

# **Chapter - I**

## **Introduction**

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

India, one of the ancient civilization of the world, embraced and evolved a unique system of 'education'; a system which was essentially (caste) community affair. This kind of education system lasted hundreds of years without many mutations. However, with the advent of British system of education community-based system of education was replaced by state-centric centralized system of education. This intervention by British had freed system of education from caste cover. However, in the process, system of education was uprooted from community. Local community lost its role in deciding and providing education to its masses.

After independence, the then National leadership of the country decided in favour of a democratic polity. They also recognized the fact that the successful functioning of any democracy in any country largely depends upon active and conscious participation of the people in political processes. The active and conscious participation of the people, in turn, depends upon their education. There fore, to create democratic citizenry, constitutional framers and political and educational leadership instilled faith and hope in education. At the same time, they also very rightly recognized that unless educational opportunities are democratized, it is well nigh impossible to democratize the polity. This appreciation of the nexus between universal, equal educational opportunities and democracy, at the dawn of independence, manifested in the form of article 45 of Directive Principles of Indian Constitution. Article 45 reads, "The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the

commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." It is very clear from the above citation that provision of elementary is the obligation of the state.

In the development model, that was adopted and adored soon after independence, in successive five-year plans, while paying lip service to decentralization, 'bottom-up approach' to development and active community involvement in development, it embraced, near totally, the 'top-down', state-centric model. This state-centric approach in education kept the real stakeholders away from decision making and implementation processes of education. The state-centric approach to education did not allow local communities to have ownership over schools that are situated in the vicinity. Communities virtually failed in owning schools is one of the principal parameters of development-physically, academically and administratively. This resulted in the apathetic attitude by the community even when the schooling conditions in villages are pathetic. This simply reveals the alienation of the community from the development process.

The state centric approach, even after its concerted efforts in fulfilling its constitutional obligation, could not realize the objective of making India a literate country. Literacy rates are lingering, considerably, at low level, even after 60 years of implementation of Constitutional mandate by successive Governments. In the course of development, within this development paradigm, different players-private, International Agencies, NGOs and others jumped in to action and started carving space for their initiatives in making universal elementary education a reality. Public-private partnerships, NGO initiatives, international agencies co-

operations and World Bank proposals in the field of primary education have become rainbow reality of contemporary elementary education. In all these initiatives, *community participation, community involvement, and community ownership have become* catchy phrases.

