



Village Education Committee For Quality Education: A Case Study Of Ladakh

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Abstract: Since Independence, the Government of India has been striving hard to involve the community more and more in the system of administration and process of development. A Village Education Committee (VEC) plays a group role to improve education through its functions. It assigns the greatest importance to the systematic mobilization of the community and the creation of an effective system of decentralized decision-making at the village level. It is well known that a village education committee has great potential to run a school very effectively. Hence, there is a need to increase the potential of the VEC members toward their roles and responsibilities and to encourage active participation and contribution among them. Hence, there is a need to analyze the functioning of the Village Education Committee (VEC) in educational management in Ladakh. There is less enrollment, more dropouts in the government schools and most of the schools are on the verge of closing in the Union Territory of Ladakh. So, village education committee members can play an important role in solving this issue. The study explores the role of the Village Education Committees in promoting quality education in Ladakh. The overall aim of the study is to contribute to lasting improvements in the effectiveness of Village Education Committees (VECs) in elementary schools of Ladakh. Further, it will also discuss the various problems faced by the VEC members in promoting education. A sample of 104 Village Education Committee members from different villages of Ladakh i.e. Leh and Kargil districts was taken. The random sampling technique was used for selecting the villages and the purposive sampling technique was used for selecting the village education committee members. Data obtained were analyzed by using percentages. The study revealed that a big lacuna of cooperation was found between the Village Education Committee members, teachers and parents. However, Village Education Committee members focused that training should be provided to teachers and VEC members related to various functions of schools. The results also reflect that VEC has played a good role in the overall functioning of the school but needs to strengthen the regularity of students and teachers in school. There is also a need for the VECs to report educational deficiencies to higher authorities. The overall functioning of the present VEC members needs to be strengthened. It was observed that engagement in domestic works, lack of information in advance about the meeting, lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities, and low educational level of the members were the prominent

causes of low attendance rate in meetings, particularly among the parents and VEC members.

Key Words: Elementary schools, Quality Education, Village Education Committee Members, Ladakh.

Background of the Study:

Education without the active participation of the community is considered a one-sided activity. Education can act as a powerful tool for reducing poverty and unemployment, improving health and nutritional standards, and achieving sustained human development-led growth (World Bank, 2004). Education is the most powerful tool for the development of any country. No country can gain momentum without education. A community acquires enormous strength. The community plays an important role in promoting education. It creates a conducive environment for those who desire to pursue education. To improve the quality and functioning of government schools, various initiatives have been taken by the government of India. One of the initiatives is the inclusion of the community in the promotion of education at various village levels. It reinforces the desire in parents for education and changes it into a reality by enabling parents to send their children to school.

VEC is a regulatory body that works in a village at the school level to ensure community participation and the smooth functioning of the school. It was visualized as part of the decentralized management structure envisaged under District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). After DPEP it was in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which strives to achieve community participation through VECs with a specific mandate that includes enhancing enrolment and retention, micro-planning and school management and accountability for bringing improvement in the quality of education in elementary schools. There must be 50% female members in VECs and a member from a deprived section of society to ensure their mainstream and to make sure about their participation in the VECs. The main function of VECs is to create awareness about the significance and importance of formal education and it also plays a major role in creating a link between school and community. Along with school administration, VECs are also expected to handle the management of the school affairs. For promoting enrolment and retention of children, especially girls, Village Education Committees play a crucial role.

Jammu and Kashmir's government formed Village Education Committee intending to encourage government-community partnership and to achieve the objective of Universalisation of Elementary Education. It was reconstituted as per government order No. 238-Edu. of 2014, Notification No. Edu/NC/SE/44-II/2009, dated 04.03.2014. The Village Education Committee is comprised of sixteen members. Headmaster or the head teacher of the school is the chairperson of the Village Education Committee (VEC), three members of Panchayat/ wards including at least one female member as a member, one respected person of the village as a member, one person from SC/ST community as a member, two-person among retired teachers/ retired government officials/ alumni/ academicians as a member, one gentleman and one lady from parents as a member, one

health worker as a member, one Anganwadi worker as a member, halqa Patwari as an ex-officio member, storekeeper concerned as an ex-officio member, village level worker of the local Panchayat as an ex-officio member, one of the teaching official of the school as member secretary (Panda & Devi, 2017).

