Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education has been visualized in the National Policy on Education, 1986. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (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.

Thus, community participation in education through Village Education Committees has thrown up new areas of research in the present scenario. Some studies on the working of Village Educational Committees have, though, been carried out in some states in India as also in other countries but the issue calls for a more comprehensive and proactive approach. Against this backdrop and in the background of the present study, the present chapter is devoted to an elaborate review of literature on the issues of community participation, functioning of VECs and other related and incidental issues of school management and elementary education. It is expected that this review would provide the necessary basis and justification for the present research and also highlight the gaps and overlapping in the studies already done in India and abroad. The review would also help the researcher to delimit and define the problem more specifically and eclectically by gaining insight into the nuances emerging out of the review of literature. In order to understand the research work done in the past, it has been considered essential to classify the bulk of the studies into two categories as given below.

2.1 Studies Conducted in India

Menon (1996) in her study to operationalize participatory decentralized model of development with community initiative in a rural society of Mewat region of Haryana underlined the need to search for all possibilities so that the people are made
primary agent of their own development through education and organization. The researcher is of the view that development at grassroots level can not achieved without the participation of the community. The Village Education Committees (VECs) play a vital role in the improvement of enrolment of children specially girls. These committees were active in ensuring retention and in reducing the drop- out rate. The study highlighted that the VECs emerged as effective instruments for people’s involvement in the school management. Due to the proactive role of these bodies in this region, the rate of enrollment of girls increased from 7.37 percent to 37 percent and similarly for boys the enrollment increased from 44 percent to 88 percent. The writing and instructional materials provided by these institutions were received well and properly utilized by the students. The door to door canvassing by the VECs to improve the enrollment was very effective.

Lal (1997) in his study on "Community participation through Village Education Committee (VEC) in primary education in selected blocks of Sitamari district in Bihar" found out that VECs in this district were constituted through general meetings of the village with active participation of the school headmaster and village leaders. There was no proper representation of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and 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. Monthly VEC meetings were held regularly on a fixed date in the school campus. 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. Appropriate block level structures (Cluster Resource Centre) were in the process of being created so as to collaborate in the activities at the intermediate level between the village and the district. On the whole, majority of the VECs were not doing well in this state.

Menon (1999) in her on "Functioning of Village Education Committees (VECs): A study of selected VECs in Haryana" found that in Haryana, the role of VECs is yet to establish a link between the school and the community. Nevertheless a significant number of members of VECs had educational level up to the secondary stage and above. The composition of the VEC in this state ensures 50 per cent
representation for women. However, the participation of women is limited in terms of the actual role in the functioning of VEC is concerned. 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. The emergence of sub-districts structures like the Block Resource Centre while envisaged as a professional support mechanism has created some problems in the existing educational administration framework. There is apparently some conflict about the roles. The role of Village Education Committees has been predominantly in areas related to accessibility and participation of children, particularly girls. Enrolment in the first three classes has increased considerably though the teacher-pupil ratio stands as 1:70. Enrolment of girls has been perceptibly high in areas where girls’ school has opened. There is a visible change in the attitudes towards girls’ education. The grants made available through DPEP for innovative projects and preparation of low cost teaching material has been utilized to the maximum. The Village Construction Committee (VCC) has emerged as a very vibrant structure activity involved in improving the school and its surroundings.

Mohanty (1999) in his study on "community participation in relation to school effectiveness in DPEP and Non-DPEP districts in Haryana" underlined that a large majority of community members in Haryana were participating in various school activities for improving school complex but getting land for the school where DPEP had been launched was a huge difficult in this state. In the schools where DPEP programme had been launched, a large majority of community members participated in resource mobilisation as well as for improving academic environment of the school. Apart from that the community members also took interested and participated in the school management processes as well.

Kumar et al. (1999) studied the community participation in primary education and school effectiveness in the city of Baroda. The study found out that the schools under Baroda Municipal Corporation (BMC) don’t form Parents-Teachers Associations whereas other schools had formed PTAs. The members of the PTAs usually participated in the celebrations of national days, sports days and result declaration day. In some cases the PTAs even sponsored few activities of the school
like school magazines, sports etc. This study also underlined that there is a positive relationship between the community participation and the school effectiveness which means that greater the community participation greater is the school effectiveness. In the sampled schools a significant number of voluntary organizations (176 out of the total 504) participated in the school governance activities in the city of Baroda.

Tyagi (1999) studied Village Education Committees in Ranchi District and found that instead 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 study revealed that nearly half (4 to 5 members each) were not attending the meetings regularly and not taking part in any school activities. They did not even know the specific objectives of these bodies. No efforts were being made by anyone to ensure that good people come to these committees who work with interest and devotion. The study further shows that mukhiya of the panchayat is not necessarily the right choice for presidentship of VEC. There was neither any formal mechanism for decision making nor there was any process for feed back to the VECs. This lackadaisical approach leads to frustrations among members dampening their initiative and sapping voluntary spirit. Members demanded that the venue of the meetings should be tola-wise so that general public and the people belonging to particular tola can also attend the meeting. One of the main difficulties which VECs face in performing their functions was that they didn’t have any financial and administrative powers.

Ed. CIL. (2000) in its report based on a study conducted on community mobilization and empowerment for universalisation of primary education in selected states of India underlined that in order to enhance community mobilization and participation in primary education different contextual strategies and methods as per the local culture and traditional folk through institutionalized structures like the NGOs, BRCs, CRCs and PRIs proved very useful. The media campaigns in addition to special programmes on radio, production of audio cassettes, printing of newsletters etc. undertaken for mobilization as well as promoting intensive participation of the community greatly impact the micro planning process at the village level. The teachers and community members trained for this purpose took up micro-planning
activities such as social and resource mapping, identification of out of school children, development of a village education register, village education plan etc. The report brings forth that the VECs, as such, have envisaged as a key institutions for community mobilization, participation and empowerment under DPEP. Almost all the states focused on sensitizing the VEC member on primary education and in states like Karnataka and UP, training were conducted through participatory techniques. Training modules have been developed on majority of states through resource institutions such as DIETs as well as with the help of NGOs and resource groups formed at the district level. The study showed that there was satisfactory participation of VEC members including woman at VEC meetings, however, the articulation of women at these meetings was limited by the presence of male members. While in Himachal Pradesh there was an awareness about DPEP amongst the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) representatives, in other states such as Assam, there was little interface and this required reinforcement. In Bihar there was virtually no interface as the Panchayat Raj system was non-existent. In states such as Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, NGOs were involved with community based strategies in the field. A few sampled states had organized training of teachers in community participation. In Assam, all the teachers interviewed for the study had undergone training with a module on community participation and the role of VECs. In Gujarat, nearly 50 percent of the teachers had received this training; in UP, more than half of the head teachers were imparted a 10 days training in the DIETs of the district concerned.

