

Community Participation in Schooling and its Impact on Increasing Enrollment and Dropout Retention

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Abstract

Community participation in school management is highly important, because the school administration cannot overcome all of the challenges of school alone. Through community involvement the work becomes easy, and promotes the quality of education, as we are living in typical tribal society, where the people have fewer tendencies toward education. Thus, the idea of community participation gets high value. The present study explains the impact of community participation in increasing enrolment and dropout retention. The study was based upon the qualitative research method, where the data was collected from 40 key informants through face-to-face interview. The purposive sampling technique was applied and only those respondents were interviewed who were directly link to the problem. The findings show that besides multi and overwhelming challenges the PTSMCs are playing active role in the enrolment of out-of-school children and retention of dropout. The members go and persuade the parents to bring maximum number of children into school. The study reveals that the existence of PTSMC has improved the standard of education.

Key Words: Community participation, dropout retention, increasing enrolment, school management, PTSMC

Introduction

The world declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 observed in its article (7) that all national, regional and local educational authorities have the unique obligation to provide basic education for all, the conference was held in Jomtien Thailand. The declaration observed that the partnership between school and local community, the private sector, religious groups and families at all level will be necessary. So that to achieve quality and quantity education for all.

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The declaration further viewed that to meet the basic learning needs for all children, youth and adult for the purpose to enhance their full capacities in order to live and work with prestige, dignity and improve their living standard and enable them to make informed decisions. The declaration also emphasized that for achieving these ends the participation of educational partners means the community is quite necessary to actively participate in every stage of policy making and its implementation, so that to fulfill the actual demand for basic educational services. (Bray, 2000)

Getting education is crucial for the development and social justice, however, it has the concerns or issues of drop out and lack of enrolment on global level as highlighted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Goal 2. As per report of the Global Monitoring the Education for All (EFA) indicates that sixty-one million of school going children were found not enrolled in schools and a huge number of children reported of drop out at the early stage who could not reach to minimal learning standard, but it is desirable that the children should rest in schools till graduation. The MDGs however, affected the standard of education to great extent and many out-of-school children enrolled in the schools. (Victoria A. Namukwaya, 2014)

Despite having progress the world failed to achieve the targets of Millennium Development Goal 2 of the universal primary education by the year 2015. The data witnessed that after completion of the prescribed time many of the children from the developing countries of Africa and Asia remained out of schools, it is said that about 59 million children in the school-going age were recorded out of school in the year 2013 and it is also revealed that 1 in 5 of those children reported had dropped from the school. So, to overcome this mountain-like challenge the UNO called a summit of all the member nations in September 2015 at UNO office to chalk out a new vision for the said program as Universal Primary Education (UPE). The title of the program was set as “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, where 17 goals were set, among these goals the goal number 4 was “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The summit further explained that by the year 2030 it will be ensured that all girls and boy should complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

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Review of literature

Community participation in school management

Community participation in the school matter 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. (Ramma, 2010)

It is in the interest of nation to involve the community in school management, there should be mutual sharing of resources, decision making which will facilitate the link between community and school. 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 creates 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, 1998)

In Pakistan it has been observed that in public schools the condition of promoting education is not praiseworthy. So, as a result it is realized by different organizations that without involvement of local community in schools it is quite difficult to achieve the targets. According to federal directorate of education (2001) “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, functional idea and effective partnership between the school and the society”. (Condy, 1998)

School can work effectively if parents are involved in it. Similarly the school principals can also play a better role in promoting quality education when parents are participated actively in the school process. But in Pakistan unfortunately it has not been entertained likewise. The culture of parents engagement has not been in vogue for the long period of time, so, the parents participation remained quite poor. However, in the last decade the government felt the need of it and introduce the concept of (PTCs) means Parent Teacher Council. According the rule the principal of the school was appointed as the convener of the committee. He will supervise the committee. It was indeed a good move for the promotion of quality education, however, it could not meet the expected result, because besides assigning a new or additional responsibility the principal was not given extra incentives, and so, as a result

he failed that he could show full concentration. Thus the (PTCs) have become dysfunctional. The study further reveals that along with the incentives the principal should be given training in order to deal the PTC effectively. This will indeed improve the skill of the head teachers. (Jehanzeb, 2013)

The role of PTSMC in increasing enrolment and retention of dropout

To analyze the efficiency and importance of SMC in last decade of twentieth century, some community model schools were established. The project was aimed to retain the dropout and enroll out of school children, which resulted positive response. In the second phase under the specific objective of inducting all children of the project area into school, bore an unexpected result and brought the dropout rate to zero percent and apart from this the community provided optimum facilities for monitoring and physical materials of the school. (Habib, 2014)

The main reason for leaving primary school is financial. Studies have shown poverty to be the main cause forcing children off the school. In the year 1977 a study indicated that 79 percent of dropout came from low-income households. Corporal punishment is another much-cited in-schools reason for dropping out. In 1989, 52 percent of Pakistani teachers were found to use physical punishment with their students. In the long run reducing dropout rate results decreases in both the direct and opportunity costs of primary schooling. This in turn increases enrolment and is an important step in achieving universal primary education in Pakistan. www.yespakistan.com

The involvement of parents and community in schools management has improved the social and academic aspects of children in different countries. So, in this way the government of Pakistan and the government of Khyber Pashtoonkhwa decided to evolve a strategy to involve the community in schools on regular basis, to achieve these ends the said governments established bodies like “Parent Teacher’s Councils” PTCs. Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa was the first of all other provinces in country to form such bodies in 1993. The basic purpose of the body or council was to enhance the role of community in increasing the enrolment rate, keeping surveillance on the teacher and students presence and discouraging their absenteeism, minimizing the unnecessary interference etc in educational institutions, besides this the PTCs also involve in spending the fund granted by the government in small repair and other commodities like class rooms. Head master 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 administration. (Nasir, 2013)

In Pakistan school management committees SMCs are called with different names, however, it works with the name Parent Teacher School Management

Committee PTSMC in Balochistan. The committee carries out its work in responsible way.

Rational of the study

Community Participation in school management has great importance in the present era. This activity is motivating the community people to involve in schooling. It has strengthened the educational system and school management, without community involvement the people are not even able to secure the schools and education from different dangers. So, there is dire need that the government should ensure the community participation in schools, so that to make the community responsible in this regard. This study highlights the significance of community participation in the schooling. The findings of the 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 the idea of community participation in schooling and know the true situation in the locale. The students may further 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 community participation and PTSMC more effective and functional. The findings give a clearer picture of the situation of the community participation and identifying the gaps, which are present in the in this regard. The study suggests that so for the work done by the PTSMC has not achieved the desired targets in the school management, 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 in 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 and relevant data was collected from the respondents. The sample size for the study was 40 key informants. The respondents were interviewed through unstructured interview guide, where they openly expressed their views. The respondents were from ESP-UNICEF staff, office bearers of Education Department, head teachers and other PTSMC members like parents.

Results

Regarding Community participation in school management

The key informants argued that it is highly important in schools. In the past when the funds were allotted, it was consumed without any planning. But since

the community involvement has introduced or school management committees have established, the fund is consumed with mutual consensus. A lot of work is done in less budget in the supervision of the committee members. The decisions are undertaken with mutual consensus and understanding, and after that the signatures are put of all members. The societies in the world having better standard of education is only through the community participation, where the PTSMCs play dynamic and functional role. The community participation is quite necessary for the promotion of education but if such involvement of community remains dead, than as a result the school becomes the hub of other activities rather than educational activities, which is alarming for the development of society. Community participation is a good act and activity. It creates the cohesion between the school and community. The school problems are solved with mutual cooperation of the school and community, which definitely creates easiness for the school administration. If there is any issue in the school, instead the head teacher the committee members go to education office and solve that issue. It is joint effort, which always yields fruitful results. Through the involvement of community the work of the school is being done in front of the community, which resultantly creates an atmosphere of confidence and trust. In such participation the work is done through mutual consensus with the community people, means the opinions of community people are given high respect. In this partnership the division of labor comes forth in a sense that the work is divided among the school and community, where the work is done by different people according to their capabilities and approach.

About the question of “The role of PTSMC in the enrolment campaign”

Most of the PTSMCs found active. The committee members undertake sincere efforts and launch campaign to enroll maximum number of children into school. The respondents viewed that to achieve these targets the committee members join the enrolment campaign and walks arranged by supporting organizations at the beginning of the academic in March, the PTSMCs also announce through loud speakers in the bazaar, in mosques, arrange press conferences, conduct seminars, meet the parents of the children, the religious clergies of the mosques, the notables and the elected members of the community. The committee members highlight the importance of education. Few of the respondents further shared that the PTSMCs of their school besides joining the enrolment campaign of the supporting organization also arrange enrolment walk on their own behalf. Furthermore few of the respondents viewed that in such campaign the PTSMCs of their schools are quite inactive.

Regarding the “Challenges and issues to PTSMC in the enrolment of out-of-school children”

The key informants viewed that the biggest challenges for PTSMCs to enroll large quantity of children into schools are poverty, illiteracy, shortage of schools especially for the girls, scarce budget for education, the parents being uneducated, lack of interest of the parents, sparse and scattered population the ghost schools, occupation of tribal lords on the schools' buildings, migration, distances between the schools and homes of the children, tribal rigid traditions and disputes, the over burden on the classes, overcrowded classes, the religious trend, (where the people prefer more to send their children to Madrasa rather school especially girls), lack of awareness, child laboring and the laziness of the PTSMCs.

“The efforts being taken by PTSMC in order to retain dropout”

Based on the sharing of Key Informants most of the PTSMCs were found active in retaining the dropout. The respondents explained that when any student drops from the school during the academic year, the committee members approach his parents; and try to bring the dropped student back to schools. If they do not succeed in bringing the dropped student, then the committee members approach the notable persons of the community or religious clergy of the mosque for the purpose to make the parents readmit his child into school, in short the PTSMCs at all cost try to retain the dropout students in the school. furthermore about half of the respondents viewed that in their schools the supporting organization has established a sub-committee with the name of “Child Club”, where there is a position of “Survey Secretary”, whose function is to identify and collect the data about the dropout students, then this boy shares the data with the head teacher and PTSMC, after that the committee members go behind the dropout students and inquire about the causes of dropout. Moreover, a few number of the respondents viewed that the PTSMCs of their schools are not more active in this regard, they added to retain the dropout students they call the parents of those students on their own behalf rather than PTSMC platform. One of the respondent viewed that out of school children are called the Labors. There are 25.2 million children out of school in Pakistan. The dropout ratio is 55% in the country which the official record reports, however, it is 78% originally. The cases of dropout are more happened between the ages from 8 years to 14 and up to 15 years.

Regarding question about “The factors causing dropout”

The respondents were of the view that the leading factors causing dropout in their community are the poverty, child laboring, the parents being uneducated, not given proper time by the parents to their children, the religious mindset,

single school teacher,(if the teacher goes on long leave the students as a result get drop from the school, but if the said post becomes vacant, then the children leave the school), corporal punishment, the inactiveness of the teachers in the school, the insincerity of parents in the education of their children, illiteracy, distances between the schools and homes of the students, the weak performance of the teachers, having no fair command of teachers on their subjects, no proper convenience to school, shortage of schools, tribal disputes, ignorance, lack of awareness about education, teachers' absenteeism in villages especially, discouragement of teachers, the blunt and weak students (when fail again and again in classes and finally leave the school), seasonal crops cultivation and harvesting, livestock in villages especially, the nomadic life of the people from cold to warm areas and vice versa, strictness of the teachers, lack of facilities in the schools, the excessive religious trend, Madrasa culture and not implementation of maternal language in the syllabuses of the schools.

Discussion

The present research study is about the “The Community Participation in School and its Impacts on Increasing Enrolment and Retention of Dropout”. The study shows that community involvement in school management is of high value, where the parents and school combine take the decisions of the school. They try to ensure quality as well as quantity education in the school. The community participation makes the school work easy in such a way that they access to all those forums which bring some development in school. The partnership of community provides courage to the school teachers and makes them able to work without any fear. The community plays the role of a watchman, which surveillance the school from unusual happenings; it works in the management of school on one side and on the other side work as security figure to secure the school from all threats. Though the role of PTSMC is quite extensive, however, it is confined over here to highlight its role/impact to the enrolment of fresh students and retention of dropout students. So, the study reveals that the school management committees are working in approximately in all schools of the district, however, they are not equally functional in all schools, but where there are functional, the committees work for the enrolment and retention of dropout with sincere efforts, the committees attend the enrolment campaign of the supporting organization at the beginning of the academic year, contact the parents and other community people to bring their children to the schools, the committees also launch enrolment walks and announcement through loud speakers, meet the notables of the community so that to divert maximum number of children towards school. In the mid of the year or during the academic year the committees go behind those students who

become drop during the year, the members meet their parents or responsible persons to inquire about the causes of dropout, and try to solve their concerns and reverse the students back to the school, which has proved quite fruitful. The study reveals the involvement of community has greatly improved the standard of education and many new and dropout students have made their way back to the school.

Limitations

- This study was conducted in urban areas of the district Zhob, but if such study is conducted in the rural areas, it can give a new and different insight to the readers.
- In this research study the topic is explore through the cross-sectional study, but having a vast thematic area if such research topic is explored on longitudinal study bases, it can gives some more results, which may prove more valuable in this regard.
- This research study was based upon the qualitative research method with a small size of sample; a quantitative research method with a large size sample can give more clear result.

Suggestions

Based on the key findings/results of the study below suggestions are put forward to ensure community participation more functional in school management, that the result could be seen as enrollment increased and dropout retained.

- The PTSMC members should give training, so that they may understand and orientate of their basic responsibilities.
- There should be a quarterly meeting of every PTSMC with the education department, so that to make them accountable.
- Daily service allowance (DSA) or a specific budget for PTSMC is very much important for making it more effective.
- The meetings on the set frequencies may boost up the efficiency of PTSMC, if the members are bound to attend.
- Joint meeting among all the PTSMCs may make every committee more functional and effective after every three months, where they may share their issues and can find best reasonable solution for them.

- Qualified and relevant persons in the committees may improve the standard of the PTSMCs and can make them more functional.

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