Profile of Ladakh:

Ladakh is a geographically isolated place in India. Ladakh under the Karakoram, in the Trans-Himalayan, is a remote region of broad barren valleys. It is scattered over 59,196 sq. km. In 1979 Ladakh was divided into Leh and Kargil districts. In 1990 Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council was created in the Leh district and the Kargil district it was created in 2003. Ladakh became a separate revenue and administrative division within Jammu and Kashmir in February 2019. In August 2019, a reorganization act was passed by the Parliament of India under which Ladakh was granted Union Territory status. According to the census, in 2011 Ladakh has a population of 274,289 and the literacy rate of Leh district is 77.20% and Kargil district is 71.34%. Most of the people of Ladakh live in rural areas and are depends on agriculture and cattle rearing. 95 percent of the people of Ladakh belong to the tribal community and it has eight tribal communities i.e. Boto, Balti, Brokpa, Purigpa, Changpa, Mon, Garra, and Beda. Some of them are nomadic. The area is so scattered that sometimes it becomes difficult to reach there. It is cut off from other parts of the country for almost six months due to snowfall in winter. The condition is very hostile and harsh. So, Village Education Committee members play an important role in promoting the education of this region. As a local, they know the difficulties and remedies to these problems. Ladakh has 18 educational zones, 09 in each district of Leh and Kargil. It has 25 blocks and 242 villages (Census of India 2011). Ladakh has a sufficient number of schools i.e. 870 elementary schools which includes both government and private but still, they lack quality education (www.dsek.nic.in).

Review of Related Literature:

Menon (1999): conducted a study on the functioning of the village education committee in Haryana. The study revealed that a significant number of VEC members have formal educational levels up to the secondary stage and above. In the first three classes enrolment has increased considerably, though the teacher-pupil ratio stands at 1.70. Girls' enrolment has been noticeably high. In the last three years attitude of girls towards education has changed. The participation of female teachers has improved the functioning of the school.

Tripathi & Bajpai (2012): carried out a study on the structure and member profile of village education committees in Uttar Pradesh. The findings of the study revealed that there are variations from one VEC in one Gram Panchayat to four VECs. The majority of the VEC members were illiterate.

ERU (2013): carried out a study on quality inclusive education and decentralized school governance. The findings of the study revealed that decentralized school governance for quality inclusive education does not exist in practice. There is no clarification of roles and responsibilities. The study also depicted that the decisions related to school academics taken at various levels were becoming more centralized and due to decentralized community involvement enrolment has improved but it cannot be said for the inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups.

Mishra & Gartia (2013): conducted a study on elementary education in Odisha. The study revealed that there is a big gap between the performance of VEC members and role perception was found concerning the maintenance of the school, implementation of government policies, and functions of the school.

Panda & Devi (2017): conducted a study on community participation in Jammu and Kashmir. The findings of the study revealed that VECs attended the meetings regularly in schools, contributed to the improvement of the school, monitored different activities in school, identified different problems of students, and discussed various issues related to school.

Significance of the Study:

According to Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, "Education should be man-making and society-making". Broadly speaking education has to perform its role for the 'all-round development of a child' including the realization of its 'social goal' by providing education through life and for life, so that children may acquire the capacity for self-reliance in a healthy and cultured environment. The school should 'therefore' be developed as an instrument for the creation of a cooperative and dynamic social order. To realize the social goal of education, schools should be an integral part of community life. The school has been kept isolated from society for too long to its disadvantage. In such a scenario the school and the community help one another and the school succeeds in achieving its educational and social goals through participation in community life. For achieving this effectively the school population should be organized as a fully functioning small community led by the teachers. Centralized planning and management more often than not disregard the unique context of a taluka or a cluster of villages and thereby the plan becomes dysfunctional. A village education committee (VEC) can be of tremendous use in developing an educational plan for all villages. The major tasks envisaged to be taken up by VECs are school-based planning/ management and community mobilization. They would be responsible for planning, implementing, and monitoring school education at the village level together with an active supervisory role. The role would also encompass local accountability, responsive planning, gender sensitization, and civil works.

In Ladakh, studies were mainly done on culture, history, and other aspects like challenges of education faced in some of the remote and isolated areas and the quality and education of nomads of Leh district. However, there is no literature available related to the village education committee members in Ladakh. So to bridge the existing gap the

researcher had taken initiative to study the role played by the village education committee in quality education in Ladakh.

The findings of the study will be highly helpful for educationists, administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, curriculum planners, and councillors. It will also assist the government in setting out new plans and policies on how to improve the education of the Ladakh region. The study will also help to identify the areas where there is a need for improvement especially in elementary schools of Ladakh.

As village education committee plays an important role in the functioning and improvement of elementary schools, especially in Ladakh. So, it's important to study the various roles played by VECs in promoting quality education in Elementary schools of Ladakh. Government can improve the schemes and strategies regarding the VECs.

Another rationale is to study the actual contribution of Village Education Committee Members in promoting and improving education in Ladakh and what contribution they have led toward those in need. Another purpose is to suggest remedial measures to overcome the problems being faced by Village Education Committee Members in elementary schools of Ladakh UT.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the role of Village Education Committees (VECs) in Promoting Quality Education in Elementary schools of Ladakh.
2. To find out the problems faced by the Village Education Committee Members (VECs) in elementary schools of Ladakh.
3. To obtain suggestions from Village Education Committee Members (VECs) in improving the functioning and quality of elementary schools of Ladakh.

Delimitation of the Study:

- The study was limited to Government Elementary schools of Ladakh.

Population and Sample:

The population for the study consisted of Village Education Committee member of all the elementary schools of Ladakh i.e., Leh and Kargil districts. Out of 242 villages, 26 villages have been selected by using the Random sampling technique. Then four Village Education Committee members were selected from each village by using purposive sampling technique. Thus from 26 villages, a sample of 104 VEC members was taken for the study (52 VECs from Leh district and 52 VECs from Kargil district).

Tool Used for Data Collection:

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect the data from the Village Education Committee members to know the role played by the VECs in promoting quality education in Ladakh.

Results of the Study:

The results of the study are as follows:

Table No. 1 shows the responses of Village Education Committee members regarding the role played by them to bring quality education to Elementary schools of Ladakh:

Responses of Village Education Committee members regarding the role played by them to bring quality education in Elementary schools of Ladakh	Percentage %
➤ Monitor the functioning of schools	89.42%
➤ Help in preparing the village education plan for their school	64.42%
➤ Organize meetings with the teachers to discuss various issues related to schools	51.92%
➤ Organize various programs for motivating rural parents so that they can send their children to schools	40.38%
➤ Initiate any special scheme in the village school for the weaker section	29.81%
➤ Identified the various problems faced by students and suggest various measures for improving the school result whenever need	29.80%
➤ Provide free books to the students and they organize educational tours for the students	23.07%
➤ Organize awareness programs regarding the health and hygiene of students and parents	20.19%

Interpretation of the Result:

The above Table No. 1 show that 89.42 percent of the Village Education Committee members responded that they monitor the functioning of schools, 64.42 percent responded that they helps in preparing the village education plan for their school, 51.92 percent responded that they organise meetings with the teachers to discuss various issues related to schools, 40.38 percent responded that they organise various programmes for motivating the rural parents so that they can send their children to schools, 29.81 percent responded that they initiated any special scheme in the village school for the weaker section, 29.80 percent responded that they identified the various problems faced by students and they also suggest various measures for improving the school result whenever need, 23.07 percent responded that they provide free books to the students and they organise educational tour for the students and 20.19 percent responded that they organise awareness programmes regarding the health and hygiene of students and parents.

Most of the village education committee members of Leh and Kargil districts monitor the work of schools, even the villagers help in the school-related construction work and in events. Most of the VECs in the Leh district actively take part in school-related issues as

compared to the Kargil district. The enrolment of students in Leh district is very low, so the village education members organize awareness programs for the parents regarding the importance of education and sending their children to government schools. Even some of them are successful in getting new rolls in their schools.

Table No.2 shows the responses of Village Education Committee members regarding the problems being faced by them in elementary schools of Ladakh.

