

Chairmen of Parents Teachers Councils and Community Involvement in Public Sector Schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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ABSTRACT

Community participation in schools is necessary for quality of education because parents and the community can play a positive role in the improvement of quality of teaching. For this purpose, the Government of Pakistan and henceforth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ordered to form bodies such as Parents Teachers Councils (PTCs) in public sector schools for strengthening community participation in schools circa 1993. Chairmen who were elected by the parents of students headed these bodies. These Chairmen were responsible to keep a contact with the school and involve parents and communities there in. The objective of this study was to evaluate the performance of those Chairmen and their PTCs as to what extent they were participating and collaborating with public sector schools. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and analyzed by using Chi-square technique. It was found that in some cases Chairpersons were actively participating for improvement of schools, while in some other cases they were not successful in doing so. It is suggested that these Chairpersons should be encouraged in connecting schools and communities through public recognition and media.

Keywords: Parents teacherscouncils, Chairmen, Public sector schools, Community involvement, Recognition, Connecting schools and community

Introduction

In the past it was considered that only Teachers and Schools were responsible for all out academic and social development of students, and that parents and communities were bound only to admit their children in schools. Keeping this factor in their mind, parents and communities did not bother to keep contact with teachers and schools about academic and social behavior of their children. This perspective not only over burdened teachers, but also lowered the performance of children. After certain considerations it was felt that just like teachers, parents and communities should also share the responsibility for the bringing up of their children, such as helping their children in completion of school work at homes, in memorizing class work, in contacting teachers and schools for enquiring about academic position of their children, in participation of school functions and in helping deserving students and schools in the form of cash and kind. Such considerations were shared with parents and communities in most of the countries and it gave a very positive result. Now parents and communities were

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collaborating with schools and together they were fulfilling the responsibilities of bringing up students in other countries of the world. Upon observing positive results in other countries, Government of Pakistan and henceforth Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP in the past) also started the programme of involving parents and communities in public sector schools. It has a lot of literature at its credit.

Review of Literature

Here a few references are given for understanding of the concept. According to Heine¹ Community has two literal meanings (i) a group of people living in the same vicinity and under the same regime, and (ii) a group of people having common interests. According to him a community is an evolving state of likeminded individuals, however, one thing remains intact and that is "place". Accurate & Reliable Dictionary² defines community as "A body of people having common rights, privileges, or interests, or living in the same place under same laws and regulations".

Collaboration of a community with the staff of an educational institution is a guarantee of quality education.

School staff alone is not sufficient to produce qualitative and quantitative academic and social results. Parents and the community can assist a school in a number of ways. They can provide volunteer teachers, free of cost buildings, building materials for the maintenance of school. Similarly they can help students in their home work and can stop unnecessary interference in schools. They can also create a sense of friendly competition in students and their parents. All over the world, governments have invited communities to cooperate with schools.

In the National Education Policy 1998-2010, considering Schools Management Committees, (SMCs) states that: "At the village , chairman of a School Management Committee, who will be an elected person, shall constantly review educational development in the area of his/her jurisdiction and ensure implementation of key policy provisions. The chairperson will also remain in constant touch with education authorities of the area and serve as the key supplier of information through supervisor as well as the Assistant district Education Officer"³.

In this regard Sawada⁴ reported that performance of community-managed schools in El Salvador was better than formal primary school teachers, and that it should involve delegation of powers of school administration and teacher's management to the community group. Shahid⁵ recommended that the school community co-operation was something more basic than parent- teacher or student- community relations. He included a whole chapter on the topic of community participation in his book. Some of its main points were that (i) **there**

must be an effective coordination amongst educating agencies, home, school, neighborhood, community and the state; for the social, moral, spiritual, physical and mental growth of children.

