

Stakeholders Participation in School Development

Case Studies from Rural Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The sustainable development in rural area depends on the availability of infrastructure facilities and its utilisation. The infrastructure facilities include physical, economic and social infrastructure. The social infrastructure includes assets that facilitate social services such as schools, universities, hospitals, and community housing. In the contemporary educational system, many stakeholders are playing a crucial role in the development of local community and also for the school development.

The school development covers the aspects such as management of infrastructure facilities in the schools, teachers and other staff, academic transactions and co-curricular activities. These core factors are most important for enabling the students for their future course of action. A research was undertaken in the Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu to study the stakeholders' roles and contribution in the process of school development.

An attempt has been made in this paper to present the case studies on the best practices by various stakeholder institutions in the context of School Development and Management (SDM). The case studies reveals in the Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu that convergence of resources can be made useful in the

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process of creating basic amenities in the school, effectiveness of panchayat leadership and better coordination with the local legislator in the process of School Development and Management. Panchayat actively participated and contributed through SMC for School Development and Management, planning at village level with the participation of stakeholders of the school can help to bring required resources for the school development, NGO contribution can be in terms of non-financial inputs like — serve in the capacity building process among students of the schools. It is also noticed that contribution for the development of school can be in the form of gifts and donations for required facilities in the school.

Moreover, there is need for local community leaders, caste association and SMC to realise that the local issues can be addressed effectively by working together in the same direction and contributing to the common cause.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary society, the sustainable development depends on the viability of infrastructure facilities and its improvement with effective utilisation. The infrastructure facilities include physical, economic and social infrastructure. The social infrastructure includes assets that facilitate social services such as schools, universities, hospitals, and community housing. It is noted that various stakeholders are playing a crucial role in the development of school. The school development focuses on the improvement in infrastructure facilities, teachers and other staff, academic transactions and co-curricular activities. The school development is not done by the Government alone, it is a part of people participation so community support is very much needed in the form of money and materials to enable the schools functioning system to be more efficient and effective.

In rural area, most of the schools are functioning with limited working capital, classrooms, lack of drinking water facility, playground, learning materials, insufficient teachers and non-teachers. In this scenario, the stakeholders are contributing to develop the schools by involving themselves to promote the educational environment that required for effectively and efficiently accessing the education by all students. The stakeholders' involvement in identifying, recognising and participating in the initiatives of school development at village level has opened up the spirit of team work towards the school development. Therefore, the stakeholders' collective action is a precursor of school development at the village level.

SITUATION

A study by Vimala Ramachandran (2013), revealed that role of communities in providing infrastructure and more recently in

managing and funding schools was formally introduced under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and formalised under *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). Decentralised management and supervision of civil works and maintenance is reported as one of the important activities of school.

K. Prabhakar (2007), found that it has generated an unprecedented awareness about education and also laid foundation for a sustained progress towards providing quality education for all section. Community participation has increased in the developments of schools. It means that SSA has opened up an opportunity for community to participate in school development.

Glewwe, Paul and Hanan Jacoby (1994), conducted a study on "Effective schooling programs in Bangladesh" indicated that income incentives play a key role in effective school enrolment of girls over boys in Bangladesh. Because, girls attending schools receive stipends in the form of lower fees and free books, and parents are encouraged to send their daughters to school over their sons.

Improving school quality through better infrastructure is strongly linked with achievement and attendance. The repairing leaky classrooms were found to be the most cost-effective investment and policy decision in Ghana. Children who attended schools with leaking classrooms did significantly worse on reading and math tests.

B. Mathur (2005), in his study found that the mid-day meal has made positive intervention in universalisation of primary education in Rajasthan by increasing enrolment, attendance of the children and also has reduced classroom hunger especially those belonging to underprivileged sections. Cooked mid-day meal has contributed to the cause of social equity as children, cutting across caste and class lines sit together to share a common meal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is mainly engaged on aspects of school development at village level. There is a need to bring out the influence of the stakeholders on the school development at village level. Therefore, a study was taken up to understand the role of stakeholders' participation and contribution for enabling required facilities in the schools at village level. In the study undertaken specifically to map the various stakeholders involved in school development; to find out the role played and contribution by the stakeholders; to discuss the constraints faced by the stakeholders in the process; and to document and analyse the best practices emerged in the process of school development. The present paper is focused on the best practices emerged in the process of school development with stakeholders' participation.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. The study

has covered the government and government aided schools functioning in rural area of 14 Blocks of Dindigul District. Among the 14 Blocks, there are 1557 schools functioning in rural area; which includes 1212 primary schools, 123 high schools and 222 higher secondary schools.

