Helpdesk Report: Education and Community Empowerment

Date: 2 November 2010

Query: Examples of effective mobilisation of citizens/communities which have brought about improved education outcomes (quality and access) for poor men and women?   Are there any examples where broader forms of social change have also taken place as a result or strengthening community action and choice in education services? (Do we have evidence of some of the key factors for success?)

Enquirer: DFID UK

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1. Overview

There is a wealth of literature on community involvement in education in poor countries reporting varying degrees of success. Within the limited scope of this study not much on broader forms of social change was found but further reading of listed literature may yield more.

An extensive World Bank literature review discusses many evaluations of outcomes of community involvement in schools. Successes, failures and evaluation difficulties are reported. This is summarised in section 2.

Section 3 of the report summarises a useful book on the subject. Sections 4-6 draw together papers from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Examples from these sections of effective mobilisation of communities which have brought about improved education include:

- BRAC in Bangladesh has graduated 2.5 million children from rural schools in 18 years. Evaluation finds pupil performance consistently better than government and private schools.
- Escuela Nueva in Colombia serves more than half the country's rural areas. Pupil learning outcomes are superior to those in conventional schools.
- Schools organised by communities in northern Pakistan reach 53,000 girls and employ 3,000 young women as teachers.
- PRONADE accounts for 15 percent of the enrolment in Guatemala.

- Community schools provide 25 percent of the total enrolment in Zambia.
- Community involvement in education projects in Indonesia, such as the National Program for Community Empowerment, shows that social pressure from an informed local community can help reduce corruption and misuse of funds.

Some less successful findings from projects include:

- A research paper on EDUCO schools in El Salvador concludes that reforms have created and sustained local democratic participation in schools through increased parental engagement and local decision making. But this has contributed to a reduction of citizens' democratic participation in the larger national and global arena.
- Research in Mali found high initial drop-out rates from community schools.
- Research in Cambodia highlights the difficulty of bridging the divide between schools and communities. Community members were reluctant to get involved with matters perceived to be the responsibility of teachers and limited efforts by the school to provide room for participation were limited.
- Village Education Committees are meant for community participation in schools in India but it is often found that the Committees are not known to community members.
- Research on community schooling in Nepal notes unintended outcomes. Reforms have been driven by the desire to limit the role of the state in providing education but not in overall control. This has increased marginalisation of the poor and further politicised teaching force and the states under-funding of public education.

Comments on broader social outcomes include:

- Evidence from Guatemala (Corrales, 2006) suggests that school council empowerment extends beyond its aims for education. Councils have fought for their interests, including mobilizing other citizens and even forcing the state to change its stands.
- A paper from Uganda argues that parents' perceptions of the accountability of the school affect the way they participate in education. Thus, accountability is one of the crucial factors for realising local democracy through decentralisation.
- An article from the School of Architecture, Edinburgh calls for school sites to be designed for education as well as community development outreach activities.
- A paper on community-based approaches from ODI notes that the improved outcomes aimed for do not need to be fulfilled as empowerment of communities is a valuable aim in itself.

2. World Bank on School-Based Management

World Bank work on citizen mobilisation in education comes under the umbrella term School Based Management (SBM). It should be noted that this includes decentralisation of power not just to parents and students in communities but can sometimes mean decision making is handed over to principles or teachers which may be less relevant for this query.

World Bank SBM web pages
http://bit.ly/aDEQYN
Gives an overview of SBM, why it is important and its impact. Other tabs on this web page are Key Issues and Publications.

Decentralized Decision-Making in Schools, *The Theory and Evidence on School-Based Management*
Barrera-Osorio, F. et al., 2009, *World Bank*

This is the most recent and key publication from the World Bank.

Assessment of the Literature on School-Based Management (SBM) Programs around the World found:

- The sample of well documented rigorous evaluations is small. Most of the studies