

Dimensions of School Community Relationship: Issues and Concerns

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ABSTRACT

One of the important areas in school administration is promoting cordial relationship with the community and involving it in school-based decisions. The involvement of community could best be achieved by forming parent-teacher council, school management committee and governing bodies, which is essential for support and owning these decisions. Parents' role, being a member of community, in the school is vital. They support their child's education by helping him in study at home, through communication with teacher, and by encouraging them. Being a member of community they influence the directions of their child's school. For this purpose, open communication should be maintained among the school, community and education department through letters, phone calls and notes as immediate responses and open door policy. The views of parents must be acknowledged, and working with them for the personal, social, and educational welfare of children through active consultation via planned meetings and informal opportunities.

Keywords

Community, communication, school-based decisions, parent-teacher council and school administration.

Introduction

The involvement of the community in school-based decisions is vital for improving students' learning outcomes. The principal provides an opportunity to parents for their involvement and acknowledges their aspirations and incorporates them in the school-based decisions. Parents have an important voice in the determination of the school's activities as well as supporting the efforts to ensure their children benefit from educational opportunities. The role of parents in the school, as members of the community, is critical. They support their child's education by helping him to study at home, through communication with teacher, and by encouraging them. Being a member of a community, they influence the direction of their child's school.

Cox (2002) described that state systems must produce evidence of the effectiveness of local management in bringing about improved learning outcomes not only in literacy and numeracy but across the curriculum. Only local people can build the capacity of their particular community and with sound participation processes in reform, change or development initiatives with learning centers and other relevant organizations and agencies, local empowerment can be achieved and sustained.

The principal is responsible for enhancing school and community relationships by providing opportunities for developing priorities, targets and school-based decisions through parent teacher council, school management committee and governing bodies. For this purpose, open communication should be maintained among the school, community and education departments through letters, phone calls and notes as immediate responses and open door policy. The views of parents must be acknowledged, and work with them for the personal, social, and educational welfare of the children through active consultation via planned meetings and informal opportunities. He must honour the advice of the parent teacher council for seeking community support and hiring of facilities for both curricular and co-curricular activities. Public education and training ought to be promoted in all that is said, done and expressed, seeking active advocacy and a positive approach from all staff, students, parents and community. Continuous re-evaluation should be made possible for acceptable plans and activities to improve education that schools provide.

Iqbal (2012) argued that the principal is responsible for becoming knowledgeable about different groups and segments of the population to which the local community belongs. Those people who have a special interest in education, in the school's affairs and discuss its problems in their

informal meetings may be included in the parent teacher's council. He should meet influential people and leaders to learn their point of view about education and school. This should help him to facilitate his communication with leaders at the time of crisis, share worries and concerns & should utilize the expertise of the leaders and interested people for improvement of the school programme. He should study the attitude of groups and individuals in the community as well as become aware of different places of their meetings and modes of communication on school related issues and problems. People discuss education and school problems on the occasion of marriage parties, funerals, and different festivals and after prayer in the mosque. They complain about teachers' efficiency, authoritative attitude, absenteeism and lack of school facilities and equipment. He should know the communities' expectations for the school, which is a mix of different people. He should understand the community's diversity as well as their shared expectations, which are the parameters by which communities evaluate the school's performance. In this way, the principal should gain knowledge about what people think and say about school & education.

Serra and Jacoby (2004) indicated that critical to the success of the principal is how he embraced the community and how the community embraced the principal. It seemed logical that open lines of communication with all parties are the keys to this partnership in the interest of student learning. Principals had at their disposal several means by which to communicate with the community. Fliers, brochures, bulletins, and calendars were excellent means by which to disseminate information pertaining to school events. The school newsletter was also perhaps the single-most important vehicle of communication between the home and the school.

Parent-Teacher Council

The principal is responsible for forming a parent teachers' council for three years, which is an association of elected parents and community representatives for effective and efficient running of the school matters. The Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) encourages parents to send their children to school in order to improve literacy and enrollment, as well as to reduce dropouts and re-

enroll children. It monitors teacher absenteeism and attitude towards students and reports to the District Officer (DO) Elementary and Secondary Education (E & SE) for taking appropriate measures. It provides support for the maintenance of school buildings and other day to-day requirements of the school. It makes suggestions to the DO (E & SE) for access & quality of education and oversees PTC funds for fulfilling non-salary expenditure such as instruction materials & class room consumable items. The chairperson of the PTC is elected by members of the PTC from amongst the four parents' members. The principal is the Secretary of the PTC, which has no vote. The parent member is substituted by other parents as soon as their son graduates from school. No parent will be a member of the PTC, if his son is not studying in the concerned school. The quorum for holding a PTC meeting is five members out of eight members. The chairperson and secretary of the PTC should be co-signatory of the PTCs' bank account and other money transactions.

The National Educational Policy (2009: 22) reported that involvement of stakeholders can be ensured for effective implementation of educational policies. The managers of education do not bother about their involvement because they do not own these policies. Therefore, the formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) or Parent Teacher Association (PTAs) is essential for ensuring their involvement in school-based activities.

Asian Development Bank (2008:35) documented in a report that effective participation of parents and community in school-based activities is the most important factor for quality improvement of education. It is ensured by clear-cut rules and regulations for schools to do certain school-based activities. The involvement of stakeholders is ascertained by including women and ethnically diverse groups in school-based activities. The management at provincial as well as district level supervised the success of such a policy and its implementation during inspection of schools. According to Connors (2000: 43), parents value the contact they have with their children's teachers throughout all stages of their schooling. They like to feel confidence in teachers' understanding of their children's needs, experiences and achievements. The work of teachers in schools is

enhanced by a mutually supportive relationship between home and school.

Bartholomaeus (2002) stated that there is an emphasis on the importance of local effort to improve student-learning outcomes in conjunction with the school. That is, the parents of the students have a vital role to play, a partnership, in the self-governance of local schools. I would suggest that local school management also represents an opportunity for parents to work to have the school acknowledge local aspirations and incorporate these in the schools' strategic directions and decisions on development in the future. That is, parents are increasingly an important voice in the determination of the direction of the local school, as well as supporting the efforts to ensure their children benefit from educational opportunities.

Important Functions of Parent Teacher Council

The following are the functions and responsibilities of the parents Teachers Council (PTC):

- a) Physical Facilities
 - Construction and repair of school building.
 - Provision and repair of school furniture.
 - Improvement of existing facilities and availability of new.
 - To protect school building, equipment from misuse & illegal occupation.
 - To help in purchasing furniture, science equipment and other things for necessary use.
 - Availability of basic facilities in school.
- b) Teachers Related Affairs
 - To provide protection to teachers.
 - To ensure teachers attendance
 - To inform higher authorities for continuous absence and poor performance of the teacher.
 - To hire extra teacher to be paid by community.
 - To make alternate arrangement for the teacher on long leave.
- c) Students Related Affairs
 - To get financial assistance from well of community members for poor students.
 - To ensure the education of all the children of community.
 - To increase enrolment in school and reduce drop out rate.
 - To work for character building of children.

- To provide financial help to the poor and talented students.
- To arrange scholarships for talented students.
- To provide note books and uniform for students.
- To arrange religious, academic & national days to promote the importance of education for students' encouragements and appreciation.
- To find solution of students' problem in time.

d) Management Related Affairs

- Conduction of PTC monthly meetings regularly.
- To communicate to the higher authorities and inform them about school problems.
- To maintain record to PTC meetings.
- To open PTC bank account to maintain fair income and expenditure record and submit a copy of these statements to the DO (E&SE) at the end of the year.

- To decide about expenditure and other affairs of PTC through general concurrence.

- To eliminate improper interference of political, well off and authorities.

e) Educational Standard

- To create such environment in school, that helps to track student activities.
- To help in organizing the curricular and co-curricular activities.
- To utilize properly community funds for the betterment of school.
- To find solutions to the problems of teachers, students and parents well in time.
- To develop good relations with community for the solution of school problems.
- To enhance the sense of education among parents for universalization of education.
- To arrange different activities on national celebrations in school.

Buffie (1989) suggested ways in which a principal could open the school to community involvement. Parents and community groups could be included in decisions that the school made. Invitations should be extended for participants in school activities and parents would be encouraged to assume leadership roles. Or, the school should go into the community by composing newsletters to businesses, by visiting senior homes to share stories or perform musically, or by clean-up activities within the community. Such activities

promoted within students a sense of responsibility and service to their community or, on a larger scale, to their country.

Secondary Education Department (2013) reported that Parent- Teacher Council shall have the authority to utilize the funds on petty repairs, minor civil works, payment of utility bills, repair of bathrooms/latrines, while wash, purchase of furniture, gardening etc; and other requirements as determined by PTC. (p.7) PTC has been empowered to utilize the funds on its discretion on need basis without any bar of spending on any particular item. PTC shall have the powers to incur expenditure up to Rs. 200,000/- (rupees two hundred thousand). PTC has been authorized to spend Rs. 250,000/- on addition of class rooms, provision of boundary walls, Group latrine and electrification in schools.

Methodology of the Study

The study attempted to identify different dimensions and perspectives of school community relationship in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It chose a descriptive methodology based on scientific method of research. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied for analysis of data. The study was delimited to boys’ high schools in public sector both in urban and rural areas of Peshawar district. Girls’ schools as well as private schools were not included in the scope of the study.

The population of the study included principals, teachers and purposively selected parents of all 70 boys’ high schools in the public sector in Peshawar district. The sample of the study included twenty-five (35.71%) schools with a distribution of fourteen (20%) in urban areas and eleven (15.71%) in rural areas of Peshawar district. Of those, 25 (35.71%) principals and 25 (35.71%) teachers were randomly selected in the sampled schools while 25 parents were purposively selected in order to elicit from them useful data.

Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires for collecting data from principals, teachers and parents regarding the different dimensions of school-community relationship. Three types of questionnaires were framed for each category of subjects (teachers,

parents and principals) using the Likert Scale with five options for each question. They were handed over to participants and collected in person.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data was obtained through closed-ended questionnaires personally handed over to the principals, teachers and parents in urban and rural areas of district Peshawar. The secondary data was obtained from office records, documents and review of relevant literature both in local and global perspectives.

The analysis of data was given both quantitative and qualitative treatment. The quantitative data was supported by statistical measures and converted into percentages in tabular form duly supported by graphic presentation. The qualitative data was placed under different patterns and categories, discussed

Options	Respondents	Questions			Total	Percentage
		1	2	3		
1. Almost Never	Principals	2	1	4	7	9.33
	Teachers	2	0	2	4	5.33
	Parents	0	0	1	1	1.34
2. Seldom	Principals	2	1	6	9	12
	Teachers	7	5	6	18	24
	Parents	6	3	8	17	22.67
3. Some times	Principals	4	9	6	19	25.33
	Teachers	12	7	11	30	40
	Parents	16	10	11	37	49.33
4. Frequently	Principals	9	9	8	26	34.67
	Teachers	1	9	3	13	17.33
	Parents	2	10	4	16	21.33
5. Almost Always	Principals	8	5	1	14	18.67
	Teachers	3	4	3	10	13.34
	Parents	1	2	1	4	5.33

and interpreted for drawing inferences.

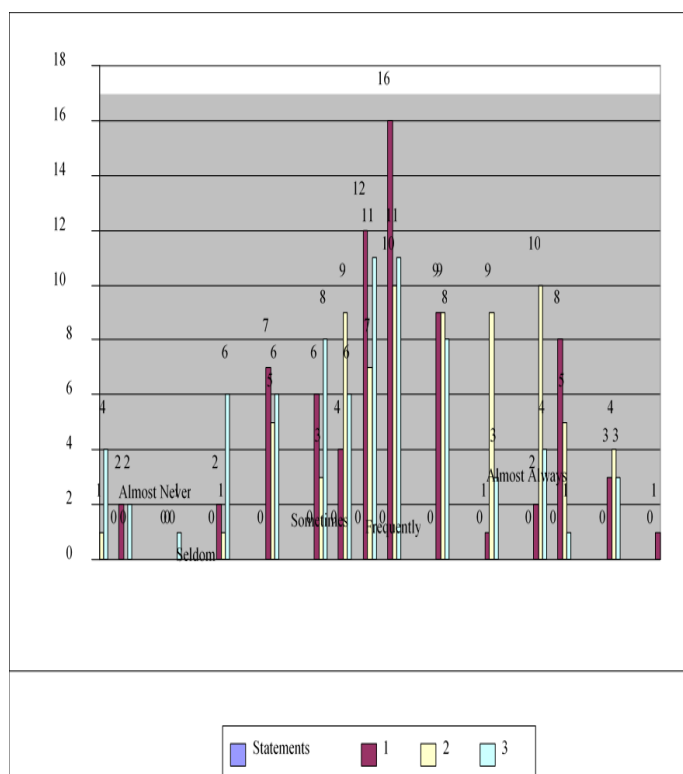
Table showing Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents

Table Indicating Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents

The data analysis in a table with visual presentation revealed that out of (25x3) 75 responses of principals, the majority (34.67%) adopted option-4, which showed that the principals frequently fulfilled their roles in School Community Relationship. Teachers (40%) and parents (49.33%) confirmed option-3 out of (25x3) 75 responses. There was agreement among

teachers and parents, indicating that principals sometimes performed the School Community Relationship Role. The results of this analysis confirmed that both teachers and parents realized that the role of principals with respect to School Community Relationship must be improved and strengthened.

Figure showing Responses of Principals, Teachers and Parents



Outcome of the Study

The parents and teachers viewed that there was a weak school community relationship, due to which the parents did not take interest in the educational matters of their children & schools. Both of them suggested improvement and collaboration of this role of the principals. The principals ought to provide opportunities for and promote school community participation in developing the schools, priorities, targets and school-based activities through parents' teachers' council. They must acknowledge the views & expectations of the parents for the personal, social and educational welfare of the children to promote their learning outcomes.

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