

Assessing the Role of SMCs in Promoting the Quality of Education at Primary Level in Baluchistan:

By

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Abstract:

The school management committees (SMCs) or community participation in schooling has great importance for the sustainability and quality of the education. Through the concept of community participation it was determined that the school administration and community people would jointly undertake decisions regarding educational booming. The community and school would work together to ensure the quality of the education in school at primary level by enrolling maximum number of children into school and retention of dropout, besides this the SMCs have also responsibility to ensure the basic facilities to students and teachers both. The Major role of SMCs is to ensure the quality of education by assessment of teachers and students performances and confining them to their roles and responsibilities.

The study was based upon the qualitative approach, the data was gathered thorough key informants and Focus Group Discussions through purposive sampling technique, the main respondents for the study were educationists, higher education department management and some respondents were also selected from the community.

The findings show that compared to the TORs of SMCs physical at ground the impact were very rare due to many reasons i.e. teachers not accepting the community intervention in schooling activities specially assessing the teacher performance, the identified member of the SMCs were not volunteering their time for SMCs activities and critical reason was that most of the SMCs members were not educated.

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Introduction:

Community participation in the school management has been felt strongly in each era, so, in this way an effective partnership between the school and community was considered to form at the dawn of the democracy in south Africa, where all other stakeholders like church, business men, political leaders were taken into confidence, because of their role assembling the people for “working together”. Both the school and community had to work together in order to prepare the students to address their educational challenges in 21st century.

Community participation in schooling regarding minor repair of the school building and increasing enrolment is quite old than the summit named as Education for All (EFA) in 1999. The people of community used to cooperate and work with the school administration regarding the improving the standard of education. They stayed committed to contribute to the school in the form of cash, labor or any there form at that time.(Yamada, 2014)

The World Bank report in 2013 explained community participation in such a way, that the community participation in schooling is not merely receiving the share of project benefits, but rather work actively in the process whereby the beneficiaries divert the direction of development towards school betterment. The SMCs can play important role in engaging the community people in education as well as in developmental activities of primary education, which will reflect higher standard in the educational institutions. (Ramachandran, 2013)

It is in the interest of nation to involve the community in schooling, there should be mutual sharing of resources, decision making which will facilitate the link between school and community. The channel of communication should be kept open for facilitating such relationship and cooperation. An old dictum that “No communication no community”. So, this relation or communication could create harmony, cohesion, integration, unity, oneness and belongings between the school and society. The school should act as an effective forum for maintaining such interaction. (Condy, July 1998)

In Pakistan it has been observed that the standard of education is not up to the mark regarding promoting quality education. Thus, on the basis of such fact it is recommended by different organizations that unless the community is not involved in schooling the education system cannot achieve the desired targets. The federal directorate of education in Pakistan in (2001) narrates “Social development objectives and outputs can neither be pursued nor ensured either by the governments or the society alone. Social service delivery, particularly those related to education and learning thus needs to frame sound and functional idea and effective partnership between the government and society”.

The Structure of SMC:

SMC/PTA is a “democratic organization which attempts to bring parents and teachers together in the interest of the child” as defined by Ajay.

The Federal Directorate of Education in Pakistan describes the structure of SMC/PTA in such a way that “SMC is an executive committee of the teachers of the school and community, which is elected for the period of two years. The members of the committee are those volunteer parents and guardians whose children are enrolled in the school. The members of the committee are elected through majority of votes. The committee creates awareness among the community people about the importance of education and persuades them towards the schools, so that they may send their children to school. The committee goes through the annual academic record and reports and minor repair of the school. It also provides counseling to the guardians and parents, teachers and students that how to generate the resources and chalk out the policies which can be implemented for the improvement of institution” (Javid Iqbal, 2011)

The Responsibilities/ Terms of Reference (TORs) of SMC

The major aims and objectives/Tors of SMC/PTA as prescribed by constitution are as below.

- 1) To work for the well-being of every student, institution and society.
- 2) To create awareness among the parents that not only teachers are responsible but they have also a key role in provision of quality education.
- 3) To encourage the active involvement of parents in the promotion of standard of education.

- 4) To create awareness among the people of community to use optimum level of time for educational facilities offered by the government to catch the experts from the community members.
- 5) To motivate and inspire the parents to send their children to educational institutions especially in rural areas.
- 6) To thought out the ways and means that how to decrease the dropout, retain the teachers' absenteeism the in schools and enroll maximum number of children into school.
- 7) To develop fraternity and harmonious relationship between the school and home or parents and avoid bureaucratic rigidity of the both side.
- 8) To improve the standard of institution and work for the benefit of students while mobilizing the resources of community. (Javid Iqbal, 2011)

Rational of the Study:

It is an historical fact that whatsoever the community had not been involved in schooling, the school could not give a tremendous output, neither it rested successful in the enrolment of maximum number of children nor sustained the development and repairing of the school, so, this noninvolvement of community ultimately led the education to the worsen position. Thus, it was the mission and vision which was put forward by the UNO to call a summit about booming the education at universal level by involving the community in the education of their children. The summit was called in 1990 in Thailand, named as education for all (EFA). The summit appreciated and encouraged the involvement of community in education of their children, so that to achieve the desired targets, and thus as a result the SMCs were established in the schools, which in fact caused good development in the enrolment of children, retention of dropout and other necessary repairing of the school.

Community participation in schooling becomes much more important in the societies where there is very less acceptance for education and the people are living tough traditional life. District Zhob is a traditional society; the people are more adhere to traditions and religion. They have very less tendency towards education. The parents send their children to Madrassa and engage them more upon in other works rather than sending to school. The literacy rate is very low.

This research study assesses the Role of SMCs in promoting the quality of education at primary level in Baluchistan. The findings of this research study may become the source of knowledge for the students of sociology, social work and other social sciences and for the students of education, where they can easily understand SMC and its role in promoting the

quality of education, furthermore, the students may explore the said problem on different angles and try to bridge the gaps. The findings of the study can prove a good tool and base for making policies and future planning to make the SMC more effective and functional. The findings give a clearer picture of the SMC in the locale and identifying the gaps, found in the way. The study further suggests that so far the work done by the SMC has not achieved the targets which should be achieved while ensuring the quality of education in the schools. So, there is more attention needed to focus the area.

In the present research study qualitative research method has been adopted, because this method has been used in many research studies in the past and got rich and valid data on similar topics. Qualitative research method was also deemed relevant to the nature of the topic. Regarding sampling technique Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data only from those respondents, who were directly link to the problem.

Limitations of the Study:

Assessing the Role of SMCs in promoting the quality of education at primary level in Baluchistan is a vast topic. It cannot be compensate in a single research study because of its multi-angle and multi-dimensional aspects. Some of the limitations of the study are narrated as below.

- 1) This research study has been conducted in the urban areas, which are more educated comparatively, but if such study is conducted in rural areas, it may give some new and different insight to the readers and also to policy makers.
- 2) This research study was conducted on qualitative research base with a small sample size; a quantitative research with a large sample size can give a clearer results.
- 3) Another limitation of the study is that this study was conducted on cross-sectional basis but a longitudinal study on different times and occasions can prove more valuable for addressing the issue.

Review of Literature:

Decentralization in education is a policy introduce in many developing countries of the world as part of the public sector reforms. Decentralization like in the broader sense is the devolution of power to the lower parts, similarly in education decentralization means strengthening the capacity building of the school administration through various training sessions. The budget is direct disbursement of capital grant to schools to meet the school expenditures, which abolished the power at higher level

and devolve to the community. Along with the devolution of power and authority the responsibilities of decision-making transferred to schools, where not only principals and teachers of the school will make the policies but the parents will also be involved equally in this process, so, this was reason when School Management Committees (SMCs) became popular administrative tools and an effective source of managing school finance and participation of the community in schooling, which caused the improvement of quality education and access to education, thus as a result the SMCs contributed to achieve the targets of globally agreed program Education for All (EFA). By having a sense of ownership, it is considered that the community people will contribute and donate in improving not only the effectiveness and efficiency of school administration but the quality of education too.(Yamada, 2014))

On the other side the government while providing education to the masses has led to a great explosion in this(education) field in the history, however, on the same footing it has also been noticed that due to economic constraints it has become difficult to provide the entire population with metropolitan-like education. The school remains often fail to equip the children with required and quality education, it is because there are some obstacles which bar the pace of progress like the distances of schools from the community, demands of children at home, cultural norms hostility to formal education etc. similarly in some other areas the retention of dropout children has been a problem of great concern. The children are admitted to the schools but they drop before reaching to their potential level. The poor quality of learning is also a problem of a great concern. The weak inputs transferred to the children are not the standard which can motivate the students. (Williams, 1999)

To ensure the regularity of teacher and students in the school the Whole school development (WSD) plan was launched in Bangladesh. The motto of the plan was to control absenteeism in the school. Through such program the grant and training was given to the principals, teachers and community representatives. The program resulted fruitful output and caused 21 % reduction in student absenteeism and 23 % in the teacher absenteeism. The study reveals that the villages with high literacy rate yielded enormous outcomes; however, on other side the villages with low literacy yielded negative results. (Blimpoy, 2011)

According to (Mamun, 2014) in Bangladesh the SMCs of primary schools at rural areas are not functioning well, but in urban areas comparatively

the committees are good. They have high potential to improve governance in primary schools. In rural areas a major portion of SMCs could not receive the required training of their responsibilities, even a large number of committee members were not aware of their prescribed role, so as a result they could not visit the homes of drop out and irregular students. The findings of the study indicates that in remote areas most of SMCs were found not playing the required role to prevent drop out and increase enrolment, even there the attendance of teachers remained an issue of concern.

The involvement of parents and community in school management has increased the social and academic targets of children in different countries. So, analyzing this development the government of Pakistan and the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa decided to involve the communities in schooling on regular basis. To achieve these targets the prior mentioned governments established committees named “Parent Teacher’s Councils” (PTCs) in the schools. Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa was the first of all other provinces in country to form these committees or councils in 1993. The basic purpose of the council was to enhance the role of community in increasing the enrolment rate, keeping surveillance on the teachers and students regularity and discouraging their absenteeism, minimizing the unnecessary interference in educational institutions and consuming the fund granted by the government in minor repair and other commodities like class rooms of the school. Head teacher or principal of the school was given authority to call a meeting of the parents quarterly in order to settle the problems faced by the school.”. (Nasir, 2013)

Methodology:

In this research study exploratory research method has been used, where it “Assessed the Role of SMCs in Promoting the Quality of Education at Primary Level in Baluchistan”. It is a cross-sectional study and the data has been collected on the basis of qualitative research. Qualitative research method has been used in many studies in the past while exploring the role of SMCs in the school management and promoting the quality of education, which has proved relevant according to the nature of the problem and rich data has been collected.

Universe:

Universe is the geographical area where the research study is being carried out. This research work has been conducted in district Zhob, Baluchistan, and the data has been collected from three union councils namely U.C. Nasarabad Muhalla, U.C. Babo Muhalla and U.C. Killi Sheikhan.

Sample Size:

The data has been gathered from 40 key informants and also through Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) from the educationists, higher education department management and some respondents were from the community. The data can be generalized to the population of the entire district.

Sample Design:

Sample represents the whole population of a selected universe. The researcher has gone through the purposive sampling, where those respondents were selected, who were directly linked to the selected problem. The research problem in hand was not a general problem but it was directly linked with the educationists, SMC members and head teachers of the schools. So, only these relevant persons were interviewed. The researcher interviewed the respondents through face to face interview and also gathered data through focus group discussions.

Tool of Data Collection:

In order to observe the problem within the locale, the researcher employed the interview guide tool to fetch the data from the respondents.

Tool for Data Analysis:

After conducting research, the data was analyzed by thematic analyses. The researcher converted collected raw data into neat data on the basis of similar answers and interpret by applying thematic analysis.

Results/Findings:

- Group discussion and Key informants interviews were started by asking respondents about knowing the SMC members of their basic responsibilities, majority of the key informants and participants of the group discussion shared that the SMC members don't know of their basic responsibilities. It is because that they have not been given trainings, where they can understand their responsibilities. However, the head teacher of the school and the committee chairmen are comparatively good in understanding their responsibilities. The participants of the FGD of the supporting organization shared that the SMC members are told their responsibilities informally in different meetings and occasions, but formally they have not been told their responsibilities through trainings. One of the key participant shared

that there are two types of activities which are performed by SMC, the one is hard which also called material like repairing of the school building etc and the second is soft which is also called non-material like controlling absenteeism of teachers and students, increasing enrolment and dropout retention etc. The respondent went on to say more that unfortunately the SMC members just remember the hard activities and forget the soft ones.