Narayana and Chandrakant (2000) studied the functioning of VEC in Satra district in Maharashtra and underlined that the co-ordination between the VEC and the higher authority like Block Level Education Authority or District level Education Authority was very less. The conduct of the meetings also needed improvement. In this district, it was observed that no proper notice was given by the Secretary of VEC to the members about the schedule of meeting. There was no proper representation of female and people belonging to reserved category. 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.

Sujatha and Rao (2000) conducted a study on "Community Participation in Education in Tribal Areas: Study of Maabadies (community schools) in
Vishakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. They found that the VECs in this area had been clearly involved in planning and implementation of educational intervention and conduct atleast one meeting in a month. Interestingly 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. In about three-fourth (70 per cent) of the villages, new school buildings were also constructed by the community either by providing manpower or material or money. Mothers’ Committees were also constituted in some villages to help the VEC in the management and preparation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The study establishes that, on the whole, the VEC in this area functioned satisfactorily.

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 sample VECs and more than half (50 per cent) mothers units 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.

Mathew (2001) conducted a study on community participation in the development of primary education in Kerala and found that the vicious circle of poverty compelled the poor parents not to participate in a satisfactory way in the school activities. 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.

Nayak (2002) conducted a study on “Role of Village Education Committees (VECs) at Primary School Level in Cuttack District of Orissa” and 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. Only 54.16 per cent of VEC members were visiting their school regularly and making efforts at their level to ensure the regular attendance of children in the schools. A little more than half (52.08 per cent) of the VEC members were of the opinion that there was a visible impact of their interaction with parents on student’ enrolment. Even then a great majority of these members did not approach the parents and convince them to send their children to school. According to Nayak only 45.83 per cent of VEC members did sincere efforts to understand and empathize with the needs of the girl children.

Ed. CIL (2002) in its study on “role of family, community and school factors in improving retention and achievement level of disadvantaged children” underlines that training imparted to VEC members motivate them to help in enhancing enrolment and retention of disadvantaged children in their respective schools. In the area of the study training of VEC members increased the parent teacher interaction and about 94 per cent parents started visiting the schools. 63 per cent parents reported to have had a good relationship with teachers. The study further highlighted that most of the parents held the view that the education is not seen to be a useful preposition as long as the employability of the children is not assured. Nevertheless many parents regarded education as valuable but their poverty kept their children away from school. The increase in drop out rate of children as per most of these parents was due to poverty and involvement of children in domestic work. It was rather unfortunate that the upper caste teachers did not like to have meetings with lower class parents. Many parents in the areas of the study wanted introduction of vocational education at lower level of
schooling so that education proves useful to their children. Provision of mid-day meals, scholarships and free text books had played a vital role in increasing enrolment and retention of disadvantaged children but their achievement level still remained poor. Poor teacher–pupil ratio was a big problem for children. Although there was improvement in infrastructural facilities and school atmosphere but still much more was to be done. Use of Teaching Learning Material (TLM) had attracted children of disadvantaged community to a great extent. According to the study DPEP has greatly changed the attitude of the people about education.

Government of Karnataka (2004) in collaboration with Azim Premji Foundation studied School Development and Management Committee (SDMC) in Karnataka. The study found out that 2% 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. 68% of the student representatives who were interviewed were boys only. Action is required to encourage girl students to take part in the SDMC activities. Students from SC/ST communities also need representation since they are still an underprivileged section. The significant findings of the study were that as against the general perception that Presidents of SDMCs were illiterate, it was found that 90% of them were literate. During the field study, it was observed that illiterate members were as effective as literate members and educational qualifications, therefore, could not serve as a basis for selection of the members.

Vaijayanti (2005) examined various aspects of involving the community in elementary education with particular reference to the role of School Development and Monitoring Committee (SMDCs) in Karnataka. The major scope of the study was to know the a) general facilities available in the village to ensure universalization of Elementary Education; b) Level of awareness of the members about the various aspects of the SDMC and their socio-economic status and their degree of participation in school; c) to know the availability of information about SDMCs and d) Procedure and process adopted for their formation; and the perception of government functionaries on the functioning of SDMCs. The study was carried out across 469 schools and over 4,500 stakeholders in eight districts of Karnataka were interviewed. The major recommendations of the Study are following:
1. SDMCs should be continued and their autonomy protected by insulating them against political interference - both in their formation and day-to-day functioning.

2. 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.

3. Involve SDMC members with reasonable qualifications (SSLC and above) in curriculum construction, teacher training and other academic issues; a register be maintained to record the visits and the suggestions made by members.

4. Encourage all schools to maintain a list of alumni to collect contributions from them for the corpus fund. The list to be prepared in consultation with SDMC members.

5. Create a platform to share ‘Best Practices’ among the SDMCs at cluster level and arrange exposure visits for the members to schools where SDMCs are functioning effectively.

6. Arrange periodic meetings by SDMC presidents in a block / cluster to share their experience. And Sabha / Gram Panchayat meetings should discuss school issues.

