Chapter-7

Conclusion

“Most parents do not know that a VEC exists, public participation in improving education is negligible ... the existence of committees, by itself, cannot be an effective tool for change, if people are unaware of the existence of these committees, do not know their responsibilities, the resources that are available and how decisions can be made”

- Abhijit Banerjee (2007)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is being implemented across the nation to achieve the long-cherished goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) through a time-bound integrated approach, in partnership with the states. The programme, which promises to change the pace of the elementary education sector in the county, aims to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010. It is an effort to recognize the need for improving the performance of the school system and to provide community owned quality elementary education in mission mode. It also envisages bridging of gender and social gaps in education across India.

The literacy gap among the different social groups with particular focus on Scheduled Tribes is discussed in the initial chapter. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is one of the important programmes to bridge the literacy gap among the various social groups by involving the community themselves in the school activities. The new development to involve community in school education has thrown up new areas of research to understand the basics of community participation in school education. This is very important in preparing and implementing viable and working models to involve the community. Therefore, it is in this context, the whole study is undertaken to understand the mechanism of community participation in tribal education. A deeper understanding of this issue is of paramount importance, since the link between community participation and equitable quality education itself is a complex issue particularly in the tribal areas. Based on the above understanding, the entire study is focused on policy studies in
primary education with reference to community participation at macro level and impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on the participation of tribals at micro level.

With regard to the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes, it is evident from the census data in the post-independent period that the status of their literacy is low in comparison with the general category including Scheduled Castes. In case of Andhra Pradesh, they are lagging much behind the other sections as mentioned in Chapter-1. Various studies indicate that cultural background, curriculum aspects, gender differentiation, poverty status of the parents, medium of languages, accessibility, poor enrolment and retention, high drop-out rate, lack of sufficient number of teachers and lack of infrastructure facilities at schools are as some of the reasons for low literacy among Scheduled Tribes in the tribal areas. Against this background, improving literacy levels among the weaker sections including Scheduled Tribes had become an important priority for all the governments in India since independence. Towards this objective many education programmes were launched, and most of them started by focusing on primary education. Stressing on the importance of primary education, Vimala Ramachandran (2003) opines that backward and forward linkages are necessary in basic education to strengthen primary education. Thus, community involvement and their participation are envisaged to enhance the quality of primary education. Hence, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has made primary education as one of its priority areas during its implementation.

An attempt is made to review the existing literature and studies with reference to tribal education in the first chapter. Most of the studies available on tribal education are at micro level in the form of case studies. These studies, in general, discuss about accessibility, enrolment, drop-out, retention and various issues related tribal education like mother tongue as a medium of instruction, cultural and curriculum aspects, gender differentiation, accessibility of schools, teacher-pupil ratio, poor economic status of the tribal parents, infrastructure in the schools etc. Some of the studies focus on the experience of various NGOs working in the implementation of primary education.

However, there are very few studies on community participation in primary education in tribal areas. Mythili (2002) in a study observed that community provides not merely
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physical and human facilities, but also exerts pressure on the teachers to achieve higher quality of education. The study suggests that the community requires ability to visualize the importance of education and translate it into action for achieving a higher quality of education. K. Mani, K. Anandan and V. Vinaitheerathan (2002) in their study finds that the community of different categories based on gender and location have positive opinion on the involvement of community to improve the functioning of primary school. R. Govinda and Rashmi Diwan (2003) in their study presents the grassroots experiences, problems encountered, and lessons learnt from the initiative launched in five Indian states. The study covers a range of important issues including how community participation works in an environment characterized by deep-rooted socio-economic divisions, the equitable distribution of participation, identification and definition of the community, and ensuring the genuine representation of those who are traditionally excluded from decision-making in rural areas.

Vimala Ramachandran’s (2003) book is a collection of essays based on fieldwork with 10 NGOs operating in the field of primary education in different states of India. She focuses on the backward and forward linkages necessary to strengthen primary education. Sartik Bagh (2005) in his study undertook an empirical investigation into the rural areas of Orissa, which focuses on community efforts and the role of Panchayat Raj Institutions towards successful accomplishments of the primary education.