Smith⁶ reported that in the United States, Parents Teachers Associations were a common thing. Every school had a Parents Teachers Association (PTA). In some schools they were known as Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA), their aim was to facilitate parents in their involvement with educational institutions. Antunez⁷ found that beside other advantages of parental involvement in schools, it could improve social behavior of students and stop them from use of alcohol, violence and antisocial activities. Students of high schools could develop a more realistic plan about their future. He said **that instead of income or social status, the best predictor about student's success was their parental involvement in their education.**

Kechia⁸ recommended nine techniques for solid parent-teacher relationships. She proposed that one should i) make the environment of classrooms warm and welcoming, and ii) got extra information about students by sending information sheets to homes. She proposed to guide parents and welcome them i) to visit classrooms to observe teaching, ii) to award top readers in their presence, and iii) to show flexibility with respect to time. Henry⁹ said that not only a classroom but the whole physical building and social environment of a school could be improved with the help of community participation. Sharma¹⁰ wrote that a community is an informal and active agency of education. It can play a number of roles in promotion of education. These roles may be (i) increasing attendance in schools, (ii) financing of education, (iii) maintaining good atmosphere in schools, (iv) catering physical facilities, and (v) providing media of informal education. Mkhabela¹¹ said that all communities value education for their children. Education is one of the public good; therefore, a community must protect and preserve it. It should be used as a tool for social development. Extensive research proved that there is a strong link between community participation in schools and excellent school attendance along with improved academic achievement of students. A sincere and committed community can arrange a lot of facilities for educational activities. It can provide free teachers, space, financing, teaching-learning material and help in school administration. It can also check absenteeism of students/teachers, increase enrolments of students and improve academic conditions of a school. According to a report published in the United States, parents and the community were responsible for quality education of students. Today all family members were inclusive in student achievements. Involvement of a family has positive effects on a child's success; and that students were inspired and motivated through it¹².

Ajmal¹³ conducted a Doctoral study in which he stated that without community participation, education was a one way restricted process and that meaningful interaction between schools and community was part of educational reforms in

Pakistan. He said that his aim was to assess the present situation of community participation in Pakistan and to propose an indigenous model in this respect. Objectives of his study were to (i) evaluate ongoing practices of community participation, (ii) to learn about awareness and reactions of stake holders, (iii) to see association and correlation of opinions of respondents and (iv) to suggest a better model for community participation. His study was delimited to 125 schools of the District of Attock. Findings of his study were (i) most of respondents were of the view that community participation was helpful in management of public sector schools, (ii) there was positive association in opinions of respondents, (iii) political involvement, lack of communication and lack of resources were the main hurdles in the way of community participation and (iv) there was no single model of participation to be followed by stake holders. The summary of the study stated **that parents being the main stakeholders of participation were unaware of their importance and that there was lack of community participation in public sector schools.** He recommended that training of community members, proper communication, provision of incentives to community and curbing political involvement were essential for development of community participation in country. In his own proposed model the researcher included parents, non-parents, social workers, leaders, professionals, volunteers, politicians, senior citizens, teacher unions in outer circle of model; neighbors, Government departments, religious institutions, school councils, PTAs, SMCs, and pressure groups in second row; Head teachers, students, supporting staff and teachers in third row; while school was shown in core of the model.

Sajjad¹⁴ conducted a M. Phil research in District Jhelum (Punjab) on community participation and recommended that for the success of community participation: (i) passive members of PTC/SMC must be replaced, (ii) politicians should support community participatory bodies, (iii) continued monitoring from government was necessary, (iv) an educational and financial expert was a must for each SMC from department side, and (v) suitable honorarium must be paid to SMC members.

Iqbal and Ahmad¹⁵ studied community schools established by the 'Ammal Project' which is supported/financed by FEF, DPE, DFID and an NGO in districts of Dir, Dera Ismail Khan and Mardan. It was seen that mismanagement of public sector primary schools was the reason of lack of motivation of their teachers, and absence of their parental involvement. And these were sufficient reasons for establishment of community schools by Ammal project. Primary Education Programme of KPK stressed the involvement of community in improvement of enrolment and quality of community schools. The target of Ammal project was to develop 90 community based schools in above three districts of the province. According to study the project served the policy of 'Education for All' and enrolled 4137 students including boys and girls who were otherwise deprived of education. Ammal community project provided a

good example of public-private partnership. As for failures of the project was concerned, it was noted that expenditures details of project were not updated, employees were not cooperative in some schools, and problem of certification of students was not resolved. Similarly, the issue of sustainability embarrassed stakeholders, sectarian differences in Dera Ismail Khan affected scheme and NGO culture received opposition in Dir District. The report recommended that (i) government must prefer a community partnership model that should suit environment and culture of the area and should be implemented with minimum charges, (ii) advocacy and publicity for such innovative schemes was necessary, (iii) attitudinal change in society regarding support and encouragement of education was necessary (iv) sustainability of community schools should be linked with income generating skills to be introduced in these schools and (v) Foundation should be supported morally for initiation of such schools.