Kumar (2005) studied community participation in primary schools of Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The study found out that the parents’ interaction with the teachers in sampled schools was not adequate due to lack of time with them. Teachers in these schools were of the view that the parents render help in organizing the school functions but they help teachers in monitoring attendance of the students only occasionally. There is Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA) in the schools but they don’t work satisfactorily. The PTA meetings are conducted in a routine manner rather than focusing on the problems of the schools and the students. With regard to the views of the head teachers, the study underlines that the parents take initiatives in getting admissions of their children but many of the parents don’t find enough time to get feedback about performance of their children on a regular basis. About one-third of the head teachers expressed that the parents come to them with complaints about the teachers mainly relating to not taking classes regularly, not checking or giving homework. Parents don’t provide any guidance services to the children relating to information on job and fulfillment of children’ needs. So far as the opinion of the
parents is concerned, more than half of them expressed that they contact the head teachers and teachers to know about the education of their children. Almost of the parents said that they help and assist their children in their studies as per the suggestions of the teachers. Kumar has emphasized in his study about the importance of community participation in academic aspects like increasing attendance, reducing school drop out and improving school results. Participation of the parents is also important in financial aspects like generating funds, sponsoring awards, prizes and functions of the school. Community can help the school in construction of buildings, boundary wall, toilets and other civil works.

Wankhede and Sengupta (2005) in their study of the Village Education Committees in West Bengal found that the VEC members in all the studied schools involved in ensuring regularity and punctuality of attendance of the teachers, ascertaining use of the pedagogical methods taught in the training and looking after the level of learning of students. Other aspects, which VEC members in various schools claimed to supervise, included sitting arrangements of students and 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. Teachers in all the four schools said the majority of the VEC members visited school only when a VEC meeting was called. Whatever the form of such supervision was, the school teachers seemed to welcome it. 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 socio-economically disadvantaged. The study found that unstable economic capacity of people was 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. What is required is developing planning capacity at gram panchayat
level. For this, regular and effective training programmes are essential. Only localized planning can make it possible to contextualize a governmental programme to the needs of the local community. Another way of empowering the local community would be by bringing vibrancy in various public fora. One such forum relevant for this context is meetings between VEC functionaries, school teachers and the parents/guardians. A similar forum for discussing broader developmental issues is the meeting of gram sangsad. It is necessary to make common people more responsive and vocal in these meetings. This can happen only through reconstruction of local power structures.

Yadav (2006) in his study on role and performance of VECs in Haryana 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. In his study he found out that there was no sharing of the responsibility among the VEC members while only four VECs have made contribution towards construction of classrooms and drinking water facilities. There was no coordination and rapport between Parent Teachers Association and the VEC although there were two representatives of PTA in each VEC.

Banerjee et al. (2007) report the findings of a survey in a rural district in Uttar Pradesh. Rural households, parents, teachers and VEC members were surveyed on the status of education services and the extent of community participation in the public delivery of education services. Most parents do not know that a VEC exists, public participation in improving education is negligible, and large numbers of children in the villages have not acquired basic competencies of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The authors are of the opinion that in order to stimulate an active participation of village people in improving education, direct steps should be taken. It cannot be presumed that the mere presence of a VEC can create a basis for community-based activism that would substantially transform the educational scenario in these villages. It is therefore, natural to ask whether some form of the village-based campaign that informs people about the provisions, resources and the existence of the VEC and the roles it might play, can stimulate participation and activism to the point where it begins to affect the state of education in the village.
Govinda, R and Diwan, Rashmi (2007) in their book on community participation and empowerment in primary education presents the grassroots experiences, problems encountered, and lessons learnt from community participation initiatives launched in five Indian states of India namely Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar and Kerala. The contributors shed light on how decentralization in education has been actualized in different parts of the country and cover a wide range of important issues including how community participation works in an environment characterized by deep-rooted socio-economic divisions; the equitable distribution of participation; identifying and defining the community; and ensuring the genuine representation of those who are traditionally excluded from decision-making in rural areas. The experiences provide valuable insights in finding ways to bring about genuine partnerships between civil society, the administration and NGOs in the drive to achieve universal education. The book stresses the point that community participation can play an important role in promoting primary education. In India, decentralization has been identified in recent years as an essential component of the process of educational reforms and change. Decentralization has resulted in many efforts to bring community and school close together as also to involve community members in the development of primary education programmes.

Sinha, Sujit (2007) while sharing the experiments of the NGO - Swanirvar in North of 24 Parganas in West Bengal on community participation in primary schools reiterates that encouraging parents to come to school during school hours and watch what their children were doing proved very useful. Parents were asked to maintain individual records of the children. The teachers made home visits, mainly to households where the children were "weak" or faced some problem. This strategy was quite worthwhile and over a period of time the drop out rate in schools reduced and enrollment also started showing improvement. According to Sinha, community participation is very important in school management and VEC or Village Education Committee need to be given more and more powers. Swanirvar tried to involve the community people in (a) physical and material contribution, and (b) decision making, planning, monitoring and control type of activities. Apart from that the parents were also involved in the participatory evaluation of the school and the teachers and also in making the Teaching Learning Material. The parents were broken into 4 to 7 groups depending upon the number present, and asked to formulate, after discussion among themselves, their opinion on three aspects of our schools. Then they had to make a
presentation on (a) what things they liked about our schools; (b) what things they did not like there and would like to change; and (c) what new things they would like to see. The study highlights the participation was wonderful and in order to ensure even a more 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. Participation of local NGOs in this aspect can prove very beneficial.

Mor (2008) in his article ‘encourage community participation’ underlined that the school-community partnership in education gives a right to the parents to choose the kind of education that their children should get. It can achieve many objectives, including increasing the relevance and quality of education, improving ownerships, reaching disadvantaged groups, mobilising additional resources and building institutional capacity. In Punjab, for managing the school affairs, the community in the form of panchayat, parent-teacher association and village education development committee (VEDC) has been empowered 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 utilisation of grants, participation in micro-planning process and organising community mobilisation activities for developing better coordination between various stakeholders. The VEDCs, which are particularly made for supervising the quality of elementary education, have been formed in almost all the villages. These bodies usually consist of seven-eight members, including Scheduled Castes and women members. The study conducted by the author in Moga and Ferozepur districts of Punjab found that in Ferozepur district, stresses that issues relating to elementary education were not even discussed in more than three-fourth gram sabhas. Quality issues have no place in VEDCs meetings. A great majority of VEDCs/PTAs and gram sabhas don’t have education on their priority list. In Moga, the proportion of gram sabha not discussing elementary education issues was as high as 90 per cent. Those VEDCs, which discussed something on education, took up only those issues that involved money, e.g., construction of building, toilets, and the repair of boundary wall. Sadly enough,
more than one-fourth VEDCs members did not even attend the meetings. Those who attended were emphatic in saying that they attended the meetings just to complete formality and had no interest in quality issue of elementary education. Parents, who can afford, don’t even prefer to send their children to government-run schools. Majority of such parents were simply indifferent to the kind of education being imparted in government schools.

