

SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing awareness around the world for incorporating professional management into traditional public services to achieve resulted *pro rata* to the investments. Similar trend has been encompassing the school education sector. Many countries have been initiating reforms to facilitate school based management. It would be appropriate to analyze the prevailing practices of school management in the context of similar reforms being initiated in India. This paper is an integral part of the doctoral dissertation in management – ‘A study of Management Practices of Secondary Schools’. The main objective of this paper is to explore the prevailing situation of the planning framework and community participation in school management. A sample of 188 secondary schools – about 34% of the population was selected through stratified sampling technique. The primary data was collected through self designed questionnaire and interview schedules. Chi-Square Test and simple percentages were used to analyze the data with the help of SPSS-17. The findings reveal that the planning framework is weak in public schools while it is well-built in privately-run schools. But, despite the established planning framework in private schools, parents or community are not involved. The parent/community participation is true to the spirit in the small chunk of public schools where the planning framework is ascertained. The study suggests the policy makers to stress on conductive framework for micro planning in public schools and thrust upon parent/community participation in the private set-up to strengthen the planning activity for achieving efficiency and accountability of the system.

Keywords: School Based Management, Planning framework, Community participation, School development councils

Introduction:

Of-late, professional management has been extended to more traditional areas of service management to achieve better results. School Based Management (SBM) is one such experiment in the area of education sector. Many countries – developed as well as developing, have been benefitting from such management oriented reforms in education sector ensuring fast development. India also has witnessed a phenomenal educational development since Independence. The public expenditure on education has gradually been increasing from a slightly less than 0.8% of the GDP during 1951-52 to about 4.02% during 2001-02 and 3.57% of the GDP in 2006 -07, aiming at meeting the targeted expenditure of 6.0% of the GDP (GOI,2004) as early as possible, as recommended by the Kothari Commission in 1966. However, as Kingdon (2007) observes, the story of India's educational achievements is one of mixed success. On the down side, India has 33% of the world's illiterates and is home to a high proportion of the world's out of school children and youth. On the positive side, it has made encouraging progress in raising schooling participation and emerged as an important player in the worldwide information technology revolution and thus emerged as a knowledge hub.

School management reforms, being practiced in many countries, are challenging the conventional education governance structures aiming at increasing school autonomy and empowering localized decision making. It aims to strengthen incentives for schools to deliver services that are responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. Advocates of this innovative system of school management point-out a wide range of potential benefits. They argue that the devolution of decision-making authority to schools can facilitate and enhance participation – a core strategy in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000). A stronger parental voice and more participation in school management will lead to greater incentives for education providers to offer more efficient services. Moving decisions away from remote planners and closer to those working at the schools who know much about the learners and their educational needs, as well as about local values and realities, is seen as a route to a more responsive system.

The origins of school management reforms can be traced to the United States in 1980s and Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom in 1990s. Similar programs have also been adopted in some developing countries viz. Latin America and South Asia, though sub-Saharan Africa also figures with increasing prominence. In India also, many committees on education and specifically, school education, have referred to the aspect of school management reforms. Indian government has been making efforts to implement these recommendations through some reforms. By strengthening the management aspects through reforms, at both the organizational as well as institutional level, the school education sector can be improved on par with the developed economies. Raju (2006) recommends autonomy not just for the private institutions and the self financed institutions, but also for the institutions which are under the government either fully or partly financed by the government. The type of autonomy should ensure that the stakeholders are protected, particularly the students, against dilution in quality. Concerning autonomy, the law must delegate the necessary decision making power to the institution – for changes in curricula and teaching methods, for internal self-governance, for interaction with other organizations nationally and internationally and for economic transactions. It is also very important that accountability must follow autonomy.

Planning and School Management:

While speaking about professional management, planning obviously should be the starting step. It is the most basic and critical function of management, regardless of the type of organization being managed. Modern management argues for sound planning in small and relatively simple; large and more complex organizations and in nonprofit organizations such as educational institutions. The difference between a successful and an unsuccessful organization lies in their planning. Institutional planning provides the structure and mechanism for the development of an institution by effective

utilization of the available resources.

