Community participation for management of elementary education has been visualized as an important strategy in all policy initiatives at national as well as international levels. There is a worldwide consensus that for bringing the desired improvement in education, involvement of families and the community is inevitably important (Jomtien Declaration: 1990 and UNESCO Delhi Declaration: 1994). The policy-makers, practitioners, scholars, researchers, and communities around the world have been striving hard to attain the goals of universalization of education through community involvement and as such participation of community in education has been acknowledged as the most crucial strategy in achieving these goals. The Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien (1990) and the UNESCO Delhi Declaration (1994) have provided a great deal of momentum to the community participation movement across the Globe.

Community participation in education in India is not a new concept. Community has always been thought as an integral part of the educational set up. Although the initially years of Post-independence India marked the centralization of education when the efficiency of the local bodies in applying their power properly was criticized (Wankhede and Sengupta: 2005) and a notion prevailed that everything belonged to the government and not the community, the idea could not sustain for long as centralization failed to affect a change in the quality of school education. (Noronha: 2003). The First Education Commission clearly spelt out the need of decentralization of school education and involvement of local bodies in the processes related to school improvement in 1966. According to the Commission, the immediate goal was to associate communities with the schools in their locality (GoI: 1966). Community participation as a primary strategy for ensuring decentralization in school education got another major boost with the adoption of National Policy on Education, 1986. The Policy laid primary emphasis on decentralized planning and management of elementary education in the country. The Policy visualized direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management and improvement in school education at the village level. The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 further strengthened the Village Education Committees by providing that
the State Government will lay down general guidelines regarding the constitution of village education committees and established norms of accountability in respect of the Heads of these institutions.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provided for decentralisation of the activities and facilitated the transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) assigned greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. The Right to Education Act 2009 also recognizes the role of local governance in school education by necessitating the formation of a School Management Committee (SMCs) in each school. Thus we see that community participation as a novel and unique approach, have always been emphasized in all the education related policy documents in India in order to build a synergic relationship between the community and the government with a view to create a sense of ownership and better resource management.

The present chapter deals with the general discussion on community participation in education while focusing on the need of conceptualizing and giving a very brief overview of the historical perspective particularly after India’s Independence. In the first part, the Chapter has very briefly touched upon some of the major policy decisions and the governmental programmes that helped streamlined the process of community participation in school education in the country. The second part of the Chapter discusses the functioning of Village Education Development Committees in Punjab in the light of the guidelines issued by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Authority, Government of Punjab from time to time for effective functioning of these bodies in this State.

PART A

1.1 Conceptualizing Community Participation in Education

In reference to community participation in education, most stakeholders agree to the need to conceptualize the meaning of community, the nature of participation and the aspects to which participation is referred to including resource mobilization, management, monitoring, and evaluation, advocacy, and policy design (Noronha: 2003).
In education discourse, community has been defined in terms of parents, larger community and the elected representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) or the Village Education Committees (VECs) etc. Community, as such, can be viewed in two distinct perspectives. First, when community is taken to mean parents, then the background of children determines the caste-class composition, second, when the community is viewed as elected representatives, then their caste-class composition determines the involvement as well as the nature of conflicts arising out of that involvement. The caste-class composition in terms of socio-economic and educational background and status determines the role played by the community members and thus their involvement into various aspects of school education. The more spontaneous kind of involvement can be seen in terms of (a) parents being partners in their children’s education by supporting them at home or (b) parents and community leaders showing interest in schools by contributing time or resources to support school development solve problems of space or facilities, lend a helping hand in school matters. (Noronha: 2003). Another dimension of community participation is political which often is viewed in terms of (a) playing a watchdog role- supervising and keeping an eye on the teacher (b) controlling the use of resources and their deployment; (c) raising issues of large educational change; or (d) influencing the curriculum and the way it is implemented. (Noronha: 2003).

According to Govinda (2003) community participation in education means the involvement of parents and community leaders as partners in supporting educational activities that contribute to improvement in their own lives. Shaeffor (1991) view community participation in primary education as any one or all of these viz (a) the mere use of resources (such as primary health care facility); (b) participation through the contribution or extraction of resources (such as materials and labour); (c) participation through attendance (such as parents’ meetings at school); (d) participation through consultations on particular issues;(e) involvement in the delivery of services; (f) involvement as implementers of the delegated powers; (g) participation in real decision making at every stage-identification of problems of, the study of feasibility, planning , implementation and evaluation.

In a broader sense, community participation refers to mutual collaboration, support and participation of families, community members and agencies, school staff, in the community or at school, in activities and efforts that directly and positively affect students’ outcomes (Rani and Arora: 2004). In general, community
participation in primary education means the involvement of parents and community as partners in supporting educational activities. Thus, community participation is a tool for self development and empowerment of community besides facilitating the achievement of the goal of universalisation of elementary education (Rani and Arora: 2004).

Govinda (2003) observes that community participation in the realm of primary education is a context-specific expression based on the degree of involvement of people, to bring certain systematic changes with a basic objective of ushering development and improvement in the quality of life of the participants, be it in the fields of health, education, social security etc. Further he has identified two categories of community participation in context of primary education as (a) exhorting community members to take active interest in the education of their children ;(b) liberalizing the administrative framework to make way for participation of community members in educational management.

The movement of community participation, however, has gone under a paradigm shift, in recent years, from a state of informal initiative to a formalized policy intervention. This can be witnessed from the documents and recommendations of various commissions appointed after Independence. There is a shift from non-participative administrative dominated educational planning to participative community-based procedure. This transformation in school education has gone through four important stages (Mohan, Devi Dutt, Antony: 2003).

1. The first stage consists of creating awareness among the parents about the importance of sending their children to school regularly. This assumes that persuasion, rather than enforcement or compulsion, is the means of ensuring universal participation of children in primary education. This is evident from the legislative measures indicative of a shift from compulsion (as specified in the Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1961) to persuasion, combined with incentives to promote universal primary education as elaborated in various policy documents on Universal Elementary Education (UEE) and Education for All (EFA).

2. The second stage is characterized by increased awareness which, in turn, creates more demand for education. The government not being totally prepared to meet this increased demand, communities are invited to provide the schooling facilities in un-served areas. This intervention fulfills twin objectives of
providing facilities to promote UEE and mobilizing community resources for education.

3. In the third stage, community support is sought and ensured while framing the provisions for establishing and managing new schools. This ensures not only participation, but also a sense of ownership as communities often provide the required space and other infrastructure facilities to run the school.

4. Sustainability of community participation is then to be ensured through the setting up of school betterment committees, which include members of the local community. These committees are primarily responsible for reviewing, organizing and mobilizing human, physical and financial support to better the functioning of schools.

Thus, community support, which begins as merely supplementary to the functioning of school, shifts emphasis to ownership of schools by community. Community participation thus gets integrated into the action plan for the goal of UEE. The constitution of Village Education Committees and vesting authority in them to oversee the functioning of primary school is one such example (Mohan, Devi Dutt, Antony: 2003). These committees are expected to develop into a participative system in which various stakeholders like the teachers, parents and community leaders work together with a common understanding to ensure maintenance of infrastructure as well as building an environment congenial to the teaching learning process.

The term ‘community’ for the purpose of present study refers to the village community in general and the Village Education Development Committees in particular. This way, community participation has been envisioned as the systematic involvement of the teachers, parents and other community members like the members of Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), Mothers Teachers Associations (MTAs) and social activists (who, in turn, have been nominated to the Village Education Development Committees) in various aspects of school governance.

1.2 Universalisation of Elementary Education and the Community: Past and Present

Community participation in education in India has a long tradition. In the pre-colonial period, the education to the masses was available through Pathshalas and Madrasas which were managed by the local people. All the arrangements including procurement of teachers, contributing space to school and the facilities to students
were made by the local communities. There used to be no central authority (like an education board) to design the curriculum but it was structured, though loosely, by the teachers and the community people together (Rani and Arora: 2004).

During the British period, the responsibility of organizing the school education was partially delegated to the Panchayats and municipalities. While the Government prepared the contents of education, the local bodies were responsible to organization and administration of the schools (Noronha: 2003).

In independent India, the universalisation of education was one of the constitutional prerogatives of the Government. This period marked the centralization of education. The government affected a takeover of the educational institutions as well as the cadre of teachers. The efficiency of the local bodies in applying their power properly was criticized (Mallik, 1996; Varghese, undated). The notion began to prevail that everything belonged to the government and not the community; therefore, it was the responsibility of the government to look after them. This notion, though, born out of an intention to improve the quality of education, could not sustain for long as centralization failed to affect a change in the quality of school education (Noronha: 2003).

The National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 envisaged a greater role for community in the field of education at the local level followed by various initiatives and programmes which indisputably underlined the importance of community participation in school governance. The successive governments made multi-pronged strategies entitling the community to be an active partner in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating the school activities.

The following discussion would take us through various milestones in the journey for universalisation of elementary education in Independent India and the role of community as stressed and highlighted from time to time.

Based on the changes in the policies of the Central Government towards education, the educational development initiatives can be broadly divided into four different phases for easy understanding. The first phase can be from 1951 to the mid 1960s which is marked by expansion of formal education system to achieve universalisation of elementary education. The second phase could be from 1968 when first National Education Policy (NPE) was framed to 1986 when the second National Education Policy was framed. The third phase can be extended from 1986 to the 1992 when the NPE 1986 was revised followed by the initiation of the Programme of

1.2.1 First Phase

Prior to India’s Independence, the British established a system of education that had limited access and denied mass education. Macaulay explicitly stated that the objective of education system was to create a new breed of Indians as similar to the Europeans as possible. It was on account of this that the Indian National Movement developed a strong critique of the British system that only imparted ‘learning skills’ and not ‘life skills’ and that did not respect Indian traditions (Singh: 1999). Thus the National movement expressed the global sentiment of education for all. The imperatives of the colonial education policy prompted our leaders to search for alternative approaches to elementary education. Gandhi’s approach of ‘education for life’, Rabindra Nath Tagore’s approach of ‘education for self- development’ and Dr. Zakir Hussein’s thrust on ‘Nayee Taleem’ formed the basis of future discourses on education. In the backdrop of Gandhi’s emphasis on ‘swawalamban’ (self-reliance), the founding fathers of our Constitution recognized universalisation of elementary education as a crucial input for nation building. During this phase India has taken a pledge through the Constitution that free and compulsory education would be provided to all children upto 6-14 years of age. Article 41 and 45 of the Constitution provided the basis for the new approach. In the light of these articles, legislations for free and compulsory education were enacted and the children were exempted from tuition fee upto upper primary classes (Singh: 1999).