A close look at the data on the location of the school reveals that majority of the schools are functioning in rural area of Dindigul District. Therefore, the study was focused on the village schools and its development in the research study used in the Stratified Random Sampling Method. Under this sampling method study district, sample blocks, sample schools and respondents have been selected at random. All the government and government aided schools functioning in the rural area is the universe of the study.

The researchers have adopted “Case Study” method in the study to scale up the stakeholders involvement and their effectiveness in collective action in the process of rural school development. The case studies are organised in this paper considering the stakeholders’ contribution in various forms and context. In the study, the following techniques and tools used — Focus Group Discussions, Case Study and Semi-Structured Interview with key stakeholders.

Case 1: Convergence of Resources for School Development

Poolampatti High School is located in the Thoppampatti Block (Panchayat Union) of the Dindigul District. This village is located in a remote area of the Block and there was no proper motorable road connecting the school. The problem of waterlogging is pronounced more and experienced hardship in the school during the raining season. This long pending felt need was discussed by the village panchayat during several meetings of the SMC of that school. As a result of sincere efforts by the SMC, political will of the Panchayat Leaders resulted in construction of concrete road for a length of half a kilometer with proper drainage facility by the village panchayat using of its own funds.

Now, it is noticed that the school is linked properly by approach road that enable people to use the road even in the rainy season. Therefore, the initiative by the village panchayat in creating proper road towards school is physically and socially considered as timely development intervention. In the same school [Poolampatti], the Panchayat Union has constructed an overhead water tank for the purpose of augmenting drinking water supply. This overhead tank is located in the school premises. This facility enables the school to have required water throughout the year for drinking and other purposes. It is understood

during the discussions that the borewell is funded by the Constituency Development Fund of the Member of Legislative Assembly [MLA] whereas the construction of overhead tank is financed by the Panchayat Union. This case study provides an understanding on how convergence of resources can be made useful in the process of creating basic amenities which are required for local community and more particularly required for the development of village school.

Case 2: Periyakottai Panchayat Union Primary School

Periyakottai Panchayat Union Primary School is located in the Dindigul Block of Dindigul district. During the present study, it is found that the Village Panchayat in Periyakottai has made efforts for providing facilities for the youth to encourage them in Sports and Games at village level. The Panchayat and the village school had an elaborate discussion during the SMC meetings on creating sports related facilities in the school.

The Panchayat has received funds from the State Government as part of scheme for development of Sports and Games among the youth in the villages. The utilisation of this resource is discussed by the Village Panchayat with the Block Education Officer (BEO) and local community leaders during the SMC meetings.

After a long deliberation and consultation, a decision was taken by Village Panchayat to allocate the land adjoining the school for the

purpose of creating facilities which help in the development of sports and games in the village and also school. As a result, it was decided to create required facilities after completing basic land development activities. The sports facilities created include Volley Ball and Kabadi ground and also other facilities for physical exercise by the students and non-students youth in the village. Interestingly, it is understood that the Youth Clubs [Nehru Yuva Kendra] are involved in maintaining the created facilities for sports and games in the school. The case study shows on how the decision on investment at village level could help to address issue in a comprehensive way. It has helped for the development of sports facilities in the village and for the benefit of students and non-students youth.

Case 3: Kurumbapatti Primary School

The Primary School is located at Kurumbapatti in the Ambathuri Village Panchayat, Athoor Block, Dindigul District. The Panchayat is involved in the school development and its Management. The school building was constructed with tiled roof two decades ago and therefore, the building has become unusable from the safety point of view. Hence, the Panchayat leadership has taken up the matter for discussion in the SMC and initiated efforts to renovate the school building with required basic amenities.

As a result of persistent efforts made by the Village Panchayat leadership and with the support of local Member of Legislative Assembly [MLA], they were able to mobilise required funds for renovation of school building with basic infrastructure facilities. Resultantly, at the time of study, it is noticed that the Kurumbapatti Primary school has new buildings with improved physical environment, with provision of toilet, drinking water and compound wall.

Initiatives taken up by the Village Panchayat to ensure maintenance of school sanitation with the provision of water facilities and workers for cleaning under Swachh Bharat Mission [SBM] in the school. Being a new Village Panchayat, Ambathurai village received required support under the Finance Commission Award. Therefore, the Village Panchayat has effectively managed to establish infrastructure facilities in the School.