Without long-term planning, it will be difficult to achieve sustained growth in education sector. Decentralization is one of the major trends in educational management in recent years. Among the many such reforms that have been undertaken, the introduction of school-based management is one of the most critical developments. The implementation of such reform is increasingly advocated in different parts of the world as a way to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of schools (Abu, 1999). With the introduction of a system of professional management in England and Wales in 1988, schools are now operating in a radically improved context in which responsibility for strategic planning has been delegated from local education authorities (LEAs) to individual schools. Giles (1995) suggests that if schools are to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the ongoing reforms, a thorough review may be needed by the governments of their existing *laissez faire* attitudes towards planning.

In India, the Education Commission, 1964-66 emphasized that the effectiveness of any educational system is affected to a great extent by proper planning, particularly at institutional level. During the last few decades, the importance of micro level and district level planning has been accepted by the Indian educational administrators. Better planning is possible only when the environment for school management is conducive with a well established framework for planning. The present paper attempts to analyse the status and functioning of the planning framework in school management at secondary level. This article is an integral part of the doctoral dissertation in management– ‘A Study of Management Practices of Secondary Schools’ at Acharya Nagarjuna University.

Statement of the Problem:

It has been widely felt that Indian school system has continuously been failing to produce results in consonance with the resources allocated. The education sector in India has not yet fully internalized the developments in the field of management and continues to look at educational planning, administration and organization as aliens. The ‘Challenges of Education’, the ‘National Policy on Education - 1986’, the ‘Program of Action – 1992’ and many subsequent documents and reports brought this mutual exclusivity into focus and emphasized the need for professionalization of educational management. These reports realized that success in implementation of the National Policy on Education would be a function of its management process. According to Jean Drèze and Gazdar (1997), ‘the most striking weakness of the schooling system in rural Uttar Pradesh is not so much the deficiency of physical infrastructure but the poor utilization of the existing facilities. . It is, in fact, important to note that in the context of development of India, the management of services sector assumes not only importance but is central to the development process itself. Education as a critical service sector and the agencies of education, a critical face of this angle, has been suffering from lack of professional management.

A study conducted by the Centre for Civil Society, New Delhi, in 2005 (Singh, 2006), stressed that the major problem lay not in the level of financial allocations, but rather in the organizational inefficiencies, lack of accountability and mis-utilization of funds. The effectiveness of education depends largely on how well its units of service are managed. Education can be made more relevant to the user through incorporating professional management at school level. The National Knowledge Commission of India (2009) has proposed to encourage decentralization, local autonomy in management of schools, flexibility in disbursement of funds to improve quality and generate accountability, improving school infrastructure and revamping school inspection with a greater role for local stakeholders. Karpade, Ashok and Meghanathan (2004) made ‘An extensive study of successful school management in India: Case studies of Navodaya Vidyalayas’ and found that successful schools adopted systematic and participative management system in running day-to-day

activities of schools. The study also revealed that people in managerial positions were delegated with autonomy which also made them responsible for successful completion of the tasks. The study observes that by following systematic management process, the heads of schools could set higher and higher goals for themselves and for their schools and achieve them with team work and efficient managerial practices.

As India is progressing in achieving the goals of accessibility and enrolment in school education, this is the time to shift concentration towards the management issues for making the system result oriented. Better models of management can be derived for Indian school system by analyzing the school based management practices followed around the world. Thus, concentration on management of schools serves as a tool for 'turn around' of school education sector in India.

Objectives of the Study:

- The principal objective of the study is to study the existence and functioning of the planning framework at the select secondary schools.

Hypothesis:

- That the select schools have a conducive planning framework for developing systematic plans, both academic and non academic, for their development.