Pandey, P. et al. (2008) evaluates the impact of a community-based randomized controlled trial to determine the impact of information dissemination on learning and other school outcomes. The information campaign gave information to the community, village education committees and parent teacher associations on their oversight roles in school management as well as the services they are entitled to. The hypothesis was that school outcomes may improve if the community has detailed information about the control it has over the schools and the services parents are entitled to from the school. The study was conducted in three Indian states, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Uttar Pradesh (UP). Even though all three states have devolved oversight roles to the community, they differ in the extent of oversight devolved. In Madhya Pradesh, a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is mandatory in every school and parents of all children enrolled in the school are members. The PTA has an executive committee which runs the PTA, though all parents are supposed to participate in decision making. The school headmaster is the secretary of the PTA and a parent is the chair. The executive committee has 14 members who elect the PTA chair from among them. The PTA chair and the head teacher jointly operate the school account. The school account receives annual grants for repair and maintenance, for school development, teaching learning material (TLM), money for school dress, money for civil works- school building, rooms, toilet, drinking water etc and money for mid day meal. Every school in Karnataka has a mandatory School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC). The SDMC members include the head teacher of the primary school, elected members of the village government and parents of children. One of the parents is the chair of SDMC. SDMC chair and the head teacher jointly operate the school account. The SDMC can inspect the schools and complain to the district or block education office. In Uttar Pradesh, a village education committee (VEC) is mandatory in every gram panchayat. There is one VEC for all the primary and junior government schools in the panchayat. The VEC
typically has 5 members – it is headed by the *gram pradhan* (who is the elected head of the village government). Other members include the senior most head teacher among the schools, and three parents of children in these schools. The *pradhan* and the head teacher jointly operate the school account. The study highlights that a large proportion of the committee members in all three states stated not having received any training from the government regarding their roles and responsibilities. Parent members of these committees had the lowest positive responses. About 20 percent of parent members reported receiving any training in Karnataka, compared to 8 percent in MP and 2 percent in UP. In all of the states, headmasters seem to be most informed about the roles and responsibilities of the school committee. Parent members of the committees seem to be the least informed and participating the least, particularly in MP and UP. Parent members of the school committees in Karnataka seem to be more informed about their roles and report somewhat greater participation in meetings and school inspections as compared to MP and UP.

Shankar Girija, K. (2008) in his article on ‘Community Involvement in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: An Assessment of the Village Education Committees in India’ brings forth that the Village Education Committee has the most significant role to play in implementing of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan at the grassroots level. The author has suggested that in order to make the involvement of VECs in school management and administration more effective, it is recommended that (i) every year, the VEC members should be given training on mode of operation of VEC meetings, role and responsibilities of VECs, facilities and grants available under SSA and MDM and monitoring of school activities; (ii) The CRCCs and BRCCs should interact with the VEC members more frequently and motivate them to participate in school management and development more effectively; (iii) Each District Project Office of SSA programme should classify the VECs in to different grades basing upon the extent of their participation in school management and development; (iv) the low grade VECs should be given more attention for activation; (v) In order to motivate the VECs to take part more effectively in SSA activities, rewards may be given to some selected VECs who have shown exemplary performance and (vi) VECs may be encouraged to take up innovative measures to achieve SSA goals at school level. VECs should be repeatedly guided in conducting micro planning exercise for their schools.
Dash and Panda (2009) carried out a study on the effectiveness of Village Education Committee on promoting universal elementary education in Nabarangpur district of Orissa. The effective VECs of different areas were selected by purposive sampling. For the present study, 30 VEC members were selected and were interviewed by developing a structured interview schedule. The authors highlighted that most of the Village Education Committees 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. The success stories of different VECs would certainly act as examples for the weaker VECs so as to improve working style for improvement of management system and effective participation. Since Nabarangpur is a tribal dominated district, it will be helpful for other tribal school VECs to learn to bring change in their mode of activities for all round development of primary school in respect to enrolment, retention, achievement and school environment etc. The authors emphasized that the function of community is proved to be very effective in all kinds of activities in the school like care and management, enrolment, teaching learning processes, organizing different cultural activities, maintaining a clean school environment, preparation of TLM and sustenance of financial support to the school.

Government of Maharashtra (2009) Department of School Education and Sport 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 the proper utilization of grants and participation in all micro-planning processes. The Government of Maharashtra, 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 village level, by the Ward Education Committees (WECs) at the Municipal Corporation or the urban level and the School Management Committees (SMCs) to be responsible in the Private-Aided Schools. The VECs, WECs and the SMCs have been authorized to appoint agencies like Self Help Groups, *Mahila Mandal*, needy women or NGOs for full involvement of the community particularly at various levels. Since the 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.

Nayak, P.M. (2009) in his book on Community Participation in the Universalisation of Primary Education emphasizes that people’s direct participation in the management of primary education is felt indispensable and inevitable for materializing long cherished goal of universalisation of primary education. Specific efforts in various forms have been 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. This book is based on a study of eight villages across two districts of Orissa and focuses on the role of the community in planning, management and organization of school activities. It explores the actual and expected roles of the School Management Committees (SMCs) in school governance. A total of 160 respondents were drawn on the basis of purposive sampling across 64 SMCs in the State. The study found that the working of the SMCs was not at all satisfactory. The meetings are either not held at all or, if held, they are just once in a year. One-third respondents stated that the SMC members did not attend the SMC meetings whenever they are held. Various problems perceived as impediments in the working of the SMCs were inadequacy of teachers, poverty of members, lack of sufficient financial aids, lack of coordination among members, inadequacy of classrooms, lack of incentives for SMC members, political interference
and reservation of SMC seats in the village community. Interestingly gender of the
classroom of SMC was perceived to be important for the effective functioning of these
bodies. The men argued that they are better in governing the SMC than their women
counterparts. The study further underlined that caste, class; gender and political
affiliation of members do affect the functioning of the SMC in multiple ways.

