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Community Participation in Indian Education System: A Reflection from the NEP 2020

Name of Scholar: Sanjay Kumar (Education),

Regd. No. 71911323, CT University

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Namesh Kumar

Abstract

After the independence India, from the first Secondary education Commission (1952-53) and the latest National Education Policy 2020, highly recommends the involvement of Community Participation in the education for its betterment. Many flagship programs are launched by government for the improvement in the quality of education in India. The community should have an access to be in the schools, learn about the schools and observe what goes on in these schools. The present thematic concept paper focused on the policies and their recommendation on community participation along with the latest policy on Education, Named as National Education Policy (NEP-2020). The NEP 2020 recognizes that education is not just the responsibility of schools and teachers, but also of the community at all levels. The policy emphasis to create a more participatory, inclusive, and equitable education system that involves parents, community leaders, Yuva/Mahila Mandals and other civil society organizations in the participatory decision-making process of the formal education setup.

After RTE Act 2009, it is essential for constructing community board for each school and Himachal Pradesh has undertaken several initiatives to encourage community participation in the educational system. Further various suggestion also recommended by this paper for community participation in school education.

Key Words: Community Participation, NEP 2020, decision-making process

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Introduction

An insight in to the past makes us familiar with the various schemes, plans and policies for the upliftment of Education and to increase the gross enrolment ration. Government of India has many policies and planning on school education and community participation after independent. Firstly in 1952-53 the Secondary Education Commission recommended to construct a managing board of schools for ensuring the proper operation and the maintenance of standards. Secondly B.G. Kher Committee (1953) focused on the need for decentralization of school management to attract community involvement and involvement of local bodies to promote and manage education. Subsequently, again the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957 recommended that primary education must be responsibility of the Panchayats. Kothari commission (1964-66) also emphasized the importance of community participation in the school education and recommended that it is essential to establish coordination between local communities and school to develop quality education in the school along with the recommendation of decentralization of education at all levels.

Further National Policy on education (1986), recommended creating District boards of Education to manage education till higher secondary level. Within a multi-level framework of educational development, Central, State and District and Local level agencies will participate in planning, co-ordination, monitoring, and evaluation. Local communities, through appropriate bodies, will be assigned a major role in programmes of school improvement.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the flagship program of Government of India 2001, now renamed as Samagara Shiksha Abhiyan, also focused on involvement of community participation in schools for the success of the programme. Many kinds of community-based institutions have been involved such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Mother Teacher Association (MTA), Village Education Committee (VEC) and Gram Panchayat etc. The government of India has initiated a programme for universalization of secondary education known as "Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan" in 2009. According to RMSA, Involvement of Panchayati Raj and Municipal Bodies, Community, Teachers, Parents and other stakeholders in the management of Secondary Education, through bodies like School Management Committees and Parent – Teacher Associations will be ensured in the planning process, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. After independence, time to time, Government

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of India has made policy and Act for decentralization of education. Many programmes have been initiated to achieve the goal of decentralization of education.

Concept of Community Participation

Community refers to a group of people from a common geographic area, caste, sex, religion. According to word bank (1999), Communities can be defined by characteristics that the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class, and race. Participation can be referred in various ways depending on the context that clarifies different levels of participation such as participation in real decision making at every stage, attendance in meetings, services etc. According to Mark Bray (2000), a community has at least some features such as: a network of shared interests and concerns; a symbolic or physical base; extension beyond the narrowly-defined household; and something that distinguishes it from other similar groups. Community participation in education helps to identify issues and problems in school education. School is a part of community and community supports school to give quality education to every student for the development of the society. According to Tanka Nath Sharma (2008), Community participation and involvement follows as First, the community should have an access to be in the school, learn about the school and observe what goes on in school. Second step would be to make community aware of the situation and make them realize the importance of their involvement in schools where their children are receiving education. Third step would be involvement in the management process of the school where their children are learning, they will be ready to get into the process of involvement. Fourth step would be decision making and be a part of school governance.

National education policy 2020 and community participation in education

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) provides a comprehensive framework for the development of education in India and focus on community participation in education is the important features of this document.

The NEP 2020 recognizes that education is not just the responsibility of schools and teachers but also of the community at all levels. The policy emphasis to create a more participatory, inclusive, and equitable education system that involves parents, community leaders, and civil society organizations in the decision-making process of the formal education setup.

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To promote community participation in education, like the previous policy documents the NEP 2020 proposes the following recommendations:

1. **Establishment of School Management Committees (SMCs):** as previous policy recommendation, the NEP 2020 policy recommends the formation of SMCs at the school level, comprising parents, teachers, and community members, to oversee the functioning of schools and provide feedback on their performance.

2. **Involvement of local communities in school governance:** The NEP 2020 envisages the involvement of local communities in the governance of schools, including the appointment of teachers and principals, and the allocation of resources.

3. **Promotion of community-led initiatives:** The policy encourages the promotion of community-led initiatives such as the establishment of libraries, playgrounds, and other infrastructure facilities, to support the educational needs of students.

4. **Partnership with civil society organizations**: The NEP 2020 recommends the partnership of schools with civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of education, especially in areas such as teacher training and curriculum development.

Furthermore, the NEP 2020 recognizes the imperative part that community plays an important role in the progress of education and proposes several methods to promote community involvement in the education system. These measures are aimed at creating a more inclusive, participatory, and equitable education system that benefits all students, regardless of their socio-economic background

Initiatives by Himachal Pradesh for community participation in Educational System

Himachal Pradesh has undertaken several initiatives to encourage community participation in the educational system. Some of these initiatives are:

1. **Mahila Mandal Protsahan Yojana:** This initiative encourages women's groups to participate in the education of girls by providing them with financial assistance to establish libraries and support schools in rural areas.

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2. **Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs):** PTAs have been established in all government schools in the state to involve parents in the education of their children. These associations provide a platform for parents and teachers to discuss various issues related to the school and the students.

3. **Village Education Committees (VECs):** VECs have been set up in each village to monitor and improve the quality of education under SSA. The committees comprise members of the village, including parents, teachers, and local authorities. Now it has been replaced by School Management Committees (SMCs).

4. **School Management Committees (SMCs):** At present, all Government and Government aided schools of the state has constituted school Management committees (SMCs) under RTE-2009 to monitor and improve the quality of education and to provide adequate infrastructure. It comprises of parents, teachers, villagers, anganwari workers and Panchayati raj Institutions.

5. **Bal Sansad:** Bal Sansad is a children's parliament that is organized in schools to provide a platform for students to voice their opinions and ideas. This initiative helps to develop leadership qualities among students and encourages them to participate in school activities.

6. **Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSSs):** JSSs are established to provide vocational training to adults in rural areas. The initiative aims to encourage community participation in education and to enhance the employability of the local population. These initiatives have helped to improve the quality of education and encourage community participation in the educational system in Himachal Pradesh.

7. **Shiksha Samvads (Aam Sabha):** Shiksha Sambvads are being organised in the schools in order to encourage parents, teachers as well as other community members of society to provide a common platform to discuss on the quality of education being provided to the children in the school as well as to discuss upon other issues that affect the functioning of the schools. Such types of initiatives encourage community to own, cooperate, decide and then work for local schools. At present, these are being organised quarterly basis in all over the state of Himachal.

Suggestions for Improvement in Community Participation

There are following suggestions for improvement in community participation-

- The training programmes like 'informed-decision-making process', 'Group-discussion' and 'participatory rural appraisal (PRA)' techniques should be developed and given to all teachers so that a training in shape of participatory methods may be imparted to community which will be community centred and will create interest.

- School Heads and community member should be quite aware about current amendments of policies (RTE, 2009& NEP2020). Awareness programmes should be organized at village level about community participation. Democratically, SMC members should be elected.

- Proper communication system between school and community should be developed. Community linkage programme (CLP) should be organized at all level.

- Functioning of SMCs should be properly supervised and monitored by higher Authorities. Their responsibilities should be fixed.

- The involvement of SMC members needs to improve in the daily activities of the school. Its timely meeting should be organized properly.

- SMC members should be motivated to take part in all the school activities such as identifying children with special need (CWSN), school going children (specially girl-child), admission drive, preparing village education register (VER) and convincing parents for sending their children to school.

- Schools can engage parents and guardians by inviting them to participate in school activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, Shiksha Samvads, monthly school meetings, and volunteer opportunities.

- The school administration can increase awareness of execution of school level teaching and non-teaching activities and programs by sending regular updates to parents and the community through social media, whatsapp groups, emails, newsletters, and local newspapers.

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- Schools can host community events, such as Jan-Samvads, book fairs, science fairs, sports and cultural events, which can bring together students, parents, teachers, and community members.

- Schools can establish ownership with local businesses, community organizations, and non-profit organizations to create opportunities for students to participate and learn in internships, apprenticeships, and other career development programs.

- By Inviting guest speakers/lectures, such as community leaders, formers, professionals, and subject matter experts, to speak at school events can provide students with a broader perspective on various topics.

- Schools can create advisory committees composed of parents, children, teachers, and community members to provide feedback and input on school level teaching-learning policies and programs.

- Schools can offer adult education programs, such as English as a Second Language, job training, and GED preparation, which can help engage and empower members of the community who may not have been involved in education previously. The concept of 'Community-Library' may be started from school-yards.

- By implementing these suggestions, schools can increase community participation in education, which can lead to better student outcomes and stronger communities.

Conclusion

The educationists and policies on Education claim that community participation increases the quality of education. In the developed country, community participation is important for the school governance with positive results. It creates ownership and responsibility of community towards schools which is a subsystem of it. School Management committees have much authority for school management such as academic, administration, to prepare village education register, to prepare disaster plan of school, to recruit adequate staff, to develop infrastructure and to expend the grants etc. Community participation is not a solution to solve every issues and problem of the school, but it facilitates the school to bring quality in teaching-learning process of school. After RTE Act 2009, it is essential for constructing community board for each school. Indian states have made their own rules for community formation for school education and states like Himachal Pradesh, SMC's are recruiting the

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teachers from their own funds with the collaboration of state government. This has helped in recovering the lack of teachers in the schools. A regular check of SMC also decreased the absenteeism of teachers and students in schools. Therefore, such responsible type of community participation in the shape of SMC is a revolutionary step for the improvement of quality in Education.

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