- The key informants and participants of the discussion group about asking the role of SMC in controlling absenteeism of teachers and students shared that the role of SMC in controlling absenteeism is not praiseworthy especially in the case of students; however, about the teacher the committee go behind the teacher if he is missing for the long time. But about the students the committee doesn't pursue the case, and this is the reason when the dropout rate is very high.
- Asking the respondents about the regular meetings of the SMCs almost all of the participants of the group discussions and key informants shared that the SMCs are completely fail while calling meetings of the committee on the set frequencies. The members shared further that there is no proper schedule for the meetings. The committees call meeting rarely, or sometime on emergency basis when there is an urgent issue faced by the school administration.
- Regarding training of the SMC members when asked the respondents, almost all of the respondents of the Focus Group Discussion and key informants were equally found agreed on the point that there is no any training for the SMC members and not they have been given training since they were established, so this is the reason when the members of the committees don't know their basic responsibilities in proper way. However, a few number of respondents shared that the SMCs who are formed before 2012 had been given training two times or three times, but after that there is no any training for the new SMC members.
- Asking about the acceptance of community intervention in schooling specially regarding assessing the teacher performance the participants of focus groups and key informants viewed that the school administration and teachers association are never ready to let them do it. The respondents shared that the teachers association considers it an external intervention in the school affairs. One of the key informants argued that when the SMCs were formed at first the association launched agitation against these committees and declared them interference in their authority. The respondents of the study shared the committees are not given the assigned authority so that they may work according to the rules of the SMC. The universe Zhob is a tribal

- society. The participants shared that in tribal set up no one wants to be under the supervision of someone else.
- Based upon the sharing of the respondents by asking them about the members of the SMCs are volunteering their time for SMCs activities, it was found that majority of the respondents were viewing that the members of SMCs are not serious in this work. They consider it as secondary or tertiary priority. So, this is why the result is zero. The members and key informants shared that the members even do not attend the meetings despite they are informed well before the meeting, and this is the reason when the attendance ratio remains quite low almost in all meetings, along with this the meetings are also not on the set frequencies as per the SMC rule.
 - Asking about the education and qualification of the parents who are the members of SMCs, the respondents shared that majority of the parents in SMCs are uneducated or very less educated. The members further shared that it is indeed a big obstacle in promoting the standard of SMCs work. The members even don't know the value of SMC and community participation in education, and thus it is the reason when SMC cannot give the desired output.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The present study is about “Assessing the Role of SMCs in promoting the quality of education at primary level in Baluchistan”. The findings of study show that there were multiple challenges for the SMCs in the locale regarding promoting the quality of education. The meeting which is the part and parcel for devising strategies and planning for the school management were found quite regrettable. The members used to ensure their attendance in the meetings very rare. There were no any criteria for the training of the SMC members. Since the committees established the members had not been given training, so, as a result they were found completely unaware of their basic responsibilities. The members of the SMCs were mostly found uneducated especially the parents, who could not understand the objectives and purpose of the SMC. The study further revealed that there was no acceptance for the SMC from the school and especially the teachers association. The association could never accept the interference of community in the school affairs especially the assessing the performance of the teachers. On this behalf they had also launched agitation against when the committees were formed at first. The study revealed further it was also a critical reason in this way that the SMC members were not sincere to reserve their time or volunteering their time to ensure the quality of education in the community school.

Suggestions:

Based upon the findings/results and discussion of the research study following suggestions are presented to make the SMCs more dynamic and functional in promoting the quality of education in community and make the teachers and teachers association accept the community involvement and SMC members should spare their time for school.

- Based upon the findings of the study majority of the SMC members from the community were found illiterate, who could not understand their responsibilities, so there is a dire need to convince the literate persons in the community and select them in the SMC, as each community has some literate persons at least.
- Through the sharing of respondents it was noticed, that the SMC members were not given training, which is the basic need to orientate and understand the members of their basic responsibilities. So, there is the need of scheduled and emergency training for the SMC members.
- Based upon the findings of the respondents the resistance from the school and teachers association was a matter of great concern, thus it is suggested that the government should interfere and help the committees to mobilize the community and over through the resistance in the path.
- As expressed by the respondents the budget for SMCs is very low, which is only 3000 per year, which is very less to manage the expenditure of the school in a year, so it is suggested to increase the budget so that the committees may accommodate the school expenditure. Besides this the DSA (Daily Service Allowance) should also be given to the committee members during the meetings for the purpose to ensure higher attendance rate in the meetings.

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