The Indian Constitution has provided for many provisions for the development of education for Scheduled Caste, minorities and Scheduled Tribes. Article 21A, which was amended through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act in 2002 says that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the state may, by law, determine. Article 24 says that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mines or engaged in hazardous employment. Article 29 says that “No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them” and Article 30 guarantees to (i) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. (ii) The State shall not, in
granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language. Article 39 says that the state shall direct its policy toward securing that the tender age of children is not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocation unsuited to their age or strength and that 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 respect to education, Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy directs the state that “there shall be free and compulsory education to all persons, including the children, irrespective of their race, colour, caste, religion and language” up to the age of 14 within ten years of the adoption of the constitution. A part of these Constitutional guarantees on education, the 1993 judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of J. P. Unni Krishnan and others vs. State of Andhra Pradesh and others (1993) was also considered to have the status of a Fundamental Right. The Apex Court had declared: “The passage of 44 years--more than four times the period stipulated in Article 45 has converted the obligation created by the Article into an enforceable right. At least now the state must honour the command of Article 45 and make it a right.” According to this judgment, “Right to Education is implicit in and flows from right to life guaranteed under Article 21” and “Every child of this country has a right to free education until the age of 14, thereafter his rights are circumscribed by the economic capacity and development of the State.” Article 46 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy further directs “the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”. It is indent from these provisions that education is the responsibility of state and can be achieved with the collaboration of civil society.

Apart from the above mentioned Constitutional provision for right to education, various educational policies and commissions that were appointed from time to time also felt that elementary education is a priority issue for all the governments. Hence, they felt that it
can be achieved through the involvement of local governance and community as a whole. In this context, education, as perceived by the National Policy on Education 1986, is an instrument which focuses on empowerment of people. The policy envisages that the involvement of local community, village panchayats and NGOs is critical for the successful implementation of education programmes. In this context, it is now well established that the process of development can be accelerated only by promoting the participation of people and the community in a perspective that includes designing and implementation of such activities.

Developing on this theme, the Programme of Action, 1992 states unequivocally that the successful implementation of programmes like elementary education including non-formal education, early childhood care and education, adult education, education of the disabled etc., require people's involvement at the grassroots level and participation of voluntary agencies and social activist groups on a much larger scale. The Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC), with their unique social mobilisation of community, NGOs, partnership between government, teachers and others have demonstrated how governmental efforts can be effectively supplemented through people's participation. One message that comes out loud and clear from these campaigns is that social welfare, including educational goals, cannot be achieved without the enlistment of non-governmental efforts.

In this context, it is suggested that the state governments may keep in view the recommendations of the CABE committee while formulating schemes on educational programmes. A major aspect of the decentralized management of education as envisaged in the Panchayat Raj Act is the formation of village level education committees which is responsible for the administration of education programmes at the village/habitation level. The main responsibilities of these committees lie in operationalisation of Micro Level Planning (MLP) in school mapping in the village/habitation through systematic house to house surveys and periodic discussions with parents. Ensuring participation in primary education of every child of every family is one of the prime aims of the village/habitation level education committees.
This strategy of community involvement is strongly proposed in the Constitution through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts. It provided for decentralisation of the activities and facilitates transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the PRIs. It has created a congenial ambience for the PRIs to play a more dynamic and proactive role. States are expected to evolve institutional arrangements both in rural and urban areas for undertaking these activities. These structures have been providing voice to women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, minorities, parents and educational functionaries. They have also been delegated with responsibilities with regard to location and relocation of existing primary and upper primary schools on the basis of MLP and school mapping. In this regard, decentralisation of school management to grassroot level bodies is path breaking policy initiative.

Thus, decentralisation in school management and community participation in primary education was always given high priority. The impact of community participation to achieve good results in education has seen through the implementation of various education projects across India, such as Bihar Education Project in Bihar, Nali Kali (Joyful Learning) in Karnataka, the Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi Projects in Rajasthan, District Primary Education Programme in many of the states, Muktangan in West Bengal, Seekhna-Sikhana in Madhya Pradesh, Janshala Programme in Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India. All these projects were implemented by the respective state governments with the support of civil society. All these projects witnessed community as the main participants as well as facilitators and had achieved good results in improving the primary education in these respective states.

NGOs emerge as important partners in the efforts of government’s, initiation towards UEE. The approach of NGOs towards mobilisation of community support has helped to improve the physical conditions and environment of elementary schools as well as promotion of education for girls and children belonging to SCs and STs. NGOs like Pratham in Mumbai, Digantar in Jaipur, Agragamee in the tribal district of Orissa, M. V. Foundation in Andhra Pradesh, CINI (Child in Need Institute)-Asha in Kolkata, Center for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) in Mirzapur, Society for All Round Development (SARD) in Rajasthan are a few of those NGOs working on primary
education with the support of local community and their participation. Against this background of community involvement in education related activities across in India by government as well as NGOs, ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ had also given major priority for local community to participate in implementation of education programme since its inception.

This programme has a clear time frame for universal elementary education with a response to the demand for quality of basic education all over the country. It is also an opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education. With reference to community participation, the programme has created a space for involvement of the members in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), School Education Management Committees (SEMC), Village and Urban Slum Level Education Committees, Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA), Mother Teacher Associations (MTA), Tribal Autonomous Councils (TAC) etc. in school management.