The study of Skiba& Strassel¹⁶ on role of parental involvement in learning of students and in creation of a positive climate in schools identified the following six ways of parental involvement: i) parenting, ii) learning at home iii) communication, iv) volunteering, v) decision making and vi) collaboration with community. Their conclusion was that **increased parental involvement could increase success of students and satisfaction of teachers.**

New Education Policy of Government of Pakistan gave five policy actions for involvement of parents and community which were i) strengthening of SMCs through involvement of students, teachers, educationists, parents and society (STEPS), ii) lengthening tenure of SMCs, iii) moving from financial audit to performance audit system, iv) training of Head teachers in social mobilization and v) launching of awareness campaigns at grass root level¹⁷.

Federal Directorate of Education in Pakistan conducted a study with the help of Multi Donor Support Unit. It said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the first province to start PTAs. About 17000 organizations formed in this province to this date. In this province, numbers of total members were one hundred and nineteen thousands¹⁸.

International Rescue Committee conducted a study in districts of Nowshera and Charsadda in 2010 aiming at to provide information about schools after the devastating floods of July 2010. It revealed that 297 public sector schools were completely damaged while 671 were partially damaged. About community involvement, it found that in some schools Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) were very active, they were busy in cleaning mud and maintenance of schools. In some others, these councils were partially active, while in others they were completely dead. The report recommended (i) active involvement of communities in schools, (ii) reactivation of PTCs/ SMCs, (iii) proper trainings of teachers/PTC members on the subject of disasters, and (iv) psychosocial support and information on students/teachers well being¹⁹.

A booklet was developed by Government of Pakistan to assist communities and teachers for improvement of schools with the help of strong school community links. The booklet was divided in six portions and it contained 29 ways to improve schools. Its page 6 and 7 showed the details of functions and constitution of SMCs/PTAs/PTCs. Pages 8 and 9 discussed how participation of children should be made sure, in this context various techniques were given on these two pages. On pages 15, 18 and 19 community's role in maintenance of ground, fence wall and cleaning activities were described. Page 21 discussed help of community in growing plants and trees. The uses of community in the construction of water tanks, drains and improvement of sanitation facilities were discussed on pages 22 and 23. On page 24, arrangement of two street signs for traffic awareness on the roadside was given. The booklet was full of pictures and colored portions, which showed community members at work in school²⁰.(Government of Pakistan, 2010).

Government of Pakistan and henceforth the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have also tried to involve communities in schools. For this purpose elected bodies of communities known as Parents Teachers Councils (PTCs) formed in all public sector schools. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the first province of Pakistan to launch community participation in educational institutions. In order to enhance community participation in the province, Elementary Education Foundation (EEF) was established²¹ by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under an ordinance in 2002. Provincial Government provided legislative support to community involvement in Education sector in the year 2005/06-2007/08. It promulgated "North West Frontier Province Provincial Reform Programme II under the heading "Encouraging public-private partnerships and community involvement"²². In order to officially involve communities in schools, the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa compiled a manual²³, in which Educational Officers at districts were assigned various tasks with respect to community involvement in educational institutions.

These participatory bodies of Parents Teachers Councils consisted of five parents, two influential citizens of that locality and a Head of that school. A Chairperson is the backbone of this body. He/She is elected amongst the parents to chair meetings of community participatory body. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa published a guide to regulate the activities of community participatory bodies. The guide elaborated functions of these bodies, and described authority and jurisdiction of Chairpersons and Head of schools separately. According to this guide responsibilities of a chairperson were: (i) to preside over all meetings, (ii) listening to opinions of all members, (iii) opening a bank account and working as a co-signatory, and (iv) developing mutual understanding and consensus²⁴. A dynamic and motivated chairperson can contribute a lot of services to a school, and a government should also expect that they would work for the academic and social development of schools. This study

was conducted to distinguish as to how far these chairpersons were successful in connecting schools and communities with each other.