Methodology:

Stratified sampling has been utilized to draw the sample from the finite universe of 557 secondary schools operating under four major types of management in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh in India. The sample has been made largely representative by selecting 188 secondary schools accounting for around 34% of the population and representing 49 out of a total of 50 mandal administrative units. The primary data is collected through self designed questionnaire and interview schedules from the Headmasters / Principals of the select secondary schools. The data is analyzed through Chi-Square Test with the help of SPSS version 17, to establish consistency of the responses.

Results and Analysis:

Each institution has personality of its own and must develop itself to optimize its full potential. It is in this context that each school should have a development plan. It must essentially be developed by its stakeholders viz., the Principal or Head Master, the teachers, the parents and the local community with the main intention to plan for optimization of the potentiality of the institution and improve the quality of education. Each school is considered, instead of a simple agency for providing educational service, as an independent entity with individually defined specific goals or objectives. The educational institute or school stands at the centre of the concept and serves as the basis for scientific management practices. It is a strategy to improve education by transferring significant decision-making authority from the State and District administrations to the individual schools. It aims at providing the participants and the stakeholders, greater control over the education process, by making them responsible for decisions regarding various functions of management viz. planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling. Through involvement of all the stakeholders in the process of decision making, the school system can create more effective learning environment for children. Thus, planning at the schools must follow a systematic process involving all the people concerned. To facilitate this school based management system, an efficient framework for planning is needed which should include all the stakeholders of the school.

School planning councils consider a range of information in their planning, including classroom, school, district and provincial data; interpret the information and identify the areas of

strength and areas that need improvement. The school planning councils share the findings with the parent advisory council and the school community and solicit feedback.

In this context, the present article attempted to find out the nature and practice of planning activities at the secondary schools in Indian education system in terms the existence of a formal framework for planning and the nature of community participation in planning.

1. The framework for planning:

By formalizing the planning activity, certain benefits accrue which cannot result from informal planning. The intrinsic purposes of planning are furthered in several ways by formalization (Camillus, 1999). Any process of development or improvement could not be ensured unless people - the ultimate beneficiaries, participate in planning and implementation of such programs. Every institution must establish a formalised framework for planning through planning bodies/councils, regular meetings and action plans.

In India, some noteworthy efforts were put in involving people more meaningfully in the process of education, which indicates the right move towards school based management practices. The National Policy on Education, 1986, recommended a major role for local communities in school management. The Program Of Action (POA), 1992, elaborately stated that ‘a Village Education Committee (VEC), comprising not more than 15 members from parents, panchayats, women cooperatives, different castes and communities and local development functionaries shall be constituted to look into the overall management of all educational programs at village level.’ The POA further stated that ‘in view of the critical role and functions of the VEC, it should be vested with appropriate statutory and necessary financial and administrative authority’. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), the highest advisory body to advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education, further clarified the powers of the VEC such as visits to school, checking attendance, recommending annual budget and undertaking maintenance and repair works. As a result of these recommendations, the VECs have been constituted in many states. Pramila Menon’s survey (1999) of two districts in Haryana found that VECs have been constituted as per the norms specified by the State Government and in particular, the norms of membership of women have been fulfilled. Awasthi and Patel’s study (2008) on perception of community members regarding SSA and its implementation in primary schools at village level in four districts of Gujarat State found that all the sample schools constituted all the communities as per the norms in the SSA framework. But, the findings of Wankhede and Anirban’s study (2005) in West Bengal contradict the ideology on the basis of which the village education committees were formed. Sadananda and Chandrasekhar found that in the State of Karnataka, all government schools have School Development Monitoring Committees; each comprising of nine members from parents and community representing women and other disadvantaged groups, as per the government guidelines. But, regarding the frequency of meetings, the study found that all members do not take part and none of the schools had conducted any meeting for the last six months and around ten percent of the schools have not even maintained any records about the meetings.

In view of the varying findings of the above review of literature, the present article attempts to explore the present practices of formal planning in terms of existence, membership, meetings, and implementation of decisions made by the planning bodies. The survey results are provided hereunder.