While Article 41 directed that the state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provisions for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of employment, old age, sickness and disablement and in cases of undeserved want; Article 45 directs that the state shall endeavor to provide, with in a period of ten years from commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. Article 21A, which was amended by 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002, provides that the state shall provide free and compulsory education for all children of the age of 6 to 14 years as the state may, by law determine. Article 21A also makes it mandatory that the schools will essentially be
managed by School Management Committees (SMCs). Besides these articles, Article 24 and 39 also have the child in focus. Article 24 says” No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in hazardous employment” where as Article 39 says that” the state shall direct its policy towards securing that the tender age of children is not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age or strength and that the children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. In the light of the Constitutional mandate of free and compulsory education, many states have passed legislations and provided facilities so that the children are able to go to school and the larger goal of universalisation of elementary education are fulfilled.

**B.G. Kher Committee (1953)**

Kher committee was appointed to examine the relationship between the state governments and local bodies in respect of the administration elementary education. The committee submitted its report in 1954 recommending that with regard to community participation and management, there is a need for decentralization to attract community involvement at the grassroots level. Thus all types of local bodies be involved to promote and manage education in the interest of mass education (GoI: 1954).

**Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)**

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee submitted its report in 1957 suggesting that organization of Panchayati Raj (rule by village council) as an instrument of rural local self-government as well as an agency for community development. The major focus of the report was on democratic decentralization in all aspects of village development like health, education and development and so on. The Panchayati Raj has been designed to encourage the people of rural areas in meeting their needs locally. The committee recommended that primary education should become the responsibility of the Panchayats. In view of the recommendations of the committee, financial and administrative powers were transferred to Panchayati Raj bodies at the village level. Many states enacted Panchayati Raj Acts. Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayati Raj followed by Andhra Pradesh and Punjab (Rani and Arora:2004).
The first phase largely focused on the free and compulsory education of children so as to achieve the broader goal of Education for All (EFL) and Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). The recommendations of the B G Kher Committee, and Balwant Rai Mehta Committee were very significant development towards decentralization of primary education and involvement of community in the administration of school related activities.

1.2.2 Second Phase

The period after Independence saw a linear expansion of the elementary education but it was in 1964 that the Government recognized the need to take a holistic view of the education and thus appointed the National Education Commission (1964-66). The Commission recommended a radical transformation in the prevailing education system and highlighted the need to promote equity and social justice. Following the recommendations of the Commission, the first National Policy of Education 1968 suggested for free and compulsory elementary education along with equalization of opportunities particularly to the vulnerable sections like the Scheduled Castes children and girls (Singh: 1999). This period also witnessed the decentralization of education where Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) strongly recommended for the transfer of powers to the local bodies for better participation of the community (Rao: 2008).

National Policy on Education 1968

National Policy of Education 1968 suggested for strenuous efforts for seeking free and compulsory education for all children upto 14 years. In respect of equalization of educational opportunities, the Policy stressed the need for more efforts and underlined that the regional imbalances in the provisions of educational facilities should be correlated and good educational facilities be provided in rural and other backward areas. The Policy recommended common school system to promote social cohesion and national integration. Common school system was essential to do away with the dual education system under which the children of the rich and well-to-do families avail education from private and good quality schools while the children from poorer households generally attended the public supported, free but poor quality schools. The Policy through common school system put emphasis on the proper integration of different bodies of school management like the government, local
bodies and the voluntary organizations. However, despite far-reaching recommendations, the Policy could not evolve a transformation of the education system that could relate more closely to the life of the people. The Policy was not even implemented by many states for the simple reason that education, at that time, was on the State List. Taking this fact into consideration, education was brought under Con-current List in 1976 through 42\textsuperscript{nd} Constitutional Amendment Act (GoI, MHRD:1986).

**Ashok Mehta Committee (1978)**

Ashok Mehta Committee formed in 1977 brought some new and significant thought in the concepts and practice of Panchayati Raj. It re-emphasized the need for involving Panchayats in local development and planning and viewed their role in terms of strengthening the planning process at the micro level (Chaturvedi: 2003). Thus the Committee advocated transfer of substantial powers and responsibilities to Zila Parishads. These included transfer of teachers, monthly transfer of salary funds and composition of a Board of Education for maintenance of the quality and standard of education (Rani and Arora: 2004). Under this Committee, district was made the first point of decentralization below the state level. The Zila Parishad was made the executive body responsible for planning at the district level. However due to the collapse of the Janta Government before completion of its term, no action could be taken on the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta Committee report at the Central level (Rao: 2008).

**1.2.3 Third Phase**

The adoption of National Policy on Education 1986 was a significant development during this period. The Policy focused on the universal enrolment and retention of children upto 14 years of age and to bring a substantial improvement in the quality of school education. It stressed on community involvement in educational management as it would establish a close linkage between school and community and help in improving the quality of education, reduction in absenteeism, and irregularity. The Policy visualized direct involvement of community in the form of Village Education Committees.

The revised Policy on Education 1992 also emphasized for community participation in educational planning and management. After formation of the
National Policy on Education 1986, a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Acharya Ramamurti in May 1990 to review NPE 1986. This Committee submitted its report in December 1990. Thereafter at the request of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), another committee was set up under the chairmanship of Shri N. Janardhana Reddy to consider the modifications in NPE taking into consideration the report of the Acharya Ramamurti Committee. The Reddy committee submitted its report in 1992 which was broadly endorsed by CABE and adopted by the Government (GoI: 1998). The report of the Reddy’s committee formed the basis of revision in the NPE 1986. The revised Policy 1992 assigned a major role to local communities through appropriate bodies to involve in the programmes of school management. The Policy laid stress on participation of non-governmental and voluntary efforts including social activist groups in planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of activities related to educational development. The Policy keeping with the establishment of a participative educational order, strongly emphasized decentralization of educational management at all levels (GoI: 1998).

1.2.4 Fourth Phase

The most significant aspect of this phase was the implementation of Programme of Action (PoA) 1992. The reviews of NPE 1986 by the Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990) and N. Janardhana Reddy Committee (1992) formed the basis for the Programme of Action (PoA) 1992.

Programme of Action (PoA) 1992

The National Policy on Education and PoA 1992 have emphasized the importance of decentralized planning and management of education at all levels and involving people in this process. The Plan of Action (1992) of the National Policy of Education (1986) said, “each Gram Panchayat may constitute a Village Education Committee (VEC), which would be responsible for administration of the delegated programmes in the field of education at the village level” (GoI: 1992). In pursuance of PoA, the Village Education Committees were formed as the structures for decentralized planning and management. The VECs have been entrusted with the responsibility to operationalize micro planning and school mapping in the village through systematic house to house survey and periodic discussion with parents. VECs were expected to build a congenial atmosphere through activities such as street
plays, folksongs and rallies etc. (GoI: 1998). The PoA emphasized on reducing drop out rates, improving learning achievements and expanding access to students with community as equal partner in the educational process. Promoting parental and community involvement has been an essential aspect of school governance under NPE 1992 and the Programme of Action 1992 (GoI: 1998).

**The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts 1992**

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts have provided for decentralization of powers and responsibilities to the Panchayati Raj Bodies. In pursuance of the provisions of the Acts, the state governments have taken steps towards devolution of powers to the PRIs with respect to educational governance and management. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has identified 29 items for transfer to the Panchayats, including primary and secondary education. All states have enacted new Panchayati Raj Acts in order to realize the Constitutional mandate of decentralized democracy and development (Rao: 2008). The Acts fully acknowledge that the community is the main actor towards school governance and education related activities.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 2001**

Community is the core actor in implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Community participation starts with the preparation of micro level planning at the beginning of every year. The Programme calls for community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization. The process is augmented through involvement of women’s groups, village education committee members and the members of the Panchayat Raj Institutions. The issues relating to community participation under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are discussed ahead in a separate section of the chapter.

**The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005**

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 is the principle document which provides a mean of evolving a national system of education. An important curriculum development principal was recommended by the National Policy on Education 1986 when it envisioned that “The National System of Education will be based on a national curriculum framework and would contain a common core along with other components that are flexible. The common core would include the history
of India’s freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. These elements will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote values such as India’s common heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of sexes ……….. and inculcation of scientific temper” (GoI: 1986). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has emphasized strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions by adopting a more streamlined approach to encourage community participation as a means of enhancing quality and accountability. The Framework elaborates that the parents and community members could come into the school as resource persons to share their knowledge and experiences in relation to a particular topic being studied. The Document says that “community involvement can also be sought for maintaining the school and its facilities. There are examples of local contributions for building school boundary walls, augmenting facilities and so on. However, community participation must not mean the economic burdening of the poor families. On the other hand, there can be an understanding that school space can be shared with the community for local events and that there will be some collective responsibility in maintaining its premises” (GoI: 2005). The Framework clearly emphasized the role of community and parents’ participation in overall development of children education. It said that participation of community in the child’s world of education and learning should allow for the community to:

1. Transfer oral history like dealing with folklore and traditional knowledge like sowing, harvesting, monsoons, traditional crafts etc to children, while the school encourages critical reflection whenever it is required.
2. Support children in their exploration and creation of knowledge and information.
3. Support children in their practice of democracy through their participation in information generation, planning, monitoring and evaluation with local government and school.
4. Participate in setting criterion for vocational training.
5. Monitor the realization of children’ rights as well as violations of these rights.
6. Enable the village to become a learning environment for children realizing the concept of the “village as a school” (GoI: 2005).
The Right to Education Act 2009

The Right to Education Act 2009 is another historic step which recognizes the role of local governance in school education. The Act specifies that a School Management Committee (SMC) shall be constituted for every school to monitor and oversee its working, and to plan and facilitate its overall development with representation of parents, teachers and community and local authority members, as may be prescribed by the appropriate State government. The SMC shall exercise such powers and perform such functions, and shall be accountable in such manner, as may be prescribed. The composition of the School Management Committee shall be so prescribed that: i) It has adequate representation of all sections of the community, including parents, teachers, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, and persons/bodies working for education, and ii) At least half of its members are parents/guardians of children studying in the school. The Act further underlines that all moneys received by a School Management Committee for the discharge of its functions under this Act, shall be kept in a separate account, and shall be utilized in such a manner as may be prescribed by the respective state government. And the accounts of money received and spent by the SMC shall be maintained and audited in such manner as may be prescribed.

To sum up, it can be said that community participation in education through local bodies like the PRIs and Village Education Committees has been recognized as very important by most of the policies and recommendations of various committees and commissions in India. This discussion would be carried further in the next section touching upon the importance attached to the Village Education Committees in various initiatives of the Central government introduced in various parts of the Country.

1.3 Community Participation in Education: Some Important Government Initiatives

From the preceding section, it is evident that community participation in education has always been central to achieving universal elementary education in India. Inclusion of minorities, women and socially deprived sections as stakeholders in the school education system has always been emphasized in major government schemes and programmes relating to school education. The present section attempts to give a brief overview of some of the education related programmes implemented in
different states by both the Central as well as respective state governments and were quite successful in making a niche toward democratic decentralization of school education.

**Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) 1987**

Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) was launched in Rajasthan in 1987 with financial assistance from SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The project aimed at reaching out to children in remote and rural areas where the formal primary schools were either non-existent or dysfunctional. Under the Project local youth with some basic education were identified, trained and provided continuous educational support to teach children in Shiksha Karmi Day schools, Prehar Pathshalas (schools of convenient timings) and Angan Pathshalas (courtyard schools). (Ramachandran and Sethi: 2002). The concept of Shiksha Karmi was based on the assumption that a change agent, especially in the field of education, can work better if he/she belongs to the same locality. The involvement of the community in the identification of potential candidates and their recruitment as Shiksha Karmi was an important feature of the Shiksha Karmi Project. A key element of the SKP was its emphasis on consensual functioning, with all decisions related to schools, selection of Shiksha Karmis, location of Pathshalas was to be taken in the Village Education Committee meetings (Ramachandran and Sethi: 2002). There was a great reliance on community support and each VEC consisted of members representing all castes, minority groups and women.

**Total Literacy Campaigns 1988**

Total Literacy Campaign and Post Literacy Campaigns were two flagship programmes of the National Literacy Mission Programme launched in 1988. Total Literacy Campaign has evolved along three basic principles. First, was to create a positive climate through mass mobilization and motivation, generating demand among non-literates for literacy and willingness among the educated to contribute and participate in the literacy campaign on voluntary basis. Second, was to design a cross-representative organizational structure and participatory management system which assured support of government and enable involvement of NGOs, voluntary agencies and all sections of civil society. Thirdly, the campaign gave stress on highly professional project implementation and management structure with inbuilt
monitoring. Total Literacy Campaign was marked by massive environment building for mass mobilization, motivation and participation, a door to door survey to identify non-literate and other resources such as volunteer teachers and learners (CED: 2005). Total Literacy Campaigns were based on a unique social mobilization approach that involved all sections of the society from grass roots level to the highest level (GoI: 2010).

**Bihar Education Project (BEP) 1991**

Bihar Education Project represented the first major attempt in India to include a holistic approach to Education for All (EFA) using district as a basic unit of planning and implementation. The Project was conceived as a micro approach (village level) as well as a macro approach (state level) for universalisation of primary education. In the effective implementation of BEP, Village Education Committees played an important role (Planning Commission: 1994). In fact VECs were the fulcrum on which most activities of BEP revolved. VECs constituted women and members of disadvantaged groups, were instrumental in carrying out detailed micro planning exercise for building a proper environment for children’s education. VECs played a positive role in raising people’s contribution in construction and school improvement activities (Planning Commission: 1994). The VECs not only helped in micro planning but in many cases also acted watchdogs against the vested interests at the village level working against the BEP. Among major components of the BEP, one was to restructure the VECs to make them more effective and inclusive. The VECs formed before the implementation of BEP suffered from the basic problem that the members were being nominated by the Block Education Officer and the ‘mukhiya’ used to be made the president. During 1991-92, the BEP restructured the basic character of the VECs and the president now was to be directly elected by the Gram Sabha and the ‘mukhiya’ was not necessarily to be the President. The restructuring of VECs under BEP had a perceptible impact and there was a tremendous increase in enrollment after this restructuring (Kantha and Narain: 2002).

**Rajasthan Lok Jumbhish 1992**

Rajasthan Lok Jumbhish (meaning Peoples’ Movement) project was launched as a people’s movement at the grassroots level to mobilize support and participation of the rural community in primary education. The project was based on the
assumption that the creation of a people’s movement for primary education would generate a stimulus for human development which, in turn, would contribute to basic socio-economic change empowering the community as a whole (Govinda:1999). The core component of Lok Jumbhish was the participatory process of school mapping and micro planning. Under this, it was the villagers themselves who carried out the field surveys and prepared the education map of the village indicating the status of participation of every child. This approach indeed heightened the sense of commitment and accountability of the community members (Govinda: 1999). The Lok Jumbhish project broke grounds in Rajasthan by creating informal voluntary groups within the community in the form of a core team and a women’s group in each village within the project area (Govinda:2002). The Lok Jumbhish project empowered local people by involving them in school matters through carefully formed Village Education Committees making the participation more representative. Formation of a core groups and a women’s group under Lok Jumbhish met the need for the coming together of people voluntarily for a common cause. It was the voluntary organization of the people that gave them a feeling of empowerment. In many villages core groups were transformed to VECs, thus, converting the informal organizations of the people into formal, legitimate structures (Govinda: 2002). The Lok Jumbhish project was able to transform, to a great extent, the centralized and hierarchical management systems of school education into people-friendly decentralized system in the state of Rajasthan.

**District Primary Education Project (DPEP) 1993**

District Primary Education Project has been one of the largest education projects of its kind in the whole world. The Programme aimed at achieving universalisation of elementary education in the country through district-specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management, participatory processes, empowerment and capacity building at all levels (Rao: 2008). DPEP stressed on the active role of the local community in promoting enrolment, retention, achievement and school effectiveness. The process was institutionalized through Village Education Committees and bodies like the Mother-Teacher Associations (MTAs). The VECs were entrusted with the responsibility of improving school facilities according to locally felt needs and priorities. The DPEP emphasized on local-specific planning in a participatory manner involving teachers, parents and Village Education Committees.
(GoI: 1997). To translate the idea of decentralization into an operational practice, the DPEP made following efforts (NIEPA: 1997).

1. The Programme identified district as the unit for initiating decentralized educational planning.
2. The Programme attempted to alter the pattern of resource decisions from state level to local levels.
3. The Programme attempted to strengthen the planning process to make it more consultative, participative and transparent.

The DPEP moved away from the schematic peace-meal approach of the earlier programmes and took a holistic view of primary education with emphasis on decentralized management, community mobilization and district-specific planning based on contextual and research based inputs (Rao:2008). At the village level, the implementation of the Project was monitored and supervised by the Village Education Committees, Mother-Teacher Associations, and Parents-Teacher Associations. The DPEP project was, however, not implemented in the state of Punjab.

Janshala Programme 1998

Janshala, which means community school, was a joint venture of the Government of India and the five UN agencies –UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA to support the ongoing efforts of the Government towards Universalisation of Elementary Education. The approach of the programme was to promote educational planning and management through village based micro planning by local committees. Janshala was relatively a small programme in terms of its scope and coverage and the programme did not cover all aspects of primary education. This Programme aimed at:

1. Enhancing and sustaining community participation in effective school management;
2. Improving performance of teachers in the use of interactive child-centred and gender-sensitive methods of teaching and;
3. To redress social constraints with affect the attendance and performance of children, mainly the girls (GoI: 2002).

Janshala was implemented on the principle of decentralized planning and management. The Programme identified block as its operational unit rather than the
district. Panchayati Raj Institutions were sought to play a more active role towards creating a congenial ambience for the decentralized planning giving greater voice to women, SCs/STs and the minorities (GoI: 2002). The VECs were actively involved in school improvement and other activities for universal enrolment and retention of children in primary and alternative schools. The Programme was implemented in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The Programme completed its term in 2002, however, the term was extended till 2004 in some states. Janshala was the first programme in the world where five UN agencies collaborated and pooled resources to support an initiative in education (Planning Commission: 2007). The Programme amply demonstrated that flexibility and decentralized mode of functioning are pre-requisites for ensuring innovations at village, school and block levels (GoI: 2002).

1.4 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 2001: Reaching the Unreached

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (meaning People’s Movement for Education to All) aims at universalizing elementary education by community - ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The target beneficiaries in the community and other stakeholders are involved in all stages of implementation to achieve the education outcomes (GoI: 2000).

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode. SSA assigns greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. SSA calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effecting decentralization. Under SSA, concerted efforts have been made to mobilize the community to promote education, to help in development of educational facilities and to oversee the functioning of schools. It advocates for community based monitoring system with full transparency. Every school is expected to share all information with the community, including grants received. SSA envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRIs. One of the principal concerns in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is the education of girls, especially those belonging to the scheduled castes, schedule tribes and minorities. There is a focus on
the inclusion and participation of children from SC/ST, minority groups, urban deprived children, children of other disadvantaged groups and children with special needs, in the educational process. On the whole, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community-ownership of the school system through active involvement of Women’s Groups, Village Education Committee (VEC) members, and members of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Overall Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is understood in the following way:

1. A programme with a clear time frame for universal elementary education.
2. A response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education.
3. An effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum level Education Committees, Parent Teacher Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools.
4. An expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country.
5. A partnership of the Centre, State and the local government.
6. An opportunity for States to develop their own vision of elementary education (GoI: 2000).

Broad Strategies Central to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme (SSA)

Institutional Reforms: As part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Central and the State governments undertake reforms in order to improve efficiency of the delivery system. The States will have to make an objective assessment of their prevalent education system include in educational administration, achievement levels in schools, financial issue; decentralization and community ownership, review of State Education Act, rationalization of teacher deployment and recruitment of teachers, monitoring and evaluation, status of education of girls, SC/ST and disadvantaged groups, policy regarding private schools and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Many states have already carried out several changes to improve the delivery system for elementary education.

Sustainable Financing: The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is based on the premise the financing of elementary education interventions has to be sustainable. This calls for
long-term perspective on financial partnership between the Central and the State governments.

**Community Ownership:** The programme calls for community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization. This will be augmented by involvement of women’s groups, VEC members and members of Panchayati Raj institutions.

**Institutional Capacity Building:** The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan conceives a major capacity building role for national, state and district level institutions like NIEPA/NCERT/NCTE/ SCERT/SIEMAT/DIET. Improvement in quality requires a sustainable support system of resource persons and institutions.

**Improving Mainstream Educational Administration:** It calls for improvement of mainstream educational administration by institutional development, infusion of new approaches and by adoption of cost effective and efficient methods.

**Community Based Monitoring with Full Transparency:** The Programme will have a community based monitoring system. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) will correlate school level data with community-based information from micro-planning and surveys. Besides this, every school will be encouraged to share all information with the community, including grants received. A notice board would be put up in every school for this purpose.

**Habitation as a Unit of Planning:** The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan works on a community based approach to planning with habitation as a unit of planning. Habitation plans will be the basis for formulating district plans.

**Accountability to Community:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and Panchayat Raj Institutions, as well as accountability and transparency to the community.

**Priority to Education of Girls:** Education of girls, especially those belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities, will be one of the principal concerns in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

**Focus on Special Groups:** There will be a focus on the inclusion and participation of children from SC/ST, minority groups, urban deprived children, children of other disadvantaged groups and children with special needs in the educational process.

**Pre-Project Phase:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan will commence throughout the country with a well-planned pre-project phase that provides for a large number of interventions for capacity development to improve the delivery and monitoring
system. These include provision for household surveys, community-based micro-planning and school mapping, training of community leaders, school level activities, support for setting up information system, office equipment, diagnostic studies, etc.

**Thrust on Quality:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan lays a special thrust on making education at the elementary level useful and relevant for children by improving the curriculum, child-centered activities and effective teaching learning strategies

**Role of teachers:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan recognizes the critical and central role of teachers and advocates a focus on their development needs. Setting up of Block Resource Centres/Cluster Resource Centres, recruitment of qualified teachers, opportunities for teacher development through participation in curriculum-related material development, focus on classroom process and exposure visits for teachers are all designed to develop the human resource among teachers.

**District Elementary Education Plans:** As per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework, each district will prepare a District Elementary Education Plan reflecting all the investments being made and required in the elementary education sector, with a holistic and convergent approach. There will be a Perspective Plan that will give a framework of activities over a longer time frame to achieve UEE. There will also be an Annual Work Plan and Budget that will list the prioritized activities to be carried out in that year. The Perspective Plan will also be a dynamic document subject to constant improvement in the course of programme implementation (GoI:2000).

1.5 **Village Education Committees: Experiences from Some Select States**

As has been pointed out earlier, community participation in school governance has been emphasized in all policy documents in India particularly after the National Educational Policy 1968. The Village Education Committees (VECs) have proved to be very effective instruments for ensuring community participation at the village level. In many states where the community people have been pro-active and vigilant, VECs have played a vital role in reducing school dropout rates and improving enrollment of children in village schools. These bodies have done an impressive work in improving the overall teaching learning environment both within and outside the class rooms. However, in many states, the performance of these bodies has been far from satisfactory. The VECs in such states have drastically failed in meeting their predetermined goals. The VECs exist only on papers. No meetings are held. The parents didn’t even know about the existence of a VEC in their village. A great
majority of gram sabhas don’t have education on their priority list. In nutshell, the VECs are yet to show the expected results towards achieving universalisation of elementary education through community participation. Some experiences are being presented from selected states in India depicting the success stories as well as the failures of the village education committees in the following section.

**Experiences from Bihar**

In Bihar, the VEC is also called the Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti (VSS) and is comprised of 15 members, out which, nine members are the parents while three are non-parents elected by the local community. Two non-elected community members are nominated by village Mukhiya. Of the twelve elected members of the VEC, there has to be at least five female members. One male and one female member each from scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward classes are essential. These fifteen members of the VEC elect the secretary and the chairperson, either of whom must be a woman. The Bihar State Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti Act of 2000 defines the process for selection/expulsion of the VEC for a maximum term of three years. The studies done in the state of Bihar have shown that VECs did not have proper representation of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the minorities. The participation of district BEP officials and Block Education officer (BEO) was very poor in the process of formation of VECs. The members were mostly middle aged upper caste, educated, agriculturists. The awareness level about their role and functions, however, was below average. There was no coordination between VEC and Mahila Samooh in the village. There was a general lack of interest among members and there was lack of coordination between community, school and government functionaries (Lal: 1997). Inspite of the VECs under the Bihar Education Project, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed and looked into for strengthening the educational planning and management structure at the village level. To ensure that the right persons are elected to the VECs is a great difficulty since the influential and powerful people want to see themselves or their favourites as VEC members. The members did not even know the specific objectives of these bodies and no efforts were being made by anyone to ensure that good people come to these committees who work with interest and devotion. The mukhiya of the panchayat is not necessarily the right choice for president of a VEC. There was neither any formal mechanism for decision making nor there was any process for feed back to the VECs.
One of the main difficulties which VECs face in performing their functions was that they didn’t have any financial and administrative powers (Tyagi: 1999).

**Experiences from Andhra Pradesh**

In Andhra Pradesh, the schools committees have been constituted by the State Act no. 13 of 1998. The school committee consists of five members of whom four parents of the children enrolled in the school are the members. These parents are elected by all the parents of the children enrolled in the school. The head master or the senior teacher is the member convener of the school committee. Of the four parent members, at least two have to be women and one person has to be from scheduled caste community. The chairman is a parent. The term of office of the members of the school committee is two years. A parent member, however, ceases to be a member when he has no child enrolled in the school or when recalled by the parent-teacher association in the manner prescribed. The school committees in Andhra Pradesh are not the part of Gram Panchayats and are separate bodies.

The studies suggest that VECs in Vishakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh have been clearly involved in planning and implementation of educational intervention. More than 80 per cent heads of the household, even those who were not VEC members, attended the VEC meetings. There were cases where the VEC collected money from the community and paid salary to the teachers from the community funds (Sujatha and Rao: 2000).

Community participation in improving education is negligible in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh and members of the school education management committees have limited awareness of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). An overwhelming majority (87.2 percent) of the school teachers were found to be aware of SSA, whereas in the case of PRI members, it was 61 percent who were aware while among parents of the school-going children, 52 percent were aware about Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The tribal community members were participating in some or the other way in the school-related activities. The community level structures i.e. the School Education Management Committees in this District of Andhra Pradesh played a key role in micro-planning, especially in the development of a village education plan and school improvement plans (Rao, Vasanta Srinivasa: 2009).
Experiences from Arunachal Pradesh

The Village Education Committees in the villages of Arunachal Pradesh has been constituted as per Govt. notification No.ED3/7/93, dated 21.6.93 with the objectives and guidelines of the revised Programme of Action 1992. The village education committee in this state consists of representatives from parents, panchayat, teachers, adult education instructors, cooperatives, women, local development functionaries. The total number of members does not exceed 15 in each village education committee. The village education committees in Arunachal Pradesh have been taking initiatives in education planning and development processes. The VECs are working for universal enrolment and retention of children in the schools. Overall, the working of VECs in Arunachal Pradesh has been satisfactory so far. The VECs in the state have organized various drives for increasing enrollment and retention of school children and the result had been impressive.

Experiences from Assam

Bhattacharya (2001) in the study on functioning of village education committees in selected VECs in Ghunucha cluster of Morigaon district of Assam found that all the sample VECs were constituted within the Government guidelines. All the VECs under study were formed in public meetings arranged by CRC co-coordinators or the Head teachers of primary schools of the villages. The composition of VECs was uniform and complied with the Government rules. The minimum qualification of president of VEC was fixed at matriculation and as a result, more than two-fifth (40 per cent) VEC Presidents were replaced by qualified persons in the year 2000. Interestingly more than two-third of the total representatives of VECs were from Mothers' Committees. The mothers' committees appeared to be very active in the entire sampled VECs and more than half (50 per cent) mothers’ committees were fully involved in school as well as village development work. Nearly 70 per cent VECs were found to be active whereas in case of 30 per cent VECs, the working was not satisfied. However the VEC members along with the teachers prepared the action plan in most of the VECs in Assam in the year 2001.

Experiences from Kerala

Mathew (2001) found that the vicious circle of poverty compelled the poor parents not to participate in a satisfactory way in the school activities in Kerala. The
role of Panchayat Raj Institutions with regard to monitoring has been significantly apprehended by the teaching community. The role of PRIs, in initiating quality improvement drives and cultural networking in the village, has remained far from satisfactory and there was a significant vacuum with regard to an integrated institutional mechanism at the panchayat level, which takes care of both the infrastructural as well as qualitative needs of the school. The different committees functioned as rather independent entities, with little or no give and take. On the other hand, there were no clear policies on primary education in the state, which swing the panchayats into action. The teaching community in Kerala obviously needs proper monitoring even as a few teachers had demonstrated excellent examples of meritorious work in this state.

Experiences from Orissa

Nayak (2002) found that a great majority of the members of VEC in Cuttack district don’t attend the meetings of VEC regularly. There was no orientation among the members about the role and responsibilities of these committees. A great majority of these members did not approach the parents and convince them to send their children to school. Dash and Panda (2009) highlighted that most of the Village Education Committees in Nabarangpur district of Orissa worked excellently well for all round development of primary schools. All the VECs took care and management work of primary schools satisfactorily. VECs organized different awareness programmes satisfactorily for attitudinal change of villagers. Facilitation role of all VECs were very impressive. VECs undertook different steps to improve the financial status of primary schools. Proper care and management of primary schools, taking steps to increase enrolment and to reduce drop-out rate, organizing different cultural activities in schools, working for development of school environment and helping the teacher to prepare TLM were significant works of VEC, which significantly affected the environment of the local primary schools. Facilitation role, attitudinal role, school improvement role, economic activities and miscellaneous works have been performed by VECs effectively for all round development of the respective school. The study concluded that the role of VECs is very essential and important for the improvement of primary education. According to Nayak, P.M. (2009) people’s direct participation in the management of primary education is very significant for materializing long cherished goal of universalisation of primary education. Specific efforts in various
forms can be launched to revitalize the school-community relationships that can be gainfully channelized for quantitative as well as qualitative improvement of primary education in the country.

**Experiences from Karnataka**

In the state of Karnataka, the VECs are called as School Development and Management Committee (SDMC). SDMCs are a part of Gram Panchayat and chairman or a member elected from the village to gram panchayat is the chairman of the SDMC. Studies have shown that the involvement of community in academic activities for improvement of quality of primary education was not satisfactory in this state (Palakshiah: 1999). Government of Karnataka (2004) in collaboration with Azim Premji Foundation found out that 2 percent of the schools in Karnataka didn’t even have a School Development and Management Committee. The monitoring mechanism seemed to be ineffective. There was low representation of girls as student representatives in SDMCs. Students from SC/ST communities also need representation since they are still an underprivileged section. Vaijayanti (2005) recommends that SDMCs should be continued and their autonomy protected by insulating them against political interference -both in their formation and day-to-day functioning. There is ambiguity and confusion in the prevailing Government circular on the formation of SDMCs. Modifications suggested while retaining the content and spirit of the first executive order. There is a need involve SDMC members with reasonable qualifications (SSLC and above) in curriculum construction, teacher training and other academic issues at the school level.

**Experiences from West Bengal**

Village Education Committees in West Bengal have made contribution towards making sitting arrangements of students and improving the condition of school buildings and attendance of students at school. However, their frequency of visiting the school for the purpose of such supervision varied significantly. An analysis of the process of VEC formation makes it clear that there is no scope for the poorly educated people to be part of VEC. However unethical it may sound, probably it would not be desirable also to nominate such people as the decision-makers for issues related with education. However, they should be given the scope to voice their opinions, i.e., they should be empowered incase they are from socio-economically
disadvantaged groups. The unstable economic capacity of people is often behind their poor participation in public works and dropout of their children from school. Therefore, one step towards empowering socioeconomically disadvantaged population would be betterment of their economic strength. In this regard, gram panchayat may play a vital role through employment generation schemes as well as through poverty alleviation programmes. Significant amount of resources have already been spent in this regard. However, the majority of the efforts have been wasted due to improper vision and unplanned implementation. There is need to have frequent meetings between VEC functionaries, school teachers and the parents/guardians. A similar forum for discussing broader developmental issues is the meeting of gram sangsad (Wankhede and Sengupta: 2005).

Sinha, Sujit (2007) while sharing the experiments of the NGO - Swanirvar in 24 Parganas district reiterated that encouraging parents to come to school during school hours and watch what their children were doing, proved very useful. The participation of the people in school activities was wonderful and in order to ensure even a better community participation in school governance, there is a need to reorient the bureaucrats, the state decision makers in matters of syllabus and text books, members of the inspectorate, the teachers’ training institutes, and the existing teachers.

Experiences from Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, a Village Education Committee is constituted by the members elected by the Gram Sabha. Representation has been given to the Gram Panchayat on the Village Education Committee. Narayana and Chandrakant (2000) underlined that the co-ordination between the VEC and the higher authority like Block Level Education Authority or District level Education Authority in Satra district of Maharashtra was very less. The conduct of the meetings also needed improvement. In this district, it was observed that no proper notice was to be given by the Secretary of VEC to the members about the schedule of the meeting. There was inadequate representation of female and people belonging to reserved categories. The educational authorities had done little with regard to proper monitoring and mentoring the VEC meetings. No or very little attention was being paid towards conducting any training programmes for the VEC members.
Government of Maharashtra (2009) in its *Annual Work Plan and Budget Document* 2009-10 for Mid-day Meal (MDM) in Schools have fully authorized the Village Education Committees (VECs) to implement the scheme at school level. Funds are provided to the VECs and they have been given full powers to expand the scope of their working so as to improve the school education in the State. They have been empowered to inspect schools, maintenance and repair of building, creation of infrastructure at the school and community levels, monitoring the academic performance and attendance of children, supervising and monitoring the distribution of textbooks, ensuring drinking water and toilets, ensuring cleanliness and sanitation, ensuring proper utilization of grants and participation in all micro-planning processes. The Government in the *Annual Work Plan and Budget Document* 2009-10, has decided that the mid day meal scheme is to be implemented by the VECs at the village level, by the Ward Education Committees (WECs) at the municipal corporation or the urban level and the School Management Committees (SMCs) have to be responsible in the Private-Aided Schools for implementation of Mid Day Meal scheme. The VECs, WECs and the SMCs have been authorized to appoint Self Help Groups, *Mahila Mandals*, needy women or NGOs for full involvement of the community at various levels. Since the Mid Day Meals scheme has been totally decentralized, the community participation has increased tremendously in the state and this model has worked very well so far. Mother’s involvement in supervision of cooked meals has helped children to participate in the school activities more actively.

**Experiences from Nagaland**

Village Education Committees have been constituted in respect of every village in the State of Nagaland. Village Education Committees have been given the responsibility of management of the schools located in the villages which include giving clearance for the release of monthly salary in respect of teachers, so as to regulate their attendance. Many primary school buildings have been constructed by way of community participation through the Village Development Boards. Decentralisation of education has been put to good use in villages where the community has consciously involved in the affairs of the school. This however is not the case all over the State. In many villages, changes have also taken place through the concern and effort of individuals. Trained and motivated teachers play a very big role in the process of decentralisation to sensitize village elders and parents so that
they are not dependant wholly on the Government. Tongpangshilu (1990) is of the view that VECs in the State are doing good work to improve the standard of education in their respective villages through involvement of the people as far as possible. VEC made commendable efforts to involve the village people in most of the community based programmes apart from making them conscious of their children's welfare and responsibilities towards social change and upliftment.

**Experiences from Haryana**

The Village Education Committee normally comprises of 12 members (six males and six females). The Haryana Government in its guidelines for setting up village education committees suggested that three members to VEC are to be nominated by the Gram Panchayat, of which, atleast one has to be from scheduled castes community and one has to be a woman member. The Head of the primary school in the village will act as member secretary of the committee. One lady teacher is to be nominated by the headmaster/headmistress apart from one representative of Mahila Mandal is to be recommended by the Mandal. One Multi-purpose health worker (female) is also to be a member of the VEC. Besides these, an anganwadi worker (Bal Sevika), two parents of children to be nominated by Parent Teacher Association (PTA) / Mother Teacher Association (MTA, one person from voluntary organization or a social worker nominated by Block Education Officer and Village Secretary/ Gram Sevika also the members of the VEC in the state of Haryana.

In order to operationalize participatory decentralized model of development with community initiative, the people are to be made primary agent of their own development through education and organization. Development at grassroots level cannot be achieved without the participation of the community. The Village Education Committees (VECs) play a vital role in the improvement of enrolment of children. These committees ensure greater retention and reduce the drop-out rates. The VECs have emerged as effective instruments for people’s involvement in the school management in the State (Menon: 1996).

The participation of women is limited in terms of the actual role in the functioning of VEC. The women still observed purdah and many of them do not even look up to male members and speak. This reticence and non-participation of women effect the functioning of the VECs as many of the local issues remain unaddressed. In
some cases, however, the woman *pradhan*, who is usually an elderly woman, was more vocal. There is a visible change in the attitudes towards girls’ education (Menon: 1999). Yadav (2006) suggested that only those member should be nominated who are at least matriculate and there must be a fixed tenure for each member. It should be made mandatory for all members to attend the meetings. Community leaders should extend full cooperation to VECs for better functioning of the schools.

From the above experiences, it can be said that there have mixed bag of experiences. Just as there are failures, there are success stories too. On the whole, community in the form of Panchayats, Parent-Teacher Associations and Village Education Development Committees (VEDC) is very important for managing the school affairs. Inspite of the failures, the involvement of community through Village Education Committees has given a good start in operationalizing the participatory decentralized model of development in all kinds of activities of the school like enrolment, teaching learning processes, organizing different cultural activities and maintaining a clean school environment. In general, community participation as a process has created a space of its own so far as school governance at the grassroots is concerned.

**PART B**

**1.6 Communitisation of School Education in Punjab**

Being fully aware of the social commitments, the Government of Punjab is leaving no stone unturned to ensure that all communities get access to and the advantage of educational facilities. The Government has introduced programmes to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years as mandated by the Government of India. Giving unqualified priority to school education, the State Government has introduced various innovative approaches like mobilizing community support and introducing decentralized planning to help achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education. Incentives such as stipends and scholarships, free books and uniforms and mid- day meals etc have been initiated in all government schools in order to improve the attendance and to boost overall literacy.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which hinges around decentralized planning and community participation is being religious implemented by the
Government of Punjab since 2002. SSA has empowered the local community by their involvement in all aspects of plan formulation. Community based planning process is being carried out by delegating powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions and constituting the Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs). The equity issues related to girls and children from socially disadvantaged groups and with special needs are being properly attended under the Programme. The Programme has helped bridge the social gaps and to a great extent ensured that no child aged 6-14 years remains out-of-school in the State. Since the implementation of the Programme, there has been a visible impact on the school infrastructure as well as quality of school education (GoI: 2000). Considerable progress has been on access related in terms of getting out of school children in to the school and ensuring that they stay there. The quality dimensions of school education are also being addressed by ensuring that the teachers are present and quality teaching learning takes place. Broad strategies under the SSA are institutional reforms in order to improve the efficiency of delivery systems and to reach out to the educationally deprived children across all communities (GoI: 2000).

1.7 VEDCs in Punjab: Guiding the Course of Community Participation

Village Education Committees (VECs) known as Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) or in Punjabi addressed as Pendu Sikhiya Vikas Committees (Pasvak) were formally announced in October 2002 by the then Education Minister of Punjab Mr. Kushal Behal. After the announcement, VEDCs actually started functioning after the panchayat elections held in June 2003. The VEDCs are expected to be helpful in improving the standard of school education in the village through community involvement. Formation of these bodies has legitimately ensured people’ participation in the school related activities at the village level by involving the teachers, parents, women representatives and social activists. The VEDCs act local management committees for each school which actively participate in the development activities of a school and implement them. VEDCs are viewed as a medium to accelerate the pace of development of primary education in the State. The VEDCs provide representation to both the elected local bodies like PRIs and the common people. A VEDC consists of eight members. Two members are from the village panchayat, two members are from the PTA, one member each has to be an ex-military personnel, a philanthropist/ NRI and a retired teacher of the Government of Punjab. The Head teacher of the concerned school is the Secretary of
the VEDC (Govt. of Punjab: 2002). The composition of VEDC as per Memo No. Em- media/2010/VEDC /30340-379, Dated: Chandigarh March 19, 2010 and Memo No. SSA/Dec/VEDC/10/34328-367, Dated April 28, 2010 have been, however, amended. The new guidelines regarding composition of VEDCs along with the details related to the process of formation, nomination and the functions of these bodies would be discussed in details in Chapter four of the report.

Preamble of VEDC

1. Resources by the State and the community but management by VEDC.
2. Teachers to be paid by the Government but they would show path of guidance to our children.
3. Barrier-free education policy formulation by each household.
4. Each household means the house of the poorest of the poor, the house of the deprived, the house of the oppressed and the house of each one of us.
5. The VEDC is of all and for all (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

Goals of VEDC

1. To intimate institutional reforms in the quality of school education in the State.
2. Effective decentralization upto school level.
3. Right of the community in school management through peoples’ initiatives.
4. Community based plan formulation and implementation for the development of school education.
5. Flexible programme formulation for the school development as per the local needs.
6. To encourage participation of the people, local, state and central governments for capital investment towards spread of education.
7. To development appropriate methods of spending with the involvement of local people.
8. To have social audit of the expenditures through people-based evaluation and to bring transparency in school expenditures.
9. To motivate teachers through better management systems and effective ways of learning.
10. To develop inclusive, effective and relevant methods for improving the academic standards through local people.
11. To give priority to special efforts for the education of children.
12. To help design context-specific programmes for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes children and the children from the sections living below poverty line.
13. To provide special education facilities to children with special needs.
14. To establish linkages with Aanganwadi programmes.
15. To make education relevant to life through real-life experiences.
16. To ensure quality of all programmes so that a child-friendly joyful education can be encouraged that emphasize on methods of learning by doing, hearing and seeing (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**General Rules of Working**

The Guidelines amended as per Memo No. E-media/2010/VEDC /30340-379, Dated: Chandigarh, March 19, 2010 states that the chairman of VEDC will be elected by majority from amongst the VEDC members other than the ex-officio members. The Panchayat shall pass a resolution for nominating the PRI members and send it to the Head teacher. The tenure of Panchayat members as the members of VEDC shall be co-terminus with the tenure of the Panchayat. With the formation of new Panchayat, new nominations shall be done. The nominations of the PTA members will be done by the school PTA by passing a resolution. Only those PTA members shall be the members of the VEDC whose children study in that particular school. PTA members shall remain the members of the VEDC till the time they are members the PTA. The Head Master shall nominate the ex-serviceman, philanthropist, retired teacher and the senior-most teacher. For ex-serviceman, the highest rank and length of service shall be given preference. As philanthropist such person from amongst the villagers shall be nominated who has donated the maximum amount to the school. The senior-most teacher from among the school-staff excluding the head master shall be the member of the VEDC. The senior-most teacher is authorized to act as the secretary of VEDC in the absence the head teacher. The formation of VEDC shall be sent to DEO (Elementary Education) by the head teacher for approval. The DEO (Elementary Education) shall approve the formation and sent it back to the head teacher. The tenure of VEDC shall be three years from the date of approval by the DEO (Elementary Education).
Education). By passing a resolution, the VEDC can change any unfit member but such a change can be made only with the approval of the DEO (Elementary Education). In case, any member of the committee remains absent in three consecutive meetings, his membership shall be cancelled and a new member shall be nominated in his place. In any case, the position of any VEDC member shall not remain vacant for more than three months. The monthly meeting of VEDC is compulsory. If need arises more than one meeting can also be held. This meeting will be held in the school as per pre-decided date and time. The notice of the meeting shall be issued by the member secretary. The quorum of the VEDC meeting shall essentially be 1/3 of its total members. The VEDC meeting or any other work of the committee shall not remain interrupted due to the absence of a member. The VEDC is fully authorized to take any appropriate decision in the interest of the school. The VEDC shall pass resolution for all its decisions or the works to be undertaken in future. Every resolution shall have the signatures of each participating member. It is the responsibility of the member secretary to record the minutes of the meetings and the passed resolutions in the school register. The VEDC shall open a separate account for the grants received from SSA. This account shall be jointly operated by the member secretary and the chairman. The VEDC chairman or any other member of the VEDC shall not, in any case, ask to bring any school record outside the school premises. The VEDC meeting shall be held within the school only. For signing any school record and cheque, the VEDC chairman shall himself come to the school. If such a thing is not done or observed, the member secretary shall report the matter to the district headquarter. On the basis of this report, the DEO shall issue a show cause notice to the concerned chairman or member and in case of an unjustified explanation; they can be removed from their position. It is the sole responsibility of the member secretary to maintain the accounts and get all SSA work and activities completed as per the guidelines (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Meetings of VEDC**

The VEDC will hold at least one meeting between 2nd and 7th day every month. The records of the resolutions passed in these meetings will essentially be maintained (Govt. of Punjab: undated).
System of Working of VEDC

The VEDC is authorized to undertake works requiring an estimated expenditure up to Rs. 15,00,000. The Government would provide the designs and the estimates of construction work to the VEDC and give required suggestions during the process of construction. Besides this, the Government would also help the VEDC in maintaining records of all the civil/construction works done by it in the village. The VEDC need not float tenders of the works falling within its authorized limits. The VEDC is also authorized to spend the grant/funds given to it by the Government from time to time. The Department of Education, from time to time, will give directions to the VEDC with regard to the Designs, the Drawings, the Estimates and the constructions of different types of civil works in the school. The VEDC will make all arrangements for constructions/civil works as per the technical recommendations in relation to the scope, design and the specifications (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

For effective implementation and sustainability of different on-going projects, the VEDC on its own, by passing resolution, may form as many sub-committees of its members as required. The VEDC can include members with technical and other leadership skills from the village for a fixed tenure and for a particular work. At least half of such members will have to be women. All the decisions of such sub-committees will have to be passed in the VEDC meetings. Each resolution of the VEDC has to be signed by at least five members out of which two have to be female members of the VEDC (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

Local Construction Committees

The VEDC, by passing a resolution in the meeting in each case, will constitute as many Local Construction Committees (LCCs) for monitoring and supervision of each ongoing civil work. The decisions taken by the LCC have to be essentially presented and passed in the monthly meetings of the VEDC. The members of the LCC have to be the VEDC Chairman, Head teacher of school who is also the member secretary of VEDC, the ex-servicemen or the retired teacher of Punjab Government, one female PTA member, another PTA member (male/female) and two members from the village with technical skills. The Local Construction Committee essentially will have at least two women members (Govt. of Punjab: undated).
Utilization of Grants/Funds by the VEDC

As per the guidelines of the Department of Education, Government of Punjab, all the grants/funds received for school development will have to be deposited in the account of the VEDC which will be jointly operated by the VEDC Chairman and the member secretary. For operating the joint account, there is no need to seek approval from the DEO. All the payments exceeding Rs. 500/- will have to be made by cheque signed both by the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher of the school. No work will be undertaken by the VEDC without passing a resolution in the VEDC meeting. The VEDC will participate in the planning of developmental activities for the school and monitor every aspect related to their effective implementation. The VEDC will ensure proper utilization and upkeep of the projects material. Before starting a development project, the VEDC will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU will be signed by the DEO (Primary) on behalf of the State Government and the Chairman of the VEDC on behalf of the VEDC. The funds approved by the Government for the works to be undertaken by the VEDC are to be deposited in the joint account of the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher. VEDC will ensure that the village people make contribution towards school activities in cash or by donating land so that maximum participation of the people can be facilitated in the school development. The grants will be utilized only as per the guidelines. The outstanding amount, after utilization of the grant for specific purpose, can be used for other activities of the school development by passing a resolution in the VEDC meeting. The involvement of a contractor is strictly prohibited in the works undertaken by the VEDC (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

Rules for Utilization of Grants/ Funds for Construction/Civil Works

As per the Guidelines of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Authority Punjab, before initiating any work and for the estimated expenditures on such work, the VEDC will pass a resolution to this effect. The Head teacher of the school will create detailed record of the expenditures on each work involved. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher to keep the relevant records of expenses with him and the same shall remain readily available for inspection by the Block Primary Education Officer/DEO (Elementary Education). At the time of withdrawal of money from the joint account, the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher will prepare a statement of the expenses to be incurred on a specific work. Advance money will not be withdrawn without a
need. All work related payments will be made under the signatures of the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher. Both of them individually, as well as jointly, will be held responsible for any kind of discrepancy with regard to the expenses on any work or loss or any other such errors. Every voucher/receipt relating to any expenditure amount will have the number and the date of the resolution passed in this regard. The Chairman VEDC and the Head Teacher will be responsible for keeping the actual payee receipt (APR)/voucher in safe custody along with the records of the VEDC. Both of them will also be responsible for safe custody of the Cash Book and Stock Register etc. Before starting any construction work, a photograph will be clicked showing the space and the surroundings. Photographs will also be clicked before the slab and after completion of the construction work which will have to be readily available in the records for checking. The committee constituted by the Department of Education for fixing and examining the rates of wages and inspecting the necessary construction material will hold its meeting from time to time. The guidelines will be issued from time to time for keeping proper accounts of the purchases and the expenditure incurred by the VEDC and the VEDC has to adhere to these guidelines accordingly (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Monitoring the Progress of Works**

The monitoring of all civil/construction or other works undertaken by the VEDC will be done on the basis of the monthly progress reports. The Block, District and State level officials shall, from time to time, inspect the ongoing works of the VEDC (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Progress Reports of VEDC**

**a)** **School Level:** The Head teacher will prepare a progress report of the ongoing works of the VEDC on the prescribed performa. The progress report shall be presented in the monthly meetings held between 2nd and 7th of every month. After the approval by the VEDC, the progress report shall be sent to the Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) under the signatures of the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher.

**b)** **CRC Level:** CRC coordinator will compile all the progress reports of various VEDCs on prescribed performa and send them, under his signatures, to the block officer within next two days. CRC coordinator will himself inspect the
ongoing works at least once in a month and record his observations in the Inspection Book.

c) **BPEO Level:** The BPEO, on receiving the reports from CRC coordinators, shall compile the reports on the prescribed performa and send them, under his signature, to the DEO within next two days. The BPEO shall himself inspect the ongoing works of the VEDC at least once in three months and record his observations in the Inspection Book.

d) **District level:** The District Education Officer shall compile all the reports received from the Block Level on prescribed performa and send them, under his signatures, to the main office within next two days. He shall inspect the ongoing works himself or through his nominee at least once in six months and record the suggestions in the Inspection Book of the school.

e) **State Level:** The SPD- SSA shall compile all the reports and inspect them. He shall himself or through his nominee inspect the ongoing works of the VEDCs of at least 10 percent of the schools (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Annual Reports of VEDC**

1. At the end of the year, the VEDC shall prepare an Annual Report listing all the grants received from different sources along with the statement of utilization or underutilization of each grant. The Annual Report shall also include the details of the works planned for the next year along with the estimated expenditures likely to incur on each of these works.

2. The annual report shall be signed both by the Head teacher and the VEDC Chairman. A copy of this report shall be sent to the CRC by the VEDC.

3. Each CRC will compile the annual reports received from the VEDCs and send the consolidated annual reports of each cluster to the BEO (Primary).

4. The BEO (primary) will consolidate the annual reports of the CRCs and send the consolidated report, under his signatures, to the DEO (Primary).

5. The DEO (Primary) will receive the reports from the BEOs (Primary) and consolidate them. Thereafter, the DEO (Primary) will inspect the ongoing works accordingly. Then the DEO (Primary) with his comments will send the reports to the SPD who will, thereafter, send the annual progress reports and
the quarterly progress reports of the ongoing works to the State and the Central Governments (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**System of Audit**

The works of VEDC will be socially as well as legally audited. For social audit, the VEDC will put up a display board in the school or at any other common place under the name of the VEDC Chairman which will show the details of the grants, name of works, estimated costs, starting date of work, material purchased and the completion date. The display board will be updated on daily basis with the details of day to day activities. The VEDC shall keep an inspection book which will remain available during the visits of the concerned officials of the Department. The suggestions of the department officials as recorded in the inspection book shall have to be essentially complied with by the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher of the school. The VEDC shall essentially hold a meeting between 2nd to 7th of every month to share information with other members regarding the expenditures and the status of ongoing works. The VEDC will convene at least two meetings of Gram Sabha in a year in which the statement of expenditure incurred and details of the grants received would be presented. Suggestions will be sought from the village people for school development and for improving the standards of education. Appropriate decision will be taken on these suggestions is the next VEDC meeting (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Legal Audit of the work done by the VEDC**

The accounts of the VEDC will be audited by a Chartered Accountant authorized by the Department of Audit. Apart from that, the Controller Auditor General will audit VEDC accounts from time to time as per the rules of the State as well as the Central government. The Department of Education, Government of Punjab will continue to issue instructions and guidelines to the VEDCs which will essentially have to be complied by the VEDCs in letter and spirit (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Guidelines for Civil Works**

For universalisation of elementary education, SSA Punjab provides financial grants for different aspects of school education. One among many such aspects are the civil works for which the grants are provided for construction of building in schools without building, for additional classrooms as needed for the schools having less number of classrooms, for verandah for the schools without verandah, for water tank
for the safe drinking water for children and for construction of sanitary block for hygienic toilets for the boys and the girls. All such grants are utilized only under the heads/items for which they are released. All the funds released under the civil work schemes are to be deposited in the account jointly operated the VEDC chairman and the Head teacher. The approval of the DEO is not required for operating this joint account. The payments exceeding Rs. 500 are to be done by a cheque only. Every bill / receipt of payments has to be essentially signed by both of the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher. Withdrawal of cash from this account and keeping the cash as an advance for any estimated expenditure is not allowed in any case. The Head teacher will enter the grants received for civil works in the income side of the Cash Book and under the same Head as it is received. The amount spent from this head would be entered in the expense side of the Cash Book. The details of the income and the expenditure would be maintained systematically and properly. The bills of expenses and the receipts of payments would be enclosed date-wise in an office file. To ensure the authenticity of these receipts, each bill and receipt would be signed by the VEDC Chairman, Head teacher and a VEDC member (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

The resolution number along with the date, under which the VEDC has sanctioned the particular amount of expenditure, shall have to be mentioned on each bill/receipt. The details of each receipt, bill and cheque has to be entered on the expenditure side of the Cash Book. The resolution number and the date shall also have to be entered in the Cash Book. The Head teacher shall prepare the Cash Book of each year which will be inspected by the appropriate officials from time to time. The inspecting officer shall tally the bills of receipts with the Cash Book and sign on each bill and receipt with date. In case, the officer finds any gap in the Cash Book, he will record his remarks in the Cash Book under his signatures and date. On the closing date of every month, the VEDC Chairman, Head teacher and one VEDC member will sign on the Cash Book after calculating the total income, the total expenditure and the net difference (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Approval for Utilization of Funds**

The VEDC will convene a meeting which will, under the civil work agenda, discuss the details of the works to be undertaken. The proceedings/minutes of the meeting will be recorded in the Register and the decisions taken on each item shall be recorded separately. Resolution number and date will be recorded for every decision.
according to which the civil works will be undertaken and respective expenditure would be done (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Estimated Expenditure as per the Approved List of Civil Works**

After the VEDC approval for utilization of funds, the secretary / Head teacher would prepare an estimate of expenditure likely to be incurred on the approved civil work planned to be started. The details of the estimated expenditure would be discussed in the VEDC meeting and necessary action would be taken. After passing the resolution of approval of the estimated expenditure, the VEDC would constitute a Local Constitution Committee for starting and monitoring the work as listed. The Local Constitution Committee would take all decisions on all pre-decided construction works and expenditures under the authority of VEDC, as per the rules. However, the Committee shall seek approval from the VEDC before implementing its decisions (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**The Power and Authority of the VEDC for Civil Works**

1. The VEDC is authorized to undertake works upto Rs. 15,00,000 along with the Government grants/funds. The VEDC need to invite tenders for works which are within its authority. The VEDC is fully authorised to spend all the grants/funds received by it.

2. The involvement of a contractor in the civil work to be initiated by the VEDC is strictly prohibited. The VEDC shall not give any work on contract.

3. The VEDC is fully authorised to purchase any material relating to the construction work.

4. VEDC is authorized to hire masons and labourer for the construction work. For this purpose, the VEDC is not required to seek approval from any other institution (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Responsibilities of VEDC for Civil Works**

1. VEDC will purchase the best material with least cost for all construction works.

2. VEDC will ensure that the construction works are done in appropriate concrete mixture/mortar.

3. For monitoring and supervision of the construction work, the VEDC shall constitute a Local Construction Committee.
4. VEDC will invite at least three quotations and purchase good quality material from good vendors/shops. VEDC will make all such efforts so as to have the best material with least cost.

5. VEDC shall make efforts so as to involve skilled masons and labourers with least cost and those who can understand the technical details and designs and complete the work as per specifications.

6. VEDC will ensure that the necessary guidelines as issued by the Education Department from time to time with regards to designs, drawings, estimates and construction are complied with. The VEDC will make necessary arrangements to carry out the constructions work as per the technically suggested estimates, designs and specifications.

7. In case, the VEDC feels the need to carry out some improvement or modifications with regards to the estimates, designs and drawings etc. then the VEDC can do so after calling a meeting and passing a resolution in that regard.

8. VEDC will ensure that the grants are utilized as per the specific terms and conditions.

9. After completion of the work for which the grant was received, if some amount remains unspent, in that case, the unspent amount can be used for any other developmental work after passing a resolution to that effect.

10. VEDC will ensure that before initiating any construction work, a photograph must be clicked showing the place and its surrounding areas. Photographs will also be taken before the slab and after the completion of construction which will always have to be readily available in the records for inspection (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Purchase of Material**

The Government guidelines state that once the resolution regarding the estimated cost/ expenditure is passed, the VEDC will prepare a list of the items / materials required for construction. Thereafter, the VEDC shall prepare a list of sources /firms/vendors from where different material/ items of good quality can be procured or such firms/vendors which have a good reputation in the market with regard to the cost and quality of the construction material. At least three quotations shall be invited from different sources/firms/vendors for procuring the required
construction material. At the time of taking the quotation the firms, vendors or the suppliers of the construction material shall be informed that the payments would be made within two days of receiving the appropriate material. The firms/vendors shall be informed about the quality and the specification of the constructions material (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

After having received all the quotation relating to all the required material, the Local Construction Committee shall prepare the details of comparative rates of the three quotations received for each material item in a Register which will, then, be produced before the VEDC President and the VEDC Secretary for approval. After recording the quantity, quality and the specifications, a written order of supply would be sent to the firm which has quoted the lowest rates as per the quality and the specifications (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

After receiving the supply of the material, the Local Construction Committee (LCC) will tally all the items as per the supply order and certify on the bill that the material supplied is according to the quantity, quality and the specifications. All the supplied material shall be stored at an appropriate place. It is responsibility of the Head teacher to prepare the Stock Register and keep it in the safe custody. Apart from different construction items purchased, the entries of all other items as purchased will also be made in this stock register. Separate page has to be maintained for separate items. Another Stock Register named as Stock Register (material at site) will also be prepared at the construction site. The main stock register remains with the Head teacher and it is prepared and taken care of by the head teacher only, whereas, the Stock Register (material at site) is prepared and taken care of by any of member of the Local Construction Committee. This register is kept at the construction site and the details of the material issued by the Head teacher for a particular work are entered into this register. The register provides the details of the materials used on daily-basis and also of the materials lying at the construction site (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Transparency in Civil Work**

1. VEDC will put up a display board in the school or at any other common place showing the details of grants received, name of work head, estimated cost of work, starting date, costs of material purchased, finish date etc. under the name of the VEDC Chairman. It will be updated on daily-basis.
2. VEDC shall prepare an Inspection Book which will remain available at the
time of visits by the Departmental officials. It is responsibility of the Head
teacher and the VEDC Chairman to ensure that the suggestions/orders as
recorded by the Departmental officials in the Inspection Book are complied
with.
3. VEDC will convene a monthly meeting between 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 7\textsuperscript{th} of every month to
share the information with the VEDC members regarding the progress of the
work and the money spent on construction.
4. VEDC will convene at least two meetings of the Gram Sabha in a year in
which the details of the grants and the expenditures would be presented.
VEDC shall prepare and present utilization certificates of each grant.
5. The accounts of VEDC shall be got audited by the Education Department from
a certified Chartered Accountant. Apart from that, the C.A.G. shall also audit
the accounts from time to time as per the guidelines of the Government of
Punjab and the Central Government. (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

\textbf{Inspection of the Progress of Civil Work}

Inspection of the progress of the civil work undertaken by the VEDC shall
continuously be done at the site. Inspection will also be done on the basis of the
monthly progress report. The block, district and state level officials shall, from time to
time, make visits to monitor the progress of the civil works. The monthly progress
reports shall be prepared at different levels and shall be sent to the higher officials for
inspection of the progress of the ongoing works (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

1. At school level, the Head teacher shall prepare a progress report in the
prescribed Performa. This report shall be presented in the monthly meeting of
the VEDC. After the approval of the VEDC, the Head teacher and VEDC
chairman shall sign and send this report to the CRC.
2. The CRC coordinator shall compile all the reports received from various
schools on the prescribed Performa and send the consolidated report to the
BEO (Elementary Education) within two days under his signatures. The CRC
coordinator will inspect the ongoing works himself at least once in a month and
record his comments in the school Inspection Book with his signatures and
date.
3. The BEO (Elementary Education) shall compile all the reports received from the CRC coordinators on the prescribed Performa and send the consolidated report to the DEO (Elementary Education) with two days under his signatures. The BEO (Elementary Education) shall inspect the ongoing works himself at least once in three months and record his comments in the school Inspection Book under his signatures with date.

4. The DEO (Elementary Education) shall compile all the reports received from various blocks on the prescribed Performa and send the consolidated report to the main office with in two days under his signatures. He shall inspect the ongoing works himself or send his nominee at least once in six months and record his comments in the school Inspection Book with his signatures and date.

5. At the state level, the State Project Director -SSA shall compile all the reports and inspect the ongoing works of the VEDC in at least 10 percent of the total schools in the state.

**Annual Reports**

The VEDC shall prepare an annual report in the financial year in which the details of grants received from various sources, their utilization and the details of unspent grants would be presented. The details of the grants received from government and other sources, assets/income generated/ received shall be sent along with the annual report. The annual report shall also include the details of the works planned for the ensuing year along with the details of estimated expenditures likely to incur on each of these works.

1. The annual report shall be signed by both the VEDC Chairman and the Head teacher. VEDC shall send a copy of the report to the CRC.

2. CRC shall compile all the annual reports received from various VEDCs and cluster-wise send them to the BEO (Elementary Education).

3. BEO (Elementary Education) will receive and compile all the reports from the CRCs and send them to the DEO (Elementary Education) under his signatures.

4. DEO (Elementary Education) shall consolidate these reports and examine them. He shall then send them to the State Project Director with his comments. The State Project Director shall send his quarterly and annual reports
regarding the ongoing works to the State and Central Government (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Sources of Income of VEDC**

The VEDC, from time to time, shall receive grants from Central/State Governments, Local Governments etc. Apart from that, VEDC may receive grants/finds/donations/help from the following sources:

1. Any grant from Government of Punjab/grant under any scheme
2. Any grant from Central Government/ grant under any scheme e.g. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and JRY etc.
3. Any grant from the District Planning and Development Board.
4. Help received from Panchayat.
5. Any grant/help from Chief Minister or any other minister of Central/State Governments.
6. Help received from industrialists and businessmen.
7. Help received from individuals or institutions.
8. Help received from PTA
9. Any other source (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

The accounts of the grants/funds from above sources shall be maintained by the VEDC in the Cash Book in a systematic and proper manner.

**Grants Received by VEDC and Methods of Utilization**

The records of the grants received from various sources shall be maintained by the VEDC chairman and the secretary. The accounts shall be maintained by the secretary but it is the responsibility of the VEDC chairman to ensure that the details of the grants received and the accounts of expenditures are being maintained systematically and properly. Before actually spending any funds on the proposed works, the VEDC will essentially pass a resolution regarding the estimated expenditures likely to be incurred on the developmental works proposed to be undertaken by the VEDC. The VEDC is not allowed to undertake any work, nor can it utilize any grant without passing a resolution (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

It is the responsibility of the VEDC secretary to present the details of the grants/funds received, the expenditures done in the monthly as well as the annual meetings and get them passed accordingly. After getting it passed in the monthly meeting, it is the responsibility of the VEDC secretary to send the Monthly Report to
the coordinator of the concerned CRC. In order to maintain the accounts of the VEDC, the funds have been divided into the following Heads: (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

1. New Construction
2. Repairs
3. Purchases other than Construction
4. Honorarium/Remuneration
5. Miscellaneous Expenditures

**New Construction**

The VEDC shall utilize the grants/funds on the purchase of material essential for the construction of school buildings like bricks, cement, steel, etc. and the cost of their transport and labour; on electric goods and wood and the cost of labour on them; on the cost of labour and the rent of the hired objects/material. VEDC shall receive land in donation from Panchayat or other individuals and shall not purchase the land, in any case (Govt. of Punjab: undated). As far as possible, the building shall be constructed with the collaboration of the village people so that the possible contribution of the volunteers can be solicited and the expenditures on transport and labour can be avoided to the maximum extent. This will also instill a sense of trust in the people that the constructed building belongs to them (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Repairs**

The VEDC shall carry out repairs of the old buildings of the school like the roof, walls, floors, doors, windows, ventilators, four-walls and main gate etc. Apart from that, the VEDC shall work for the upkeep and repair of the materials like the furniture, fittings and other infrastructural facilities available and used in the school (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Purchases**

The VEDC shall make purchases relating to office and classroom furniture, blackboards, teaching and learning material, sports goods, furniture, almirahs, books, newspapers and magazines for the library (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Honorarium/Remuneration**

The VEDC shall make payments of honorarium to the workers/volunteers/service providers employed for the EGS centres, Balwaris, for
special drives for education of SC and ST children, for art-clubs, as education volunteers, for learning of soft skills to the children and other extra curricular activities etc. (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

**Miscellaneous Expenditures**

In order to achieve its objectives and for completion of its works, the VEDC shall also spend grants/funds for different other expenditures like making payments of water and electricity bills, sanitation and beautification of surroundings, preparation of playground, planting trees and shrubs within and around the school, help the needy children, educational tours, cultural programmes, medicines to students during emergencies and first aids etc.

It is the responsibility of the VEDC to keep and maintain accounts of income and expenditures in a systematic and proper manner. Attention is again invited towards the fact that VEDC can not do any expenditure without passing a resolution to that effect. No work would be started without passing a resolution, nor would any expenditure be done (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

It is the responsibility of the Head teacher to prepare and maintain the Cash Book for incomes and expenditures of the VEDC. He shall paste and carefully keep all the vouchers and receipts of expenditures in an office file in a chronological order. Every bill/voucher/receipt shall be signed by the VEDC chairman, Head teacher and a member of the VEDC so that their safe upkeep can be assured. Every receipt shall bear the resolution number and the date by which the said expenditure has been approved (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

It is the responsibility of the Head teacher to prepare the Cash Book for the financial year and get it verified by the appropriate official from time to time. Each verifying official shall sign on the Cash Book with date as a proof that the verification has been done. Besides signing the Cash Book, the verifying official shall also sign on each voucher with date. In case the verifying official finds a gap/error, he shall record his comments in the Cash Book (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

Every month the VEDC shall present the details of the income and expenditures in its progress report. The VEDC shall record the details of the balance amount from a particular grant received during that period (Govt. of Punjab: undated).

From the discussion, it is clear that the community participation in the form of Village Education Development Committee (VEDC), Panchayats, Parent-Teacher...
Association is very important for managing the school affairs. These bodies give a right to the parents to choose the kind of education that their children should get. The Government of India has empowered these bodies to inspect schools, monitor the academic performance of children, attendance and quality of education, supervise regular supply of quality and hygienic mid-day meals, supervise and monitor aspects relating to distribution of textbooks, maintenance and repair of building, creation of infrastructure at the school and community levels, ensuring drinking water and toilets, ensuring cleanliness and sanitation, ensuring the proper utilization of grants, participation in micro-planning process and organizing community mobilization activities for developing better coordination between various stakeholders. The school-community partnership in education in form of Village Education Committees has, to a great extent, increased the relevance and quality of education, improved ownerships and built institutional capacities in the Country. In the light of the above discussion, it is worthwhile to mention that the major focus of the present investigation is to evaluate the functioning of Village Education Development Committees in the State of Punjab.

1.8 Statement of the Problem

The participatory management of schools involving communities has been recognized as a crucial aspect in India. The on-going Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) strives to achieve community participation through Village Educational Committees (VECs) with specific mandate that include enhancing enrolment and retention, micro planning and school management, fiscal responsibility and accountability for bringing improvement in the quality of education in elementary schools. But the fact remains that the socio-economic and cultural constraints like poverty, patriarchy and gender-based stereotypes, lack of awareness among people continue to act as impeding factors towards achieving the intended goals of the Village Education Committees. As community participation remains an important factor in achieving better educational outcomes, a need is now being felt that the Village Education Committees must be made more affective by evolving some ways with which the people could get closer to the quality issues of elementary education in government schools. It is important to know how far the Village Education Committees have been able to achieve their goals. What are the views of the people about these bodies? What problems and constraints do these committees face? What can be the mechanisms by
which the functioning of Village Education Committees can be strengthened? These are a few questions that can be answered through the proposed research. Against this backdrop, the researcher intends to undertake the present problem as stated below:

“A Study of the Functioning of Village Education Development Committees in Educationally Backward Districts of Punjab”

1.9 Significance of the Study

Community participation in education in India has always been thought as an integral part of the educational set up. The First Education Commission clearly spelt out the need of decentralization of school education and involvement of local bodies in the processes related to school improvement in 1966. According to the Commission, the immediate goal was to associate communities with the schools in their locality. Community participation as a primary strategy for ensuring decentralization in school education got a major boost with the adoption of National Policy on Education in 1986. The NPE 1986 visualized direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education. The Policy envisaged people's involvement and participation in educational programmes at the grass-root levels as very important. The Policy viewed Village Education Committees as bodies that could ensure participation of every child in every family in primary education either formally or through non-formal means.

The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 further strengthened the Village Education Committees by providing that the State Government will lay down general guidelines regarding the constitution of village education committees and establish norms of accountability in respect of the Heads of these institutions. The major responsibility of the village education committee was to operationalise micro level planning and school mapping in the village through a systematic house to house survey and discussions with the parents.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992 also provided a fillip for decentralisation activities and facilitated the transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The PRIs have also, been delegated responsibilities with regard to location and relocation of existing primary and upper schools on the basis of micro planning and school
mapping. Under these Acts, decentralisation of school management to grassroots level bodies is an important policy initiative.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) one of the most comprehensive programmes launched in 1994 with international assistance from World Bank and European Union was designed primarily as a decentralized program to address local needs and circumstances by involving local stakeholders. The communities were required to establish Village Education Committees (VECs) under DPEP. Local groups including Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and Mother Teacher Councils (MTC) were also encouraged to participate in VECs. The Lok Jumbish(LJ) and Shikhsa Karmi Programmes (SKP) launched in 1994 stressed on mobilizing the village community to take responsibility to universalise and deliver quality education. The positive impact of the LJ and SKP served as a model for designing innovative approaches for community involvement in all educational activities of a village school in the country.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in the year 2002, aims to Universalize Elementary Education (UEE) through people’s involvement and participation. SSA assigns greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. It calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effecting decentralization. It puts a great deal of emphasis on the civil society for ensuring the effectiveness and viability of our school education. Institutions such as Village Education Committee/School Management and Development Committee/Ward Education Committees have been set up at village or school level in almost all the states to ensure community participation in the school education system. The Right to Education Act 2009 is another historic step which recognizes the role of local governance in school education. The Act specifies that a School Management Committee (SMC) shall be constituted for every school to monitor and oversee its working, and to plan and facilitate its overall development with representation of parents, teachers and community and local authority members, as may be prescribed by the appropriate State government.

In this scenario, it is evident that community participation in education through Village Educational Committees has been given utmost importance in most policy documents of the Government of India relating to school education. As such, new areas of research have been thrown open for the academics on various issues of
community participation. The review of literature on community participation indicates that there have been very limited efforts to evaluate the functioning of these committees at the grass roots level. Although some studies on the working of Village Educational Committees have been carried out in some states of the country but no comprehensive study, as such, has been undertaken in the state of Punjab so far. Keeping in view the crucial link between community participation and equitable quality education, it is all the more important to understand how Village Educational Committees can work more effectively, what mechanisms should be used, what benefits can be yielded, and what are the expectations and perception of the people about the whole process. The above background, therefore, provides the necessary basis and justification for this research study which primarily intends to evaluate the functioning of Village Education Development Committees in educationally backward districts of Punjab.

1.10 Operational Definitions

**Socio-demographic Profile:** This refers to personal characteristics of VEDC members in terms of their gender, caste, age, education and marital status.

**Process of Formation and Composition of VEDCs:** Process of formation and composition of Village Education Development Committees mean the process of formation and composition as specified by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Authority/ State Project Director, Government of Punjab.

**Functions of VEDCs:** The functions of VEDCs mean the functions as laid down by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Authority, Government of Punjab.

**Increase in Enrollment:** The increase in enrollment would be noticed by analyzing the difference in gross enrollment figures of the sampled schools over a period of three years (2000-2003) before the formation of VEDCs and three years (2003-2006) after formation of VEDCs.

**Reduction in Drop-out Rates:** The reduction in drop-out would be seen by analyzing the difference between the absolute numbers of the students dropped out in each year in each class over a period of three years (2000-2003) before the formation of the VEDCs and for three years period (2003-2006) after the formation of the VEDCs.
**Improvement in the School Results:** The improvement in the school results would be seen by analyzing the school result in terms of the number of ‘failures’ for each year in each class over a period of three years (2000-2003) before the formation of the VEDCs and for three years period (2003-2006) after the formation of the VEDCs.

**1.11 Objectives**

1. To study the composition, the process of formation and the functions delegated to Village Education Development Committees under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in the state of Punjab.

2. To know the socio-demographic profile of the Village Education Development Committee members in terms of gender, age, education, caste and marital status.

3. To study the general facilities available in schools necessary for improving the standard of education to children.

4. To have an understanding about the awareness of the members of the Village Education Development Committees about composition, the process of formation and the functions of these bodies.

5. To study the contribution of Village Education Development Committees in the promotion of elementary education in terms of:
   - Increase in enrollment.
   - Improvement in school result and reduction in school drop-out rate.
   - Contribution of members in individual capacity.
   - Conduct of meetings.
   - Activities undertaken with reference to improving infrastructure, fundraising and incentives to students.

6. To study the problems and constraints encountered by the Village Education Development Committees.

7. To know the views of the teachers about the working of the Village Education Development Committees in Punjab.
1.12 Delimitations of the Study

- The study examines the role and performance of the Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) in universalizing elementary education in specific context of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and is descriptive and evaluative in nature.

- The study is confined only to two districts, Mansa and Muktsar, of Punjab which have the lowest literacy rates as per the Census 2001.

- The study is delimited to only 52 government primary rural schools and 52 VEDCs and the sampling for drawing these schools and there by the VEDCs is primarily purposive.

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