Objectives of the Study

Following were the objectives of this study:

1. To observe how a Chairperson can involve communities in schools.
2. To see the linkage/collaboration of Chairperson with schools.
3. To propose some new ideas in education through community participation.

Statement of the Problem

The study was aimed at investigating the effectiveness of the role of elected chairpersons in community participation in public sector schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that chairpersons remained ineffective in bridging schools and communities with each other.

Methodology

There are 25 districts in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There is one elected chairperson of Parents Teachers Councils (PTCs) in every school. Out of 1472 chairmen in 1472 high/higher secondary public sector schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2008) 100 chairmen were selected from them. Data were obtained from them through a questionnaire. Chi-Square technique was used to analyze the data and interpret.

Results and Discussion

H₀: Role of chairmen in involving community in schools was ineffective.

H₁: Role of chairmen in involving community in schools was effective.

Statements		Mostly	Rarely	Not at all	χ^2
Principal/Head master hold meetings of PTC/SMC.	f_o	65	10	0	98
	f_e	25	25	25	
	Residual	40	-15	-25	
	$(f_o - f_e)^2$	1600	225	625	
	$(f_o - f_e)^2 / f_e$	64	9	25	
Parents were contacted to discourage absenteeism of students	=	46	4	19	69
The performance of teachers was discussed in the meetings of PTCs.	=	23	0.36	17.6	40.6

Chairmen met with the Education Department about the problems of school.	=	0.36	1.96	0.64	2.96
PTC funds were spent rightly in schools.	=	70	23	23	116
You contributed schools without government assistance.	=	1.4	4.8	11.5	18

□ =0.05

df = 4

Table value =9.488

Discussion

According to statement No; 1 Chairpersons responded that the Principals/Head masters to hold meetings of PTCs regularly. This response showed somewhat exemplary situation, because regularity of meetings were a rare phenomena. Statement 2 revealed that chairmen contacted parents and informed them about absenteeism of their children in order to discourage student's absenteeism in schools, this response showed also a rare happening, because absenteeism was still present in an average school. According to response No; 3, performance of teachers was discussed in meetings of PTCs but it does not match with real situation, because still there is a lot of difference between this response and on the ground realities. Similarly, Statement 4 indicated that chairmen PTCs/Councils did not meet Education Department about problems of schools; this was depicting a genuine situation, and should be improved in the best interest of schools. Statement No; 5 depicted that PTC funds were spent rightly in schools; this response was right and matched with reality. Response No; 6 showed that chairmen PTCs provided furniture and raw material to the school without assistance of government, this response might be true in some cases, since donating something to public sector schools was a new phenomena in the culture of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The above discussion showed that excluding statement No; 4, chairmen of community participatory bodies were fully successful in bridging schools and communities. These responses showed somewhat exemplary and an ideal working situation of PTCs, it looked that chairpersons tried to hide actual situation. If such a situation was really prevalent in schools then why were the academic results so poor in examinations and why was the social behavior of students weak in daily life?

Conclusions:

1. According to chairpersons, Principals/Head masters held meetings of PTCs.
2. Chairmen contacted parents to discourage student's absenteeism.
3. They discussed performance of teachers in meetings.
4. Chairmen PTCs/Councils did not meet Education Department about the problems of schools.
5. PTC funds were spent rightly in schools.

6. Chairmen PTCs provided furniture and raw material to the school without assistance of government bodies.

Recommendations:

1. Regular meetings of Parents Teacher Councils should continue.
2. Services of chairmen in contacting parents of absent students should be appreciated.
3. Chairman must solve problems of schools.
4. PTCs chairmen should compulsorily meet officers of Education Department about problem.
5. Government should appreciate proper spending of PTC funds through press.
6. Provision of material to schools by PTC chairperson should be encouraged.

Recommendations for further Research:

1. The study should be replicated in other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other provinces
2. Comparative study of gender, and rural & urban can be conducted
3. The present study was conducted in quantitative form; it can be conducted in qualitative form.
4. The same study can be conducted for receiving opinions of administrators.

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