In this way, community participation has been made as one of the important components in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan along with other provisions like infrastructure development, provision for appointment of teachers, quality education, accessibility to education etc. It assigns greatest importance to the preparatory activities as these have been conceived as a necessary condition for quality implementation of the programme. Systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making are part of the preparatory activities. The preparation of habitation level educational plans through effective community mobilization for MLP and school mapping is the greatest challenge of the preparatory phase in this programme. The programme also aimed at capacity building of the members in PRI, SEMC, PTA etc. The preparatory phase provides for a process and activity based constitution of such committees and training of community leaders for better management of the schools.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan strongly advocate that through a participatory process a core planning team be constituted in each village at the habitation level including selected education committee members, selected community leaders, selected school teachers and some selected parents, ensuring participation of women as well as persons from the
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deprieved communities, and this selection of team is very critical for effective planning. It is expected from the team that these members have to prepare habitation level planning and it must contain all the details about household survey and other issues related to UEE.

Keeping this as background for ensuring primary education as a policy issue and community participation as a strategy in the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to achieve UEE, the present study is focused to study the involvement of community participation in school related activities during the implementation of first phase of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The study is made in three mandals in the tribal area of Rampachodavaram agency, East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The profile of the Rampachodavaram agency area reveals that the social and economic background of the respondents varies from one community to another. Among the three mandals selected in the study, two are interior and many villages have proximity to the forest. More than 85 percent of the sample villages are interior and hardly have basic facilities of electricity, transport including bus facility, communication including post office and anganwadi centers.

A total of 26 villages are selected based on systematic sampling method from the three selected mandals at 10 percent of the total number of villages in each mandal. 345 respondents are selected based on simple random sampling method from 26 sample villages across three selected mandals. These respondents include members from School Education Management Committee (comprising of the parents of the school going children, PRI members and school teachers), members in Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and students undergoing primary education. The list of respondents is accessed from the school records of the respective schools in 26 sample villages, whereas the list of PRI members is collected from the panchayat secretary in the office of the respective panchayat samithis.

Tribal population is more than the non-tribal communities like the Scheduled Caste in these villages in the area. Nearly one-third of the sample villages are found at a distance of 20-40 kilometers from the mandal headquarters and nearly 20 percent of the villages
are also found at the distance of more than 100 kilometers. The socio-economic background of the respondents revealed that more than 58 percent of the respondents belong to the Konda Reddi community named as Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) followed by Valmiki, Konda Dora, and Konda Kammara.

Nearly one-third of these tribal communities depend upon podu cultivation for their livelihood and a few of them are agricultural labourers. The income of these tribal groups varies and more than 90 percent of these tribal groups earn Rs. 5001 to Rs. 15000 per year. Most of them are seasonal workers, and remain without any work during October to June in a year. In terms of ownership of land, more than 60 percent of the respondents possess 1 to 2.5 acres of land while 20 percent of the respondents were landless. Their education background too varies. The collected data gives a clear picture that more than 20 percent of the respondents are illiterates, while nearly 30 percent of them have studied upto primary and upper primary education.

The data reveals that 60 percent of the respondents in SEMC (parents of the school going children, PRI members and school teachers) and PTA were unaware of what Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan meant and 90 percent of them did not have a fair understanding about Micro Level Planning (MLP). 95 percent of the respondents from these categories reported that they had not participated in the preparation of MLP. More than 80 percent of the schools in the selected villages did not have copy of these plans with them. The teachers in these schools gave not so very pertinent responses for not having these micro level plans in their schools. Most of the teachers revealed that they did not know how to prepare these plans.

The policy document on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan had made it clear in no uncertain terms that MLP is an important official document for the school, which contains the details of enrolment, drop-out, teachers, resources, committee members etc. It is supposed to be prepared by the community members and teachers together at the beginning of each academic year. In the case of school teachers some of them were aware and possessed some level of understanding on MLP. However, the selected villages were very remote areas and not easily accessible. This could be the reason for their lack of understanding.
about MLP. Moreover, these schools located in these interior villages did not have basic facilities like drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys, playing items, playground, electricity, television, teaching-learning material etc.