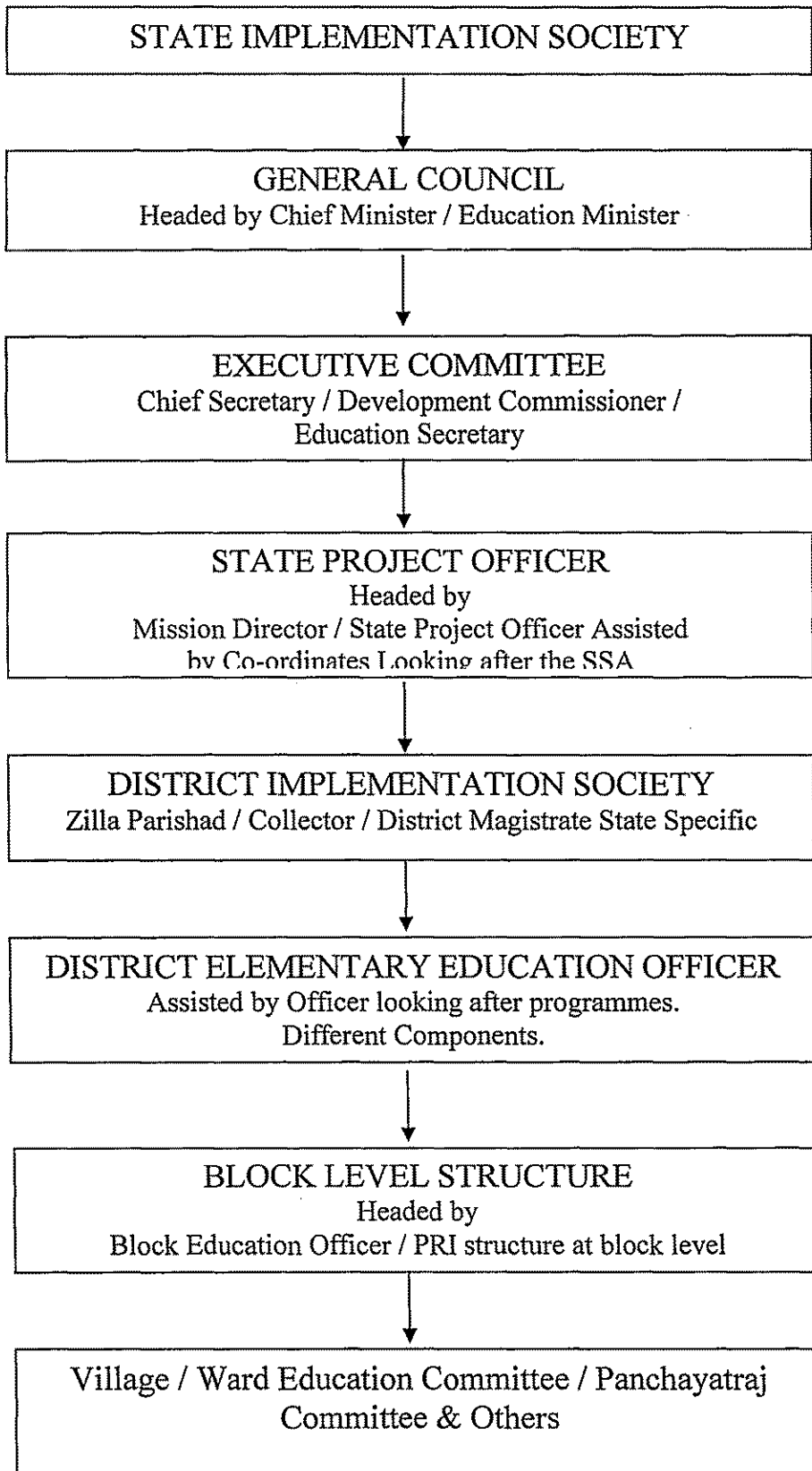
Role of community in development is not entirely new thing in development discourse in general and education in particular. Gandhi's development model, including his scheme of education, was, in fact, centered on local community. Though post-independent development model took different route, it did talk about community participation and involvement in development and education. Number of committees, such as, B.G. Kher Committee 1953, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee 1957, Sadiq Ali Committee 1964, Bhandari Committee 1969, Bongiwar Committee 1971 and Ashok mehta 1978, that were set up after independence highlighted the key role of the community in development and education in decentralized administrative set up. The national Policy on education (NPE) 1986 rightly assigned a major role to local communities in programmes of school education and also stressed the involvement of local panchayats, voluntary bodies including social activist groups and non governmental organizations in universalization of elementary education.

These efforts culminated into the enactment of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution in the year 1992. These amendments provide scope for the active participation of the community, both in the development and social sector. The Panchayat Raj Act, the result of these amendments, categorically shifted the focus to elected bodies at grass root level- district, block, municipal and village. As village being the nucleus

of India, Village Education Committees popularly known as VECs-- are formed as a sequel to this strategy. The constitution of these committees was made mandatory by the promulgation of an executive order issued in 1995. The village Education Committees comprise seven to fifteen members one third of them being women. They also have member representatives from the parents of SC/ST, minority community students, teachers, anganwadi workers and other persons concerning with education. Now, Community participation in development and education has become a non-negotiable commitment to translate education for all to a reality. Initiation for community participation in UEE has, primarily, come from two different agencies, namely Governmental and Non Governmental agencies, Government's efforts in this regard crystallized in the policy of SSA.

To effectively implement SSA , which has such a large coverage , it is important that the appropriate structures are developed & strengthened for effective management of the programme. As far as management is concerned , the central concern of the programme is adopted those management practice that combine specification of clear objectives , decentralization of planning at the district level & participation of grass root level structure in the implementation of the programme .The visual representation of the essential structure envisaged in the programme up to village level is given in the flow chart on the next page.





## 1.2 NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

According to the *PROBE* survey (1999), Contribution of Village Education Committees is nominal. About half of the PROBE sample schools had "functional" VECs. Functional being understood in the liberal sense that the VEC that meets atleast once in 12 months. So it is difficult to state with certainty that local community empowerment will emerge as major factor in determining the future framework for primary education management. Nevertheless, the experience and lessons accruing from the initiative taken in different states are likely to guide the future course of action, both at the levels of policy and practice, several questions and issues need to be carefully studied. For instance, are community bodies really being vested with power or authority or are they only being given more responsibility without full authority? Are the departmental personnel ready to share power with community? Are the community members prepared to take more power & responsibilities? Will this really usher in a new sense of accountability at the grass root level for school functioning? Are the VECs members are aware of their powers and functions.

Agenda thus is not just to activate VECs but real challenge is to achieve goal of success in the schooling issues, through all available channel.

The study is required to know the extent of involvement of disadvantaged group such as SC, ST,OBC & WOMEN etc. and also to know the awareness level of these VECs and it is an attempt to show the ground reality of the community participation in villages through these

VECs so that the policy makers could facilitate effective community involvement and empowerment in primary education.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

The present study therefore entitled as:

"Awareness of Village Education Committee Members About Their Powers and Functions – A Study".

### **1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS:**

Before proceeding further, in any research, the researcher should have clear understanding of the problem. The problem selected for the study is "Awareness of Village Education Committee Members About Their Powers and Functions – A Study".

The terms like Awareness, Community, Community participation, VEC needs special description as they convey different meaning to different people. This may result in ambiguous understanding of the terms. Therefore to overcome this problem, the researcher made an attempt to define the terms operationally so as to avoid confusion. In this process, researcher here under has given the understanding of the terms by various great personalities in the field.

#### **1.4.1 AWARENESS**

"A man is in focus when and to the extent that his mind is set to the goal of awareness, clarity, intelligibility, with regard to the object of his concern i.e. with regard to which he is considering or dealing with or engaged in doing.





To sustain that focus with regard to a specific issue or problem is to think. What is involved here is not an issue of the degree of a man's intelligence or knowledge. Nor is it an issue of the productiveness or success of any particular thinking process. Nor is it an issue of the specific subject matter with which this mind may be occupied. It is an issue of the basic regulating principle that directs the mind may be occupied. It is an issue of the basic regulating principle that directs the mind activity: In the mind controlled by the goal of awareness.

To be in focus is to set one's mind to the purpose of active cognitive integration. But the alternative confronting man is not simply optimal consciousness or absolute unconsciousness. There are different trends of awareness possible to man's mind, determined by the degree of his focus.

- a) The clarity or vagueness of his mind's content.
- b) The degree to which the mind's activity involves abstractions and principles or is concrete bound.
- c) The degree to which the relevant wider context is present or absent in the process of thinking.

Thus, the choices to focus do not consist of moving from a state of literal unconsciousness to a state of consciousness. To focus is to move from a lower level of awareness to a higher level-to move from mental passivity to purposeful mental activity to initiate a process of directed cognitive integration. In a state of passive awareness, a man can apprehend the need to be in full mental focus. His choice is to evade that knowledge or to exert the effort of raising the level of his awareness.

The choice to focus one's mind is a primary, just as the value sought, awareness is primary. Awareness is the starting- point and preconditions of goal directed human action.

1. All awareness is necessarily selective in any particular moment, there is far more in the world around him than a man could possibly focus on and he must choose to aim his attention in a given direction to the exclusion of others. This applies to introspection no less than to extrospection.

Focal awareness entails a process of discriminating certain fact or elements from the wider field in which they appear, and considering them separately. This is equally true of the perceptual and conceptual levels of consciousness.

2. There are degree of awareness. There is a gradient of diminishing mental clarity

Along the continuum from focal awareness to peripheral awareness to total unawareness or unconsciousness.

3. Man is a self programmer. To an extent immeasurably greater than any other Living species, he has the ability to retain, integrate and automates knowledge.....

#### 1.4.2 VEC – VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Present study intends to look into awareness of Village Education Committee members. Therefore it is necessary to understand what VEC is. VEC is an elected representation of Village Communities. Since VEC is an elected representative of a communities, so it is necessary to define community first.

## COMMUNITY

Our primary concept is that of community. Community is variously understood and interpreted. According to R.M. Maclver, Charles H. Page Macmillan (1986), it is the term we apply to a pioneer settlement, a village, a city, a tribe or a nation. Wherever the members of any group small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest but the basic conditions of a common life, we call that group a community. The mark of a community is that one's life may be lived wholly within it. The basic criterion of community, then is that all of one's social relationships may be found within it.

It is a particular kind of territorial group where the membership is determined by the local group broad enough to include all the major institution, all the statuses and interest, that makes a society. The community consists precisely inter-institutional and inter-group connection that give whole its cohesion.

According to Joseph S. Roucek (1986)- The term community refers to a heterogeneous variety of social groups, large and small. It is centred around the idea of a group's territory, combined with its shared culture, bond of union, tradition and other elements of moral order. The term can also be used to refer to the felt sense of coherence in a group, the total complex of attitudes, values and sentiments that binds its members together in a community.

Hollingshead sees three definitions of community in current sociology-

- 1) It denotes solidarity, cohesion and common interest

- 2) It refers to a geographic area with spatial boundaries; and
- 3) It implies a sociogeographic structure embodying the ideas of the first two.

Hollingshead further claims that community study stands in need of a coherent, theoretical framework.

In present day civilization the nation remains the largest effective community. By this we mean that the nation is the largest group which is permeated by a consciousness of comprehensive solidarity. Having seen what community is, it is necessary to understand nature of communities in India.

#### *Nature of Indian Community*

In India, community is obviously not a "homogenous notion" It is either various communities unequally placed within a society or various groups in a community unequally placed. (R. Govinda & Rashmi Diwan 2003).

Noronha further highlights this aspect of heterogeneity by pointing out that community can be viewed in two distinct perspectives-

- 1) Local class- caste composition when parents, as the background for the children, are taken into consideration;
- 2) Elected representatives where their class composition influences the nature of involvement as well as the nature of conflicts arising from such environment.

So the heterogeneous social structure of the Indian community results into differential use and different level of extent of advantages of

the existing infrastructure and institutional services to different citizens belonging to different social & cultural backgrounds like different religions, castes, creed, gender etc

*Now again came back to our topic Village Education Committee -*

In the light of Panchayati Raj Act, the revised PoA 1992 advised the states to draw up appropriate legislation that would among other things provide Panchayati Raj Committee for the education. Following this Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was set in 1993 under the chairmanship of Veerapa Moily. This committee visualized standing committees at different levels such as village panchayat, panchayat samiti, zilla parishad assigning comprehensive powers, functions and responsibilities to all these structures.

It also recommended the setting of Village Education Committees (VEC) acknowledging that the village normally represents a “cohesive community” ideally suited for promoting programmes involving the support of the local community. All the above policy directives clearly indicate that particularly in the past decade or so, policy makers have strongly advocated the role of community in moving towards the goal of achieving UEE through decentralization of the education system.

*Wide Spectrum Of Representation*

As enunciated in the government orders, the VECs comprises of seven to fifteen members each .The Panchayat president is the chairperson in rural areas and the Ward members hold the position in municipal corporation . The Headmaster of the school is the member secretary. It has been ensured by a wide spectrum of the community including

members from the marginalized sections of the society. The members includes PTA president, group members, parents, women, SC/ST members & parents of disabled children.

### *Roles & Responsibilities of VEC members under SSA*

The Government orders issued by government have also been instrumental in empowering the VECs. To accelerate the programmes through decentralized and participation approaches, the role and responsibilities of VECs members have been redefined as follows-

- 1) Identifying needs of the school
- 2) Conducting periodical meetings to ensure co-operation of the community, community mobilization
- 3) Assisting the Headmaster in transparent utilization of grants released to schools and effective utilization of the funds
- 4) To manage the joint account of the VEC
- 5) To manage civil construction and maintenance works wherever assigned or needed
- 6) Enrollment of all school-age children and ensuring cent percent completion of elementary education of all children
- 7) Conducting campaigns and melas for UEE
- 8) Monitoring the academic performance of children achievement levels, attendance and quality of education
- 9) Organising functions and celebrations in schools and public events which showcase the skills of students
- 10) Effective co-ordination of the community with the implementing agencies

- 11) Displaying school data and receipt and expenditure of grants in the school public notice boards
- 12) Involvement in Teacher training