Showing the responses of Village Education Committee members regarding the problems being faced by them in elementary schools of Ladakh	Percentage %
➤ Lack of teaching aids in their schools	83.65%
➤ No transport facility in their schools	77.88%
➤ Lack of computer laboratory and they have no heating system in winter in their schools	71.15%
➤ Lack of residential facility for teachers and have not enough classrooms in their schools	59.61%
➤ Lack of adequate books in the school library and no hostels facility for students in the school campus	53.84%
➤ Lack of cooperation from the government and parents and no electricity in the schools	47.11%
➤ Due to engagement in the domestic works, there is lots of absenteeism during the meeting	46.00%
➤ Low literacy rate among the committee members and lack of awareness regarding them of roles and responsibilities the members	43.11%
➤ Low enrolment rate in the schools	41.34%
➤ Lack of adequate teaching staff especially lack of computer teachers in the school and lack of interest from some VEC members in school-related activities	23.07%
➤ Lack of playground in the schools	17.30%
➤ Lack of drinking water facility in the schools	11.53%

Interpretation of the Result:

The above Table No 2 shows that the majority of the Village Education Committee members i.e. 83.65 percent responded that there is lack of teaching aids in their schools, 77.88 percent responded that they have no transport facility in their schools, 71.15 percent responded that they lack computer laboratory and have no heating system in winter in their schools, 59.61 percent responded that they have no residential facility for teachers and have not enough classroom in their schools, 53.84 percent responded that they have not enough books in their school library and have no hostels facility for students in their school campus, 47.11 percent responded that there is a lack of

cooperation from government, and parents and they also have no electricity in their schools, 46 percent responded that due to engagement in domestic works and a lack of information in advance about the meeting there is lots of absenteeism, 43.11 percent responded that there is a lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities, and low educational level of the members, 41.34 percent responded that there is low enrolment in their schools, 23.07 percent responded that they have not enough teaching staffs and there is lack of interest of some Village Education Committee members in school related activities, 23.07 percent responded that there is lack of computer teacher in their schools, 17.30 percent responded that there is no playground in their schools, 11.53 percent responded that they have no drinking water facility in their schools.

There is a lack of facilities in most of the government schools whether in the Leh district or Kargil district. The government has not provided any transport facility to the students and staff which ultimately affect their academic performance. As we know that Ladakh is a scattered place so it's not possible to reach on time in schools without any transport facility. Even in some villages in the Leh district parents didn't cooperate with VEC members and teachers because most of their children were in private schools and which become a hurdle in the way of development. While in the Kargil district, most of the VEC members are not interested in school activities.

Suggestions of Village Education Committee members regarding the improvement of the functioning and quality of the elementary schools of Ladakh

Following are the suggestions given by village education committee members to improve the functioning and quality of the elementary schools in Ladakh

- Infrastructure facilities should be improved
- Adequate funds should be provided on time
- Parents should cooperate with VEC members and teachers
- Parents and the community should be motivated
- Government should take proper steps to solve the problems
- Awareness programs related to various issues should be organized for the stakeholders
- Hostel facility should be provided to students
- The vacant posts should be filled on time
- Subject-specific and skilled teachers should be recruited
- Transfer of teachers should be done on time
- Training should be provided to the teachers time to time
- Educated and dedicated Village Education Committee members should be elected
- Higher authorities should visit the schools at intervals
- Government should cooperate with VEC members
- Along with structural reforms, some long-term context-specific local strategies are required for the capacity building of community members for proactive participation in the development of the education system.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The study concludes that village education committee member plays a vital role in improving the elementary education system of Ladakh. As the study revealed that most of the participants responded that they lack facilities in the schools like a computer, a heating system in winter, a residential facility for teachers, not enough books in the library, no hostels facility for students who came from far areas, low enrolment rate, funds are not provided timely and not enough teaching staffs. Even there is less cooperation between parents and the government. So, the government should cater to the needs of the schools and provide funds on time. Government should also strengthen VECs and gave them training at regular intervals so that they can do their best in improving the functioning and quality of elementary schools in Ladakh. VEC members also faced many constraints which can be solved by the government with the cooperation of parents and teachers at the village level. Cooperation is a must among the VEC members, parents, teachers, and government so that there is no constraint in the functioning and development of the elementary schools of Ladakh.

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