Rao, Vasanta Srinivasa (2009) in his study evaluated the working of the
school education management committee (SEMC) in a tribal area of East Godavari
district of Andhra Pradesh. The respondents for the study were members of the
SEMCs. Among the three categories in each SEMC, two parents out of four, one
member of the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) either panchayat president or
panchayat ward member whoever was available – and all schoolteachers/headmasters
(in the study area most of the schools were single teacher schools or with a maximum
of two teachers) were covered. 125 respondents were selected by simple random
sampling from 26 SEMCs in 26 sampled villages of the three mandals. The study
found that that community participation in improving education is negligible and that
members of the school education management committees have limited awareness of
the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The study indicated that more than 67% of all
categories of the respondents were aware of SSA. An overwhelming majority (87.2%)
of the schoolteachers were aware of SSA, whereas in the case of PRI members it was
61% and among parents of the school-going children, the percentage was 52%. The
SEMC members (17%) suggested that creating awareness among the tribal parents
would enable them to participate in school related activities. The other suggestions
were to introduce mid-day meal programme on a daily basis in the schools, making
drinking water available in the premises, use of TLM materials by teachers, provision
of better infrastructure schools and so on. All these suggestions reveal that the tribal
community members were participating in some way or the other in school-related
activities. These community level structures i.e. SEMCs play a key role in micro-
planning, especially in the development of a village education plan and school
improvement plans.

Institute of Rural Research and Development (2010) in its report on capacity-
building needs of Village Education Committee in villages of District Mewat, State of
Haryana explored the effectiveness of the VECs in influencing the access to and
quality of education in 13 villages of this district. It investigated the level of
knowledge and awareness of VEC members pertaining to their roles and
responsibilities, and about Government policies and constitutional rights for the promotion of formal education. Furthermore, it also explored the level of involvement of members in education related activities in villages and coordination among VEC members, schools and District administration. The findings revealed that the effectiveness of VECs in the villages is limited. More than half of the VEC members are inadequately informed about their roles and responsibilities. Their participation in activities to ensure quality formal education in the villages is also inadequate. The members admitted to having received no formal training, before being made members of VEC. The involvement of VEC members in activities as stipulated in VEC guidelines is negligible, and even VEC meetings are not organized on a regular basis. The members are not involved in budget tracking and many of them are not aware of annual funds granted to VECs. Effective engagement of VEC members with the community is missing in almost all villages. Across villages, the level of knowledge and participation of members varies. It has also been observed that the literate members of the VEC are usually more informed and involved. Similarly, male members are more aware and participative, as compared with female members. The report suggests that there is need to build the capacity of VEC members around their entitlements and responsibilities. Such a capacity-building program must aim to educate the members about importance of VEC, reason behind the formulation of VEC and its role in ensuring quality formal education in villages. The program must also ensure that the knowledge gained by VEC members gets translated into affirmative action by members at village level.

Zingkhai and Asung (2011) in their article published in the Sangai Express bring out the dismal state of affairs of Village Education Committee in the state of Manipur. According to the authors, in 2011 alone, in the month of April, these bodies were known as VEC (Village Education Committee) chaired by the Headman, in the month of May, they were named as SMDC (School Management and Development Committee) chaired by the Headmaster, and in the month of June, the name was further changed to SMC (School Management Committee) chaired by the District Councillor. Highlighting the misadventures in governance of the Government of the State of Manipur, the authors laments that the composition and nomenclature and its frequent changes of the village level education committees in the hills, is more surprising and interesting. The trajectory of the three different types of nomenclature and composition of the committees in just three months does not show these bodies in
a good light. The first Committee which was known as VEC, till 15th April, 2011, had the Headman/Chief as the ex-officio Chairman. The second Committee that short lived for less than two months was known as the SMDC with Headmaster (or the senior most teachers in the absence of Headmaster) as the ex-officio Chairman. The third Committee which is the latest is known as the School Management Committee (SMC) as per vide order NO.30/19/09 –SE(S), Secretariat: Education Department (School Section), dated the 14th June, 2011, which says that the Member of District Council of the area in which the school is located shall be the Chairman/Chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC). The Headmaster (or senior most teacher in absence of Headmaster) shall be the Member Secretary. The Bank account of the Committee shall be operated jointly by the Headmaster and Executive Director of DRDA concerned. As per the opinion of the authors the District Councillors instead of strengthening the efficiency of village level committees, have an implicit intention of institutionalizing a covert ploy to loot the money granted, which in the end, would also loot the ‘Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education’ asserts the authors.

Aikara J (2011) studied the decentralization of elementary education and community participation in Kerala. There are two structures for decentralization of elementary education. One is the representatives of the local self government while the other is in form of representatives of civil society organizations. In the process of decentralization in school education all state schools in the state are brought under local self governments. Involvement of civil society is a form of both decentralization and community participation. Participation of the local self government is the result of the direct dispersion of power from the State government whereas the civil society participation in elementary education can be considered as the result of ‘deemed to be decentralization’ in so far as the state recognizes and/or supports the efforts of the representatives of civil society organizations in providing elementary education. According to the author although there is decentralization in the form of state systems and state-civil society partnerships, the major aspects of school education are with the centralized state department of education. The local self government and the civil society elements function for certain aspects of elementary education that are decentralized from the state central authority. The main function decentralized to them is the provision and maintenance of infrastructure of the school under their jurisdiction. Decentralization of education in Kerala has not resulted in greater
participation of the stakeholders like teachers and parents in school management. The author has stressed that for decentralization to lead to greater community participation, there is a need for more convergence of state support and the social capital of the civil society.

2.2 Studies Conducted Abroad

Haq (1996) examines the status of community participation and the factors which may contribute to the more active participation of community in primary education in Bangladesh. Data for the study were collected through personal interviews and focused group discussions with parents, teachers, local opinion leaders and government officers involved in school management. The study selected a sample of 180 parents, 36 community leaders, 36 school level implementers (Head Teachers, SMC/PTA members and Taluka Education Officers) from six districts of Bangladesh. The main sampling unit selected was the school. The 18 primary schools were selected on the basis of their geographic and residential (urban/rural) location. The study indicated that the nationalisation process of primary schools did detach the community from a sense of ownership of their local school. Most schools rely very little on their local managing bodies (SMC and PTAs) which play a symbolic rather a powerful and active voice for their school. Parents and guardians identified that they were the key people to keep contact and make the link between the school and community. It appeared from the discussion of the focus groups of SMC and PTA members that the community has a feeling of moral obligation to the school and that people were willing to donate things to the school as well as look after school property while teachers are away. Parents reported that they were willing to take care of school, if asked, to enhance it’s upkeep and appearance. Study concluded that the local people at all levels are still interested in schools and are ready to contribute in the form of management and supervision provided government is willing to acknowledge their contribution. It was recommended that wider level community participation could be enhanced by a wide range of socio-cultural activities and sports.

Rashid and Salam (1999) studied two Village Development Committees (VDCs) in villages Pahankucha and Gudaraia of Bangladesh with particular reference to the country’s development programme named as Watson programme. The aim of this programme was to have safe water, hygienic latrines and overall hygiene
practices in the rural community. Apart from that the programmes also aimed at making people aware of the benefits of sending their children to school, plantation, clean environment, various income generating activities and drawbacks of the dowry system and women oppression. According to the authors, the aim and goals of the Watson programme cannot be attained by ensuring the participation of only a particular sector of the community. The spontaneous participation of the targeted community as a whole is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of the development programme. All classes and sectors of the community should be organized and their active participation should be ensured. This is why community approach instead of target group approach is proved to be more effective in successful implementation of Watsan programme. The key functions of the VDC are to make adjustment between the existing problems and resources by taking necessary decisions. The VDC sometimes acquires resources from outside in order to solve the village problems. Thus it ensures the happy atmosphere and an overall development of the village. The study found out that the VDC members are very enthusiastic about the work they have been doing, their successes, and the issues they plan to tackle in the future. They are proud of the achievements they have made in the safe water and sanitation department, in the remarkably short time. The VDCs are ready to throw themselves wholeheartedly in the attempt to make the people realize the need for safe water, hygienic latrines and overall hygiene practices. They talk to the villagers, and visit all the houses. Their success is due to the fact that they make people realize the need for development. The VDC has performed a remarkable role in raising the use of hygienic latrines in the village. The VDC has conducted different programmes such as courtyard meeting, discussion in the mosques, and has encouraged the rural people through interpersonal communication to construct and use hygienic latrines. The VDC has been successful in carrying out its motivational programmes due to its system of communicating through the local opinion leaders such as Imams (Religious leader of the Muslim community), school teachers, and local government members. Moreover, they are encouraging people not only on hygienic latrine and safe water use, but also making them aware of the benefits of sending their children to school, plantation, clean environment, various income generating activities and drawbacks of the dowry system and women oppression.

Eldah et al. (2004) explored community schools in Kenya and role of community in funding and managing these schools. In Kenya community schools in
Kenya are defined as schools which are built, financed and managed by the communities themselves, with or without government assistance. The authors have emphasized that the community schools play an important role in providing alternative channels for students enrolled in non-formal education to join the formal education system. The present study was confined to a sample of nine schools in Nairobi province and in Rift Valley province – Kajiado district. These schools were selected on the basis of their different features in view of representing the various types of schools offering primary and secondary education in Kenya. The study revealed that these schools are constantly expanding their contribution to the achievement of the goal of basic education for all in the country, despite the many challenges facing them. Dropout rates in these were low. Some of these schools offered lunch to students, which helped to keep them in school. The majority of teachers were poorly paid but they remained in the job because of their commitment to the learners and their parents. They needed better supervision from the government and opportunities to upgrade their levels of competency. Infrastructure facilities needed to be improved and land ownership is a potential source of conflict between the schools and the churches which very often own the land where schools are built. The study points out that there is a need for the Kenyan Ministry of Education to assist these schools to cope with their main problems in the areas of teachers’ salaries, pedagogical improvement, and supervisory services. Although the community schools do not always abide by policies, norms, regulations and standards established within the legal education framework, it is important for the government to acknowledge the role that these schools play in increasing access to and participation in primary education to many marginalized groups. The government, within the free education policy framework, is duty bound not only to maintain the quality of education offered in the community schools, but also to support the schools (both government and community initiated schools) through the provision of teaching-learning materials, teacher training, school feeding, pre-service and in-service training of teachers, and meeting part of the teachers’ and non-teaching staff salaries. It is incumbent on the government to develop sustainability measures to ensure continuity of the programmes after donor withdrawal in many of the community schools.

Urban Public Schools” examines how school districts and communities can work together to address facility and academic achievement inequalities affecting African-American and Latino students, as part of their school construction programs. This study explores the hypothesis that when school districts engage community stakeholders in a clear, consistent and meaningful way in the long-range planning and site selection of new public schools, they can build schools more effectively and achieve better academic outcomes and overall benefits for impacted communities, as well as increased support. A case study of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) sheds light on the numerous challenges school districts face in engaging communities as key partners in the long-range planning and site selection process for new urban schools while trying to address educational and facility inequalities and community development needs. From 1999 to 2001 quantitative and qualitative data on LAUSD was collected through first-hand observation and from primary and secondary sources. Qualitative research on the community engagement practices and policies of thirteen other school districts from nine different states was collected through the use of surveys and phone interviews. Promising practices were identified from these school districts, chosen for their high rates of growth and active school construction programs and key guiding principles were developed. The research provided invaluable insight on how school districts can more effectively engage communities in the long-range planning, prioritization, and site selection process for new urban schools while working to reduce facility and educational inequalities and support community revitalization and development needs.