### *Training to VEC members*

The VEC have been duly empowered in the areas of planning, implementation and monitoring of the educational interventions at school\ village level. The members have been given a two days orientation\training on their redefined roles and responsibilities in the SSA context. They have also given exposure on micro-planning. The training been helpful in inculcating a sense of community ownership among VECs members

The contents of VEC orientation / training module includes-

- 1) Understanding the aims and objectives of SSA and their significance
- 2) Conduct of VEC meetings (twice in a month) & recording the minutes of the meetings
- 3) Improving infrastructure facilities in school building the provision of separate toilets facilities for girls to enable cent percent enrollment and retention of children including girl children
- 4) Conduct of awareness campaigns, metric melas and special enrollment drives, parents counselling
- 5) Maintaining Village Education Register and its annual update-conducting door to door survey
- 6) Identifying children with special needs and out of school children in the area in order to enroll them

- 7) Special intervention for the SC/ST, disabled and gifted children
- 8) Supervision of the distribution of free textbooks and free midday meal for children
- 9) Receipt and distribution of grants to schools to make the community understand about proper utilization of school grant, teacher grant and other assistances made available to them
- 10) Overall monitoring / supervision and management of all activities of the school

#### *VEC meetings*

VEC meetings are conducted twice a month in all schools, which enable the members to discuss about the problems and issues concerning school improvement and formulate local specific interventions. To provide support and guidance sometimes BRC (Block Resource Co-ordinator) also attend these meetings. The members record the minutes of the meetings and copy of these minutes is sent to district office for facilitating further action and monitoring.

#### *Village Education Register*

VECs maintains Village Education Register (VER) in all schools, which provide reliable information about 0-5 children, school age children(6-14 years),out of school children(dropouts and never enrolled),disabled children with various categories of disabilities. The VERs are updated during April-May every year for initiating follow up measures. The Headmaster and teachers of the school undertake the exercise involving the VECs members.



### *Funds Through VECs*

All grants to school such as school grant, teacher grant, maintenance grant are routed through VEC. a joint account in the names of chairman and member secretary has been opened to facilitate the receipt and distribution of funds. Funds for civil construction are also routed through VEC as these construction are undertaken by the community. All funds are directly sent to VEC by District Project Office(DPO) through cheques to facilitate easy fund flow.

So the prime aim of establishing VECs is to ensure the participation of every child in primary and elementary education. It was in this manner that the very process of decentralization of both planning and management of education was to percolate down to the very grass root level like village

#### *1.4.3 VEC – A Source of Community Participation -*

VEC's awareness is reflected in its participation or involvement in UEE. Since, VECs is an elected body of the communities, VEC participation can be seen in terms of community participation.

Community “participation” is a context- specific expression based on the degree of involvement of people, to bring certain systemic changes with a basic objective of ushering development and improvement in the quality of life of the participants. This involvement could be for health, education, social security etc. When we speak of community participation in elementary education, again it is the involvement of parents and community leaders as partners in supporting educational activities that contribute to improvement in their own lives. Participation in itself

provides an involvement with the system which can diminish alienation and also can serve to stimulate educational change; it is itself an educational experience". Thus, participation is an experience is felt differently by different people in different circumstances, even in similar situations. This is because the benefits that flow from participation may not be same for all. In the context of deep rooted socio-economic stratification that characterizes our society, participation processes have to be orchestrated in such a manner that benefits of the participation are equally distributed." Participation would go hand in hand with safeguards for the poor and marginalized, which most often is a political task requiring active and sustained intervention of the state". Therefore, the type of participation that makes the most sense will vary with the environment in which the school operates. Shaeffer summarizes, the various shades of meaning attached to the community participation are-

- a) the mere *use* of the service
- b) participation through the contribution of resources, materials and labour;
- c) participation through "*attendance*"(e.g., at parents meetings at school), often implying passive acceptance of decision by other
- d) participation through consultation on a particular issue;
- e) involvement in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors;
- f) involvement as implementers of delegated powers; and
- g) most completely, participation in real decision-making at every stage-identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation and evaluation.

The substance of all these propositions seem to lie in one or both of the categories: (a) exhorting generally reluctant community members to take active interest in the education of their children;(b) liberalizing the otherwise rigid administrative framework to make way for participation of the community members in educational management.

The discourse becomes even more complicated if one moves from the question of “community participation” to that of “community empowerment”. Will empowerment of the local political bodies ensure genuine representation of the traditionally excluded sections of the local community? This is the matter that needs to be studied more closely.

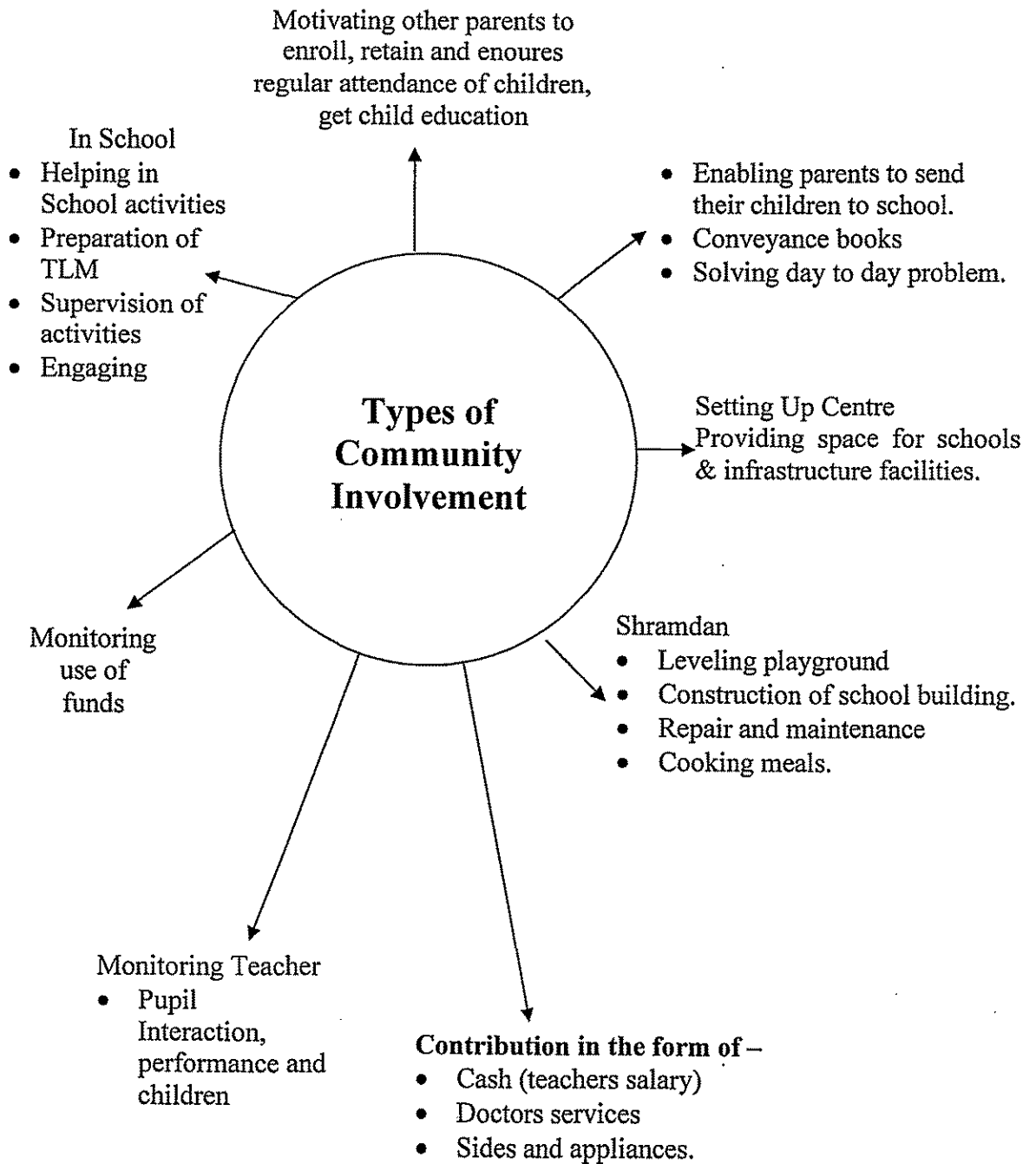
*From community participation to community empowerment:*

Everyone would agree that the route to empowerment is through involvement and participation, usually taking place in communities with common self interest. When people are entrusted with some power or given the opportunity to show their capabilities, participation becomes the means of empowerment leading people to feel and act empowered. Panchayati Raj could be viewed as a mechanism for promoting such involvement of people with common community interest. But as Kantha and Narain cautions, this cannot be naively assumed as a natural consequences of establishing the Panchayati Raj system. Though the process has the potential for leading the communities towards “empowerment”, it can be understood only when one understands its relationship with “powerlessness”.

It is the analysis of powerlessness that gives meaning to empowerment. It is the collective articulation that produces social energy, which leads to empowerment. Community participation implies,”

participation of disempowered". These include" those who have not had access as a community, as a geographic area or as a gender". Community participation in the specific context leads to community empowerment only when the people who are involved are ideally those who have" little or no access to basic education".

Experiences from other countries indicate that participation itself increases only when more sharing of power is ensured." Community involvement in education appears to be maximized by two specific but surprising factors-the distribution of money and power to the community. There emerges a situation where hierarchical relationships are minimized and genuine partnership are maximized. Community involvement is most productive when handled as a joint exercise in communication and redistribution of power, responsibility and money". Certainly, the terrain from community participation to community empowerment is quite a difficult one, since it is highly dependent on the readiness of decision-making authorities to devolve power and money, and the preparedness of the community and other personnel functioning at the grassroots to accept the challenge. One can expect an empowered society where partnership and participation proceed coupled with freedom to spend money and enjoy power with accountability.



## **1.5 STRUCTURE OF VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEES IN MADHYA PADESH TAKEN FOR THE STUDY D- 248**

As we know VECs is an arrangement which evaluates and manage the educational needs of that particular village. In Madhya Pradesh, these committees are formed under the act of basic education 1972. The first VEC in M.P. was established in 2000. Like other VECs it also comprises of seven to thirteen members including members from women, SC/ST and minorities. The president and vice president are selected among the parents whom children secures highest percentage in the academics. Various powers and functions have been given to the members of VEC to make their involvement effective and empowered. These are –

- 1) Members could give their suggestions in habitation level planning
- 2) Empowered to recruit local level teachers
- 3) Regular updation of VER
- 4) Empowered to sanction teacher's leave
- 5) Empowered to decide school timings
- 6) Arrangement of school infrastructure
- 7) To manage alternative schooling centre
- 8) To monitor indicators like access, enrollment and retention
- 9) Knowledge about the maintenance and repair grant
- 10) To make interaction with parents

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Researcher proceeds in the study with the following questions in mind-

- 1) What is the Educational background of the members of Village Education Committees?

- 2) What is the Socio-economic status of the members of Village Education Committees?
- 3) Are the members of VECs have enough awareness about the powers and functions Given to them?
- 4) What is the nature of participation of VEC members in education?

### **1.7 OBJECTIVE**

- 1- To study the awareness of village education committee members about their powers and functions.
- 2- To study the awareness level among male and female members regarding their powers and functions.
- 3- To study the awareness level among the members of different social categories regarding their powers and functions.
- 4- To study the awareness level among the members having economic status regarding their powers and functions.

### **1.8 HYPOTHESIS**

- 1- The awareness of VEC members about their powers and function will be low.
- 2- There will be no significant difference in the level of awareness among male and female members regarding their powers and functions.
- 3- There will be no significant difference in the level of awareness among the members of different social categories regarding their powers and functions.

- 4- There will be significant difference in the level of awareness among the member having different economic status regarding their power and functions.

## **1.9 DELIMITATIONS**

- 1- The conceptual limitation of the study is that, it equated community participation with the activities of VECs.
- 2- The other conceptual limitation is that, it confined to 'knowing' part of awareness only.
- 3- The procedural limitation of the study is that, it adopted one time approach to collect required data rather than adopting longitudinal participant observation in collecting the data.
- 4- Present study is confined only to know the awareness regarding the powers and functions given to the VEC members.
- 5- Present study is confined only to Madhya Pradesh.
- 6- It is further restricted to Gwalior region only.