With reference to members in SEMC (parents of the school going children, PRI members and school teachers) and PTA the data reveals that low levels of participation and involvement in the school related activities. Nearly two-third of these respondents did not have a fair understanding as to how many members SEMC consists of. Only one-third of them (parents of the school going children, PRI members and school teachers in SEMC) reported that SEMC consists with seven members. In the case of school teachers alone, 64 percent of them do not have knowledge of the composition of the SEMC. With reference to their membership in SEMC, half of them were unaware that they were members in SEMC. In the case of PRI members it stood at 57 percent and interestingly 53 percent of school teachers responded that SEMCs did not exist in their schools. The field survey reveals that caste wise analysis of awareness of the respondents on their own membership in SEMCs Konda Reddi and Paragi Porja community is more aware than Valmiki community. In terms of literacy wise analysis of awareness of the respondents on their own membership in SEMCs, it indicates that educational background ha no influence on their awareness of membership in SEMCs.

Training is one of the important aspects for enhancing capacities of an individual. On enquiry about details of training received on their roles and responsibilities, 46 percent of the SEMC members responded that they had not received any kind of training. In the case of school teachers, the corresponding percentage stood at 36 percent. It reveals that most of the community members were not trained on their roles and responsibilities. Some of the respondents however were trained by CARE-STEP, an NGO which had worked in the area during 2002-2007.

The data presented in the study also reveals that the respondents were not actively participating in the monthly SEMC meetings. It is very interesting to note the variations in the participation of different categories of the respondents in SEMC monthly meetings. In the case of parents of the school going children in SEMC, only 17 percent of them
reported in affirmative, whereas in the case of PRI members in SEMC it stood at nearly 27 percent and in the case of school teachers in SEMC at nearly 47 percent. It reveals that school teachers have better participation more than the other two categories of the respondents. It was also revealed that more female respondents were participating in the meetings than male respondents. Despite being members in various education committees most of the respondents did not know about the financial resources of school. Most of them reported that they never discussed about the utilization of these grants in the SEMC monthly meetings.

The school teachers, who are called change agents at village level, did not possess much understanding on community participation. Most of them were not trained and possessed only one to three years of experience. It was observed that more than half of the schools in the sample villages were not visited by the school education officials during the academic year 2007-08.

The data also reveals that nearly half of the schools did not have regular teachers in the tribal area. Instead of regular teachers, ‘vidya volunteers’ were working on temporary basis. Some of these ‘vidya volunteers’ were not even qualified to teach in schools. The respondents also gave suggestion for improvement of community participation in tribal area. The suggestions include creating awareness among the community members, providing training on their roles and responsibilities, conducting regular SEMC meetings, closer co-ordination of teachers with the community etc.

It is also interesting to note that most of the PTA members did not know that the PTA exists in their villages. More than two-third of them expressed this view and 67 percent of them did not know that they were members in PTA. It is also interesting to note that 34 percent each of the respondents from the category of illiterate and those who studied upto primary education said that they knew about their membership in PTA. Whereas in the case of highly qualified respondents it was much lower indicating that educational background did not influence the awareness of the respondents on their own membership in PTA.
The results presented with reference to students and teaching aids and other facilities available to them in their schools revealed that most of the schools lack proper drinking water and toilet facilities. The students responded that they use community hand pump or they go to their houses to have drinking water and for toilet they use the open space in the nearby canal or bushes. This is an indication of absence of basic facilities in the schools. Most of the villages in tribal areas do not have the basic facilities in the schools. It is observed that most of the teachers treat students well and they use Teaching and Learning Material (TLM) while they teach. In some cases, as per the responses of the students, teachers beat the students in the classroom.

It is also revealed from the data that nearly 97 percent of the students responded that their schools provide mid-day meal to all the students daily. In terms of quantity, they expressed that it was not sufficient for them. Overall, the entire analysis of data presented about community participation in primary education during the implementation of the first phase of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan reveals that participation of different categories of the respondents in SEMC and PTA in school development activities have not made much impact in the tribal area.

The study reveals that school teachers possess some understanding on MLP, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and functioning of SEMC and PTA when compared to other respondents in education committees. Community participation and their ownership in the tribal areas in implementing education programmes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have lagged much behind the expectations.

The overall findings in the entire study reveal that even though the provisions in policy and constitutional guarantees are ensured for better implementation of education programmes in the tribal areas, it has lagged behind in the implementation of these programmes at grassroot level. Prior to the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, there existed education programmes which were implemented with the coordination of community as the main actors and these had succeeded in achieving good results across India. Nonetheless, in the case of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, particularly in the area of
where the disempowered communities like Scheduled Tribes are present, the community participation leaves much to be desired during the implementation of its first phase.

The lack of participation of tribal community could be overcome during its second phase of the implementation by creating more awareness among the tribal communities on their roles and responsibilities as members in various village education committees such as School Education Management Committee (SEMC) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Improved awareness among members on their responsibility and accountability to monitor their village education can ultimately ensure the availability of infrastructure facilities in school, quality of education, utilization of financial grants of the schools and thus realize the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE).