This is another major bottleneck in ensuring transparency and seeking accountability from the education system.

Next, despite best of intentions, meticulous planning and resource allocations, several initiatives to spread education by the government after Independence failed as the community did not feel the need of education. Schools were established in communities and teachers were appointed and all efforts were made for easy accessibility of education to children. At several places in India, we still make the same mistake. Providing school does not ensure attainment of education by pupils. Creation of demand of education is vital and supply (schools) without demand would remain unutilized. Once a community (including parent or child) feels the need of education, efforts would be made to acquire education. This demand creation was done in Total Literacy Mission, which gained huge success. Government adopted various initiatives such as Kala Jatha, Nukkad Natak, Bal mela, radio, TV programmes, production of video and audio cassettes, printing of newsletters and pamphlets, etc., for disseminating information about benefits of education and that created demand for education and also enhanced community participation.

After creating awareness and working on the psyche of the community members so as to motivate them to actively participate in monitoring of school system, next step is their capacity building. Block Resource Centres and District Institute of Education and Training can provide training and orientation to members of VECs, community leaders, youth and other volunteers.



2 © Arkaprava Ghosh / Barcroft India

Once the community people are aware, are motivated and are trained, they can help identify and address factors that contribute to educational problems, such as high dropout rate, poor academic performance, etc. Community participation can aid in promoting girls' education. Through participation in school activities, talking to teachers, parents and communities can understand importance of girls' education which has the potential to improve their lives, improved family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates, and reduced child mortality rates, and their economic empowerment.

Aware and participatory communities can help in developing indigenous curriculum and learning materials so as to make the education more functional and relevant.

Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. When parents contribute their time, labor, materials, land, and funds, they tend to be more involved in school activities, including participating in meetings with teachers and monitoring teachers' performance. Participation can greatly help develop accountability, which contributes to improving the education delivery. Community members are expected

² <http://theindianschool.in/nukkad-natak-based-on-the-uttarakhand-floods-held-at-dilli-haat/>

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https://www.google.co.in/search?q=bal+mela+image&rlz=1C1CHBF_enIN745IN745&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjkyft3_7UAhXHQ48KHbveAhYQ7AkIQQ&biw=1366&bih=662#imgrc=FtnYqzF1VoKohM:

to be actively involved in the process of interventions through planning, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, they are expected to acquire skills and knowledge that will enable them to monitor, and evaluate efficiently.



Thus, community engagement in enhancing quality education provision has three stages:

First, community awareness is a pre-condition to utilization of educational services. Creating a demand for education is the subsequent step which prepares the community to view need of education as their primary and basic need.

Second, community mobilization and participation is the second stage. Now, the community starts realizing the need to involve itself in education system, appraises the existing specific socio-cultural and economic challenges that act as barriers in acquiring education and also collectively finds ways and means to address them. Capacity building of community people is a part of this stage.



Third and final, community participation and empowerment is the stage when the community has learnt the dynamic factors that influence education attainment and is now prepared to actively engage itself in the process of education. Community people through various forums participate in the school system, closely monitor its functions, attend to the loopholes and issues that are hampering effective functioning of schools. In this stage, sense of ownership of school system prevails and community members participate in the school system as a matter of their duty as well as right. It ensures community empowerment and also provision of quality education to its children.

Summary:

The scope of community participation in the educational process has been expanded and widely acknowledged over the decades. The decentralized system envisages the community as an active partner in the process of planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the school activities. Various efforts have been made to ensure community support and participation in school education. Challenges related to community's engagement in provision of education are discussed. Community

awareness and demand creation are the pre-requisites to ensure utilization of educational facilities. Active community participation or engagement in education system facilitates transparency and accountability and help in realizing the goal of education for all.