It is understood that the willingness of the local leadership and support of the MLA has paved a way for improving the infrastructure facilities in the school. It is a show-case for convergence of effective panchayat leadership and better coordination with the local legislator in the process of School Development and Management.

Case 4: Mahalakshi Girls Higher Secondary School, Vathalagundu

The Mahalakshi Girls Higher Secondary School, Vathalagundu

was established in 1975 to provide access to education, specifically for girls. A group of residence of Vathalagundu have established and managing this school. Later with the expansion and after upgrading as a higher secondary school, many local community leaders have played role in managing this school.

There was dearth of building with the continuous increase of the enrolment in the school. In this context, the socio-political environment was favourable as local leader who is involved in management of the school and also Chairman of the Panchayat Union belong to same political ideology. Therefore, the local panchayat with the help of favorable socio-political phenomenon attempted to augment the facilities in the school, especially meant the girl's education.

The chairman of the Panchayat Union has taken up the needs of the school with the Member of Parliament [MP] to find out required resources to construct building for higher secondary classes in the school. As a result, a huge funds were provided under the MP Local Area Development Fund [MP LAD Fund]. This dramatic change in the strategy starting from grassroots level to MP level. The MP, Chairman of Panchayat Union and local Panchayat leadership are belonged to same political ideology. Therefore, a strategic decision was taken in favor of providing resources under the umbrella of MP LAD Fund for new buildings.

The case reveals that even if it is the aided school, socio-political climate and willingness of the political leadership resulted in augmenting infrastructure facilities in the girls' school. This also reveals the favourable steps taken by political leadership for the benefit of girls' children education. It is evident that Panchayat Raj Institution actively participated and contributed to SMC for School Development and Management. Moreover, the financial resources of the Government through MLA and MP LAD Scheme utilised for the development of school.

Case 5: Efforts of the Non-Governmental Organisations [NGO]

The Non-Governmental Organisations [NGO] have contributed for the development of school in Dindigul District. It is understood that they have rise to the occasion and managed the crisis in the school, mostly relating to infrastructure facilities. The present study has documented some of the best practices that resulted in school development at village level. The following are some of the showcases for the contribution of NGOs in School Development and its Management.

The Primary School, Pallapatti was started in 1960s with simple structure and thatched roof. Frequently, the PTA has extended support to the school for repairing and renovation works. This school is located in a strategic point and

attracted students from many nearby villages, particularly from the weaker section. Therefore, the school is considered very important in that neighborhood. In 1985 during the summer vacation the thatched roof was collapsed.

As the incident was during the holidays, the impact was very minimum. But the Panchayat, local community and PTA have approached the NGO (Reached the Unreached - RTU) for getting support to renovate the school buildings. The RTU has made several visits to the village premises and deliberated with Village Panchayat and PTA. The efforts by these organisations culminated in mobilising fund from a foreign donor by the RTU. The founder of the RTU has personally visited the Pallapatti School and assured financial support for construction of concrete building.

At the end of 1986, all efforts by the PTA and Panchayat have been rewarded by the RTU with new school buildings. The Village Panchayat and PTA have been efficiently supporting to maintain the established facilities in Pallapatti School. The initiatives by the PTA with partnership with the RTU has motivated the Milk Producer's Cooperative in the village. As a result they have been contributing for construction of class rooms in the school and panchayat provided water facility in the school premises.

The case shows that resources for the school development can come from various stakeholder organisations at the village level. It is

the planning at village level with the participation of stakeholders of the school that can help to bring required resources for the school development at village level. The initiative is more important than the contribution by the stakeholder of the school. In this case, all stakeholders have same approach and result in the success.

Case 6: Role of a Social Worker

Dr. P. Selvaraj is a Medical Doctor serving in the Nilakottai Taluk of Dindigul district. He has been moving around in the Nilakottai Taluk to provide medical services in the villages. In the process motivated by his father, he has started focusing on serving the socially disadvantaged group in the villages. Attracted by his social service, many fellow doctors who share the similar views have come together to help many schools in the Nilakottai Taluk.