Beyene, Y. et al. (2005) conducted a study on “stimulating community participation in primary schools” to know a) why does community participation in Ethiopian schools need to be stimulated?; b.) how does community participation impact school quality? and c.) what are the characteristics of a community that make its members more willing to participate in schools? The findings of this study underlined that the community participation projects must properly account for the local context in order to adequately address the barriers to quality education. Because the setting in which schools are found is so important, different approaches must be utilized in rural and urban areas. Urban areas are more likely to be overloaded with competing demands by various developmental actors and may have priorities that are vastly different from governmental directives. In contrast, rural areas are generally
much more receptive to outside intervention, principally because they have been
given less attention historically. The research found that greater attention must be
placed on the role of women in the program. Women are not as actively involved in
PTA committees as men and as such, are much less likely to contribute to financial
decision-making. They are, however, having profound effects on female enrollment
through their involvement and activities within the Girls’ Advisory Committees. Last,
the lack of knowledge sharing among various implementing partners is being
addressed by USAID, but efforts to increase collaboration are still in their beginning
stages. The study expressed that the Basic Education Strategic Objective Program II
(BESO II) could be strengthened by helping communities to diversify the forms of
participation, taking greater care to understand the local context and barriers to
change, being aware of the unintended (and potentially negative) consequences of
their efforts to promote greater community involvement in schools, insisting upon
planning for the future, and incorporating more flexible approaches to curricular
design and scheduling in the formal education sector to ensure sustained community
participation and high enrollment rates in primary education. Study believed that the
community participation had a positive impact on the quality of education in Ethiopia.
Most of the community members wanted to get involved in the school activities and
were stimulated and mobilized.

Hill, F. (2005) in his article on “Community Involvement - Is It Rinky-dink or
a Chance to Think?” underlined that community involvement as part of the facility
planning process has been around for a long time. Today’s parents are more informed,
success-oriented, and technology savvy than ever before. They know what they are
doing at work, and are demanding that the skills and knowledge necessary for success
will be available to their children. For effective involvement of parents in school
activities the teacher should adopt a more personal approach. The author reiterates
that in the American context, the teachers must identify successful students (present
and past) and their parents along with their phone numbers. Then the teachers must
personally call and alert the parents to the upcoming request for them to attend a
facility planning meeting or other such activity in the school. After that, the teachers
should follow up with a “personal note” – which means a personally signed note,
addressed specifically to the parents. (Not a mass mailer). Then, make a reminder call
prior to the meeting to confirm time, location, and agenda. According to Hill, these
and other such strategies for community involvement definitely produce good ideas, improve community support, and make the process worthwhile. They have worked well all across America.

USAID (2005) started a programme for Community Participation for Improving Schools with the collaboration from World Education in Mali in Sub-Saharan Africa to assist the community in conducting a community education assessment. As an experiment, the programme was first launched in Bambougouwere, a small village in Mali. In this village many children were being kept out of school, particularly girls, because they were needed to help out with chores at home, and because the school was so little valued. The programme helped the community to identify and prioritize their educational needs, and examine cultural and social practices that influence their children's educational opportunities. This program aimed at enhancing community participation in schooling thus mobilized, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) which then began changing the face of education in Bambougouwere. The PTA constructed three new classrooms. They repaired the roof to the school using locally donated materials and funds, and they furnished the classrooms with enough dried mud benches for all students. More than that, the PTA mobilized groups of parents to talk to other parents to reduce the amount of work children do at home, so that they are free to attend school and study. The PTA brought their concerns not only to the local office of the Ministry of Education, but also to the town's mayor. As a result, the school has two new, better qualified teachers, and the mayor's office is supplying the school with chalk, notebooks, and a new well so that children will have potable water. Enrollment in the school increased. Bambougouwere is just one of 405 public schools that USAID supports in Mali to improve the quality of education for over 16,750 students.

Bobekova, Elvira (2007) in her paper ‘Decentralization of Education in Rural Kyrgyzstan’ sets out to understand the decentralization process in the post-Soviet Kyrgyz Republic with special attention to rural schools and their communities’ capacity to sustain them under decentralized management. The ideas about the hindrances to educational decentralization in rural Kyrgyz Republic derive from the author’s field research. The collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1991 had a tremendous disruptive impact on the economic and social institutional structures of the Kyrgyz Republic. Despite the sound basis of universal literacy developed by the
USSR under a centralized education system, the new independent state pursued educational reforms, the primary feature of which was decentralization. The push for decentralization came from the shift to a market economy that made it difficult for the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to finance education. A decentralized approach to education was seen as the path to development for a country striving to build a democratic society. Decentralization was also seen as a way to relieve the financial burden of running schools and improve the quality of school education. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic shifted partial financial responsibility for schools to local governments and delegated some autonomy to schools, assuming that decentralization would increase the participation and accountability of key school actors, attract local resources, and improve the quality of education. Decentralization is largely seen by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic as a cost saving policy, but the reality is that the center must provide the required expertise and financial flow in order to sustain and nurture its successful implementation. Much of the success of decentralization depends on the parents’ and local actors’ attitudes, actions, and performance. Therefore, information is an essential part of the successful implementation of decentralization. Parents and school administrators need to be given relevant information, at least about simple indicators of relative performance such as preparation of teachers, spending per child, and educational outcomes. Decentralization does not guarantee efficiency. This is only developed through experience. Accountability cannot simply come into being. It needs to be nurtured. Decentralization is a complex process that involves actors and institutions outside the schools. Therefore, any reform to the education system requires a holistic approach. Currently in the Kyrgyz Republic, decentralization is rhetorical. The reasons for this are much more complicated than stated here, because it is not a linear process and it involves a number of interconnected institutions.