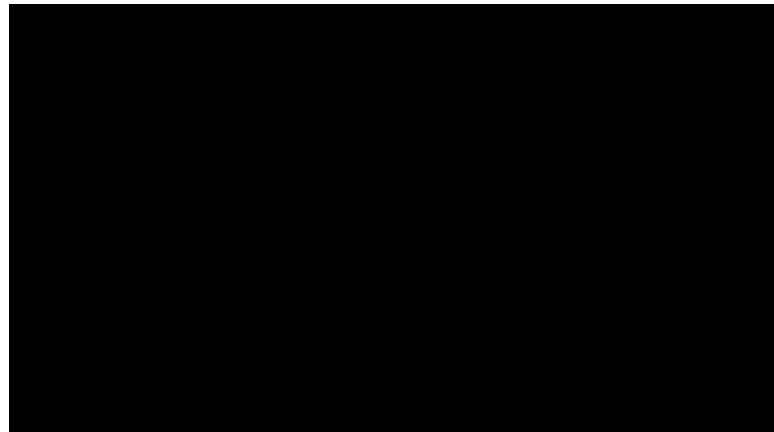
a. Existence:

Regarding the constitution of Planning and Development Bodies at school level, there are mixed responses from different categories of managements. In around 70% of Government and Local Body managements, the planning and development bodies are either non-existent or inactive. The same is prevalent in about 77% of the Private Aided managements and all of the unaided managements.

When it comes to the membership aspect, the planning bodies existing in a few percentage of the public schools comprise of all the stakeholders viz. the village Sarpanch or head; the Headmaster; and the representatives of parents, local public, a few NGOs and experienced and learned persons as members. In the schools under aided managements, the planning bodies include members of the sponsoring organization, the Headmaster, senior teachers, parents and eminent local people. But, it is remarkable to note that the representatives of the local community or parents are not involved in the planning bodies operating in the Private Unaided schools.

b. Frequency of meetings:

The frequencies of the meetings of the planning and development bodies have been irregular in different categories of schools, as evident from Table-1. The responses regarding the frequency of the planning and development body meetings are analysed with Chi Square Test to establish the relationship among different categories of schools (Refer Table-1).The discussion of the results regarding the frequency of meetings of the planning and development bodies, as appear in the cross tabulation, is presented below.



All the Government schools are conducting the meetings annually while a majority of the Local Body schools (around 38%) are conducting quarterly, followed by 25% having it monthly and another 17% of them conducting it whenever required. Among the Private Aided schools, 39% are holding half-yearly and 19% quarterly and another 15% each monthly and whenever required. The majority of unaided schools (53%) are conducting on monthly basis followed by 18% of them having it quarterly. Thus, the trend in the frequency is considerably varying among the four categories. The Chi Square value (62.466) is very highly significant at 0.001 level.

Category	Table-1: Frequency of Planning Body Meetings at Schools-Crosstabulation						Total
		Monthly	Quarterly	Half yearly	Yearly	Whenever required	
Government	Count	0	0	0	4	0	4
	% within category	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within column	.0%	.0%	.0%	18.2%	.0%	2.1%
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.1%	.0%	2.1%
Local Body	Count	28	43	14	9	19	113
	% within category	24.8%	38.1%	12.4%	8.0%	16.8%	100.0%
	% within column	50.0%	76.8%	48.3%	40.9%	76.0%	60.1%
	% of Total	14.9%	22.9%	7.4%	4.8%	10.1%	60.1%
Private Aided	Count	4	5	10	3	4	26
	% within category	15.4%	19.2%	38.5%	11.5%	15.4%	100.0%
	% within column	7.1%	8.9%	34.5%	13.6%	16.0%	13.8%

	% of Total	2.1%	2.7%	5.3%	1.6%	2.1%	13.8%
Private Unaided	Count	24	8	5	6	2	45
	% within category	53.3%	17.8%	11.1%	13.3%	4.4%	100.0%
	% within column	42.9%	14.3%	17.2%	27.3%	8.0%	23.9%
	% of Total	12.8%	4.3%	2.7%	3.2%	1.1%	23.9%
Total	Count	56	56	29	22	25	188
	% within row	29.8%	29.8%	15.4%	11.7%	13.3%	100.0%
	% within column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	29.8%	29.8%	15.4%	11.7%	13.3%	100.0%

Table-2: Chi-Square Test Results.	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	62.466***	12	.000
N of Valid Cases	188		

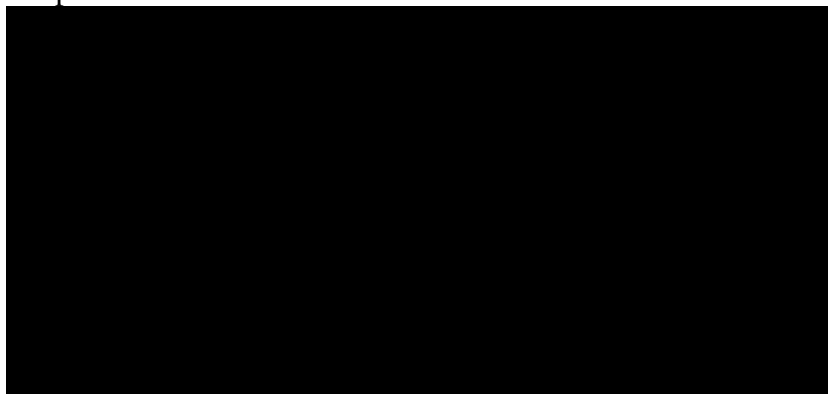
- * 0.05 Significant.
- ** 0.01 Highly Significant.
- *** 0.001 Very Highly Significant.

c. Member Participation:

The participation of members in the meetings of Planning and Development Councils is not encouraging in public sector schools as evident from Fig-2. While all the members are regularly participating in Private Unaided schools, it is totally unsatisfactory in the Government category. The member participation in 64% of the Local Body schools is not satisfactory while it is good in 65% of the aided category.

2. Community participation:

Community participation has received increased attention in international and national educational policies in the recent years. Community participation in education is seen as a way to increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve. As a result, it intends to improve access, retention, quality and performance of schooling. The National Policy on Education, 1986 and the Programme of Action, 1992 clearly recommended empowering the local community to participate in management decisions. The Eighth-Plan document clearly enunciated that ‘in the process of development, people must operate and government must cooperate.’ Cooke and Kothari (2001) said that international institutions and governments in developing countries often use community participation leading to locally driven reforms, while in reality these institutions and governments are actually garnering local support for pre-planned interventions and transferring costs from the public to the private sector.



Community participation in education can take place basically in two forms – informal and formal. The informal system has been in practice since long, as the local communities contribute to educational effort by providing a piece of land or other locally available materials for construction and sometimes in cash. The formal system is in the form of village panchayats and village education committees which take active part in the educational matters. The increasing significance of formal participation of local communities is evident from the observations of a state report which reads: ‘rather than confining the communities to the periphery of the system of involving them in the donation of land and construction of a building for the school, it would be worthwhile to try and involve them more actively in various activities of the school.’

Some other forms of people’s participation are the parent-teacher associations of a school, which are generally prevalent in urban and affluent societies rather than rural areas. However, the efforts of several committees in implementing the school based decentralized systems have been suffering from so many problems such as the difficulty in composition of the VECs; the hesitation, if not reluctance, to entrust local bodies with real authority; the difficulty of raising resources through local bodies; the relationship issues between the local bodies and the educational administrative authorities; adapting to changes in the process and procedures of educational management; and the increasing private effort in education. All these problems have posed the real difficulty in implementing the concept of school based management. This inefficiency has gradually led to an increasing private effort in education. With this development, the results have been commercialized and exploited.

The empirical results of Yasuyuki’s study (1999) on El Salvador’s EDUCO Program support the view that decentralization of education system should involve delegation of school administration and teacher management to the community group. Priyanka, Sangeeta and Venkatesh (2008) proved that providing information through a structured campaign to communities had a positive impact in three Indian states. Jennifer (2006) found that reports from the parents, students, teachers, and education authorities in Southern Ethiopia clearly indicate that community participation in education is a great deal more complex than the term alone typically suggests. The studies of Zaman (1998); Ahmed and Nath (1999); Edcil (1999); Rao(1999); and Garia (2002) confirmed the assumption that the community always extended support in construction of school buildings, organization of cultural activities and local festivals. The resource support for organizing such contact and awareness programs was confirmed by Srivastava (1999). These research evidences suggest that community participation in schooling can indeed contribute to increasing educational access and quality, but its impact varies according to the form and is not automatically positive.

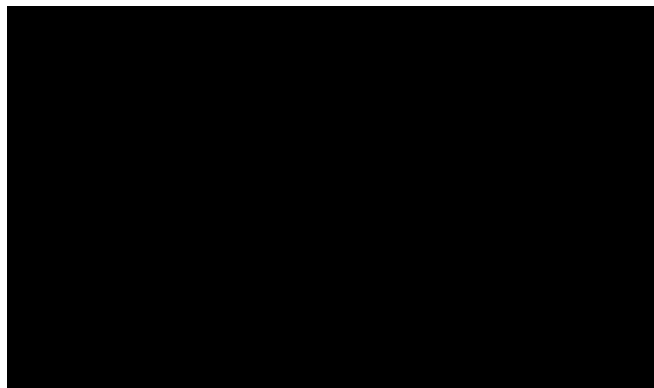
It is necessary to insist on the genuine participation of the community institutions with a sense of ownership. In this context, decentralization means bringing schools close to the community. The bureaucratic system, as it functions presently, tries to coordinate till the last point in the chain – the school and the teacher. It does not reach beyond the school to the wider community. In order to ensure greater participation of the community and bridge the gap between the community and the school, local institutions such as the School Education Committees or School Cluster Committees at the village, block, and district level have been set up. In practice, however, these have been utilized by the government structure to execute and implement their schemes. However, they do not participate in decision making with regard to attendance and regularity of teachers and children or the problems encountered by the children in the schools. They are not concerned with the problems faced by the teachers, the day-to-day issues that may arise; they do not liaise with authorities or elected bodies to bring to their notice the difficulties children or teachers face such as lack of textbooks, physical infrastructure, and quality of education and so on. Thus the local communities are never empowered to play an active part in the management of the educational institutions for which they made considerable contribution.

The community participation aspect has been analyzed in terms of community inclusion, nature of participation and contribution to the school. The survey findings in this regard are as follows.

The inclusion of community members in school management through planning and development bodies is better in the case of the public sector schools than in the private category as is obvious from Fig-3. About 70% of the planning and development bodies existing in the public sector schools are accommodating community persons as members. Only 50% of the planning and development bodies in Private Aided schools are involving community members. However, all the private unaided category schools have instituted the planning bodies but did not involve any outsiders, except for a few numbers of parents occasionally.

Conclusion:

From the above results, it can be concluded that the framework to facilitate better and micro planning at the school level accommodating school based management practices is very weak in the schools managed by public sector where as facilitation of parents and community in planning is totally absent in the schools run by the private managements. In the small chunk of public schools having planning bodies, the functioning of the committees, accommodating all the stakeholders is in the true spirit. But, it is clearly evident that the initiation from the members external to the school is very weak in the case of public schools.



Regarding the aspect of community participation, it is again, the same story. The members from the community or parents are not facilitated in private managements where as even though, facilitated, not interested in case of the public managements. Thus, the overall situation of the planning framework and community participation is not encouraging in the select secondary schools.

The main contention of the school based management reforms is decentralization to enhance accountability of the school managements. Professional management of schools is possible only when the resource allocation and decision making are decentralized to the level of individual schools. The governments initiating reforms at the secondary level of school education through schemes like Rastriya Madhyamic Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) should consider these aspects first to facilitate professional management of each school which ultimately can ensure efficiency of the sector.

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