He has been associated with the PTA for a long time and serving as President of PTA at Taluk level. Currently, he is leading the PTA of Southern Districts in Tamil Nadu. He has initiated so many school development activities in this region. The present study has enlisted some of the following as best practices—

- A team of doctors led by Dr. Selvaraj contributed for the development of higher secondary school at Nilakottai. They have provided through PTA and also individually for construction of open theater and stage, an entrance gate, provision for drinking water facility and photo copying machine.
- PTA has provided funds for purchase of land for expansion of school at Nilakottai.
- The PTA under the leadership of Dr. Selvaraj has mobilised resources for providing class room and furniture for the Primary School of Nilakottai Taluk.
- As a doctor took interest in providing clean drinking water to the children and for this purpose, RO water facility has been created in 16 schools in Nilakottai Taluk.
- Along with team of Doctors, periodically providing free health check camp in many schools for the benefit of poor children.
- Donations to meet the cost of part time teachers who are engaged by PTA.
- Attracted by his contribution for school development, many community leaders have provided funds for construction of building in Nilakottai schools.
- As a social worker, he has contributed along with other doctors in establishing surveillance cameras in a school at Siluvarpatti.
- In the entire Dindigul district, the winners in the sports events are honored with gold and silver medals by Dr. Selvaraj and his friends to encourage the students to participated in sports and games.

- Apart from these kind of contribution, any school which is in need of financial support for annual sports day celebration, Dr. Selvaraj and his friends have been donating.

These contributions indicate, how the doctor cum social workers can contribute to the development of schools at village level. As a leader of PTA, how a person can facilitate is a lesson from the case study.

Case 7: Science Laboratory

The Thambithottam Higher Secondary School, Gandhigram, Dindigul District was established by Gandhigram Trust and managed for the last five decades. This school has been advantageously located close to the national highway. This school attracts more number of students every year, but with increasing students' strength the demand for building to have science laboratory has increased.

Attract by the performance of the school and need for expanding laboratory facility, Cognisant Foundation (NGO) has provided funds for creating laboratory facility in the school. With this facility the school has an exclusive building for Science Laboratory. The contribution by Cognizant Foundation for the school run by Gandhigram Trust and aided by Government of Tamil Nadu. It is a case for Inter-Institutional partnership for School Development and its management. Though, the Gandhigram Trust is a huge

NGO running various educational Institutions.

Case 8: Student Parliament

Mr. Mohan is an alumni of the Gandhigram Rural Institute and also with farming background. He is inspired by the Gurukula System and students' participation in managing various programmes in the School level. Mr. Mohan who is a founder of an NGO has initiated programmes in the selected schools of Athoor Block. The programme contains the following elements—

- All the students in a school is Member of Youth Parliament.
- Active students are designated as Ministers with specific responsibilities.
- The responsibilities are managing various services and facilities in the school campus, they are ensuring drinking water facility, conducting assembly and prayer, maintaining science laboratory.
- This model and practice provides opportunities for students at school itself to get trained in various activities and also develop their leadership.
- The team of ministers under the guidance of the Teachers manage various co-curricular activities which indirectly provides opportunities for creativity and also working in the team.

Therefore, the contribution of NGO in terms of non-financial inputs provided serve for the capacity

building among the students in the schools. It is a replicable practice and helpful for the students and teachers.

Case 9: Drinking water facility in the Primary School

The NGO has been working near Ammainaikanur which has been focusing on one of the important facilities in the primary school that is provision of safe drinking water. Because, availability and use of quality water for drinking purpose by the students in the primary school premise is significant to ensure their health. If there is no adequate quality water for drinking purpose, the student at primary school level may face various health problems and which indirectly affects their regular attendance. Hence, the NGO provides facility for drinking water by adopting following strategies—

- Exclusive bore-well with pumping facility
- Construction of pipe line to draw water for school
- Water purification facility, place where is no quality water for drinking facility
- Proper and adequate storage facility for water

The NGO has discussed the subject in the SMC and took efforts on Project mode to mobilised the resources for creating the drinking water related facilities. The Panchayat has helped by providing bore-well. The NGO has provided related facilities to augment the drinking water facility

in the school. It shows cases the partnership between the NGO and Panchayat for the primary school development, in particularly sharing the resources for the common cause.

Case 10: Local Contribution by material

T. Koodalur, Guziliamparai Block has a Government High School. The study has made an attempt to understand and bring out the role of CBOs, in the context of improving amenities in the school.

During the interaction in the village, particularly with the PTA leaders, SHGs and Youth Club have revealed that contribution by community immensely supported for the development of school. The outcome of the Focus Group Discussion among the parents and CBOs indicated that they are interested to provide and improve the facilities required in the school.

The contribution of the CBOs for the school development is found to be in novel way. It is understood that the School Management Committee has identified a list of needs in the case of amenities required for the school. The task of mobilising resources in the form of possible contribution to the capacity of the members of PTA, SHGs and Alumni Association. It means that many stakeholders at village level are willing to contribute resources according to their capacity.

As a result the discussions in the School Management Committee and also within the PTA, SHG, and Alumni

Association, they have decided to provide material contribution in the form of donation and gifts. Needs of the school included – Drinking water Pots, Dust bin, Broom stick and also Store Room facility for books and stationery.

The CBOs have mobilized all these items in the form of gift to the schools. Whereas, the PTA has used its network with business community to mobilise facility for storage of books and stationery.

On the request of the PTA, a hardware shop owner has donated to steel cupboard to the school. Interestingly, it is learnt that all these items were presented as gifts to the school during Annual Day Celebration organised at the school. The implication is that the local community and CBOs have considered the school as their own and willingly donated to deliver facilities in the school. The case study also implies that the contribution for the development of school can be in the form of gifts and donations for required facilities in the school.

Case 11: Ecological Development

The Inter-institutional cooperation has helped a Primary School functioning at Thangatchiammapatti, Vendasandur Block. Few decades ago, this school was starving for basic facilities such drinking water and toilets. But, a situation has emerged out discussions among the caste leaders and SMC which was engineered by the intervention of the

Gandhigram Rural Institute under extension activities.

The Primary School was located in a piece of land donated by the local caste leader during 1960s. The school is located in front of the village temple. It is understood that the backyard of the school was not effectively put into use. Because that piece of land was occupied by a section of village community with their huts. The issues jointly identified by the SMC, caste leaders and temple trust are—

- the backyard of the school is occupied as a result students and staff are not having toilet facility;
- there was no exclusive source of water for school;
- during the outreach programme of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, held discussions with school, local community, Panchayat leaders and Temple Trust to find out ways and means to improve the physical facilities and improved environment in and around the school;
- this exercise has led to larger discussions among officials at Block level and also representatives of the village and
- the chairman of the Temple Trust is also the President of PTA at village level. Noticing the situation, the Gandhigram Rural Institute has brought together all the stakeholders on a single platform in the school. This platform has provided wider consultation on improving facilities in the school

with the concept of self help at village level.

A year long exercise by the stakeholders culminated in designing the strategies to find solutions so as to solve the problems of the school.

- The public who have occupied the backyard of the school need to vacate place with an assurance of other place for the dwellers.
- This has been made possible by donation of an acre of land by local land lord who is also happened to be senior leader in the village community.
- A working arrangement was made through Written Agreement between Temple Trust and SMC on approval of Block Development officials.
- As per the agreement the Temple Trust has been providing water to the school.
- In the backyard of the school, toilets were constructed for the use of students and staff.
- The Gandhigram Rural Institute has provided require mix of sapling for tree plantation in the backyard.

As a companied effect, the school got back its land with assured water supply by the temple trust. This has enabled improve the physical environment in and around the school. Moreover, a section of people who have vacated the school backyard have been given permanent place for

their dwelling by concerning their under rural housing project.

The analysis the case indicates that the highly motivated rich people [caste leaders] and asset less poor can equally contribute for the development of the school. It is also understood that cultural change in the village community which initiated a kind of transformation around the school. In nutshell the Gandhigram Rural Institute has made the local community leaders, caste association and SMC to realise that the local issues can be addressed effectively by working together in the same direction and contributing to the common cause. As a result, the benefit of the transformation is enjoyed by the student and also a section of people who got their own dwelling place within the village.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that stakeholders are pillars of school development. As they have created required facilities through collective action Their contribution has created basic amenities such as drinking water facility, transportation, play ground, fencing, compound wall, electric facility, blackboard and name board with effective participatory approach made practical possibility to rural school development. Decision on investment at village level could help to address issue in a comprehensive way. The case studies revealed

that best practices in stakeholders' participation indicated that—

- Willingness of the local leadership and support of the MLA is a way for improving the infrastructure facilities in the school.
- Effectiveness of Panchayat leadership and better coordination with the local Legislator in the process of School Development and Management. Panchayat Raj Institution are actively participated and contributed through SMC for School Development and Management. Moreover, MLA and MP LAD Scheme is source of resource for the school development.
- Planning at village level with the participation of stakeholders of the school can help to bring required resources for the school development.
- NGO contribution can be in terms of non-financial inputs like - serve in the capacity building process among students of the schools.
- Partnership between the NGO and Panchayat for the school development, in particularly sharing the resources for the common cause.
- Contribution for the development of school can be in the form of gifts and donations for required facilities in the school. Moreover, there is need for local community leaders, caste association and SMC to realize that the local issues can be addressed effectively by working together in the same direction and contributing to the common cause.

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