Parajuli, Mahesh Nath (2007) in his study on People’s Participation in School Governance in Nepal found that each studied village had a School management Committee (SMC). But in many cases people, particularly women and low caste, did not know its existence. People are not much informed about who runs or manages the school or they think that teachers run or mange the school. Even those who have heard about the SMC, many did not know their expected roles. Most people think that their expected role is to provide labour contribution to school or just sending their
children to school. People did not know about the financial situation of the school nor were they aware whether they have a right about enquiring about the financial situation. They think that they did not have such right. The study underlines that people’s knowledge of and participation in school management helps understanding their response to the state initiatives of decentralization regarding school governance. People’s knowledge is very important and successful in management of school. In Nepal schools were effectively governed by the community until 1971, when they were nationalized and placed under the central state. Later the Nepali state started to translate the hegemonic international targets and elements from the world models into the national and then the local programmes- Decentralization and local involvement. The Nepali state has repeatedly claimed that decentralization has led to people’s participation in the governance of the school at the local level. However, the state policy is to seek decentralization and participation according to the state’s agenda and not in accordance with people’s agenda. Analyzing people’s knowledge about and participation in decentralization and school governance and making a critical assessment of state policies in this regard, it is found that the state policies and practices do not promote participation of local people in the governance of the school in their locality. At the district level it is shown that the district planning process is very much committed to transforming the national programmes or fulfilling the national targets and least concerned with the context at the district or at the local level. Hence the process has remained a centralized practice. The study concludes that centrally managed structures and hierarchical social structures and practices are some of the factors that prohibit people’s participation and keep them away from village social processes. Due to these reasons the village schools were unable to make a place for themselves in village social space.

The International City/County Management Association (2008) in its special edition IQ Report brings forth that the community-oriented schools in US are generally more sustainable because these schools encourage broad community involvement in school facility planning and provide high-quality education. They are relatively smaller size and have the capacity to fit gracefully into the neighborhoods they serve. They are located within a neighborhood and are safe for children to walk or bike to. They act as a neighborhood anchor and support community use of the school facility after school hours. These schools enhance teaching and learning, and
accommodate the needs of all learners and result from a planning and design process involving all stakeholders. The schools provide health, safety and security and make effective use of all available resources and allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing needs of the students and community members. Community-oriented schools have tremendous impact on the communities in terms of community cohesion, social equity and quality of education. In many cities and towns, these schools serve as community anchors that support greater community interaction, engagement, and pride. The socioeconomic makeup of neighborhoods is reflected in a community’s schools, and has important implications for academic equity. Academic success, teacher satisfaction, parental involvement, attendance rates, graduation rates, and student safety are greatly influenced by school size and use, including the degree to which it is integrated into broader community life.

UNICEF (2011) in its report on ‘Schools of Quality: The Lao Approach to Child-Friendly Schools’ examines the Schools of Quality (SoQ) Programme of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. As per UNICEF, SoQ is the rights-based, child-friendly approach to improving the quality of education in the country. The SoQ approach aims to ensure all children realize their right to a basic education of good quality that prepares them with the life skills required to be healthy, productive members of society, prepared to face the challenges of a fast-changing world. Schools of Quality work closely with communities to ensure that all children enroll attend school regularly and complete their primary education. All stakeholders are involved in developing and maintaining a healthy, safe, supportive and protective environment for students and teachers, including provision of clean water supplies and an adequate number of toilet facilities for girls and boys. The SoQ actively encourages community members to participate in school development as well as teaching and learning. A close working relationship is maintained with the community, primarily through the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC), to ensure universal enrolment and support for quality teaching and learning. Teachers communicate with parents in support of their child’s learning. The school director provides leadership and support for teachers and students and takes a lead role in promoting education in the community. The VEDC provides guidance in school planning and management activities, ensuring the school improvement plan is implemented. Communities in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic have a long history of supporting schooling
through financial or in-kind contributions. They typically provide village land for the
school, construct or assist in construction of school buildings, offer accommodations
and food supplies to teachers, and in some cases, recruit community members to serve
as teachers when no government-provided teachers are available. The SoQ approach
is transforming community interaction with schools in fundamental ways. Child-
seeking activities, for example, have raised awareness of community obligations to
ensure access to education for all children and have encouraged joint responsibility
for creating conditions that enable this to be achieved. Community members are
engaged in a sophisticated assessment of their school against the SoQ dimensions and
standards, using the indicators as a guide, and become more aware of what quality
schooling should look like. For many, it represents the first time they have discussed
education with school staff in such detail. Throughout the lengthy process, staff and
community members grapple with concepts and their application to the realities of
their lives. Because the self-assessment requires consensus, it builds common
understanding of the state of their school – identifying aspects in which it excels,
aspects in which it lags behind expectations and priorities for improvement. The
report reiterates that the SoQ program has been very successful in improving the
standard of education in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

2.3 Conclusion

It is evident from the overview of the research studies that although
community participation in the processes of educational change and reform has been
acknowledged as important world over but so far active community participation in
school governance remains a distant dream. Most studies conducted in India and
abroad have considered the importance of community participation in school
management without a doubt, nevertheless, at the same time, these studies also accept
the fact that socio-economic and cultural constraints like ignorance, illiteracy,
poverty, patriarchy and gender-based stereotypes of the community members continue
to act as impeding factors towards achieving a more inclusive and equitable school
education. Most of the Indian studies reveal that most parents in rural areas do not
even know what a Village Education Committee (VEC) is all about. The monitoring
mechanisms for the bodies made for ensuring community participation like the VECs,
PTAs, MTAs and PRIs; continue to remain ineffective, by and large. The lack of
coordination and rapport between various stakeholders like the teachers, parents and Panchayati Raj functionaries is another factor that weakens the working of these community-based institutions. Mere presence of a VEC in a village may not transform the educational scenario so long as the members of these committees are not active and sensitized. The studies also make it clear that it is very important to understand how these committees can work more effectively, what mechanisms and strategies should be used, what benefits can be yielded, and what are the expectations and perception of the people about the whole process. Against this backdrop, the present study mandates the importance and pertinence for finding out some effective ways and means which can help strengthen the village education committees and consequently make these bodies more functional and efficient so that the goals of decentralized management of schools as envisaged in the National Policy on Education, 1986 can be achieved through active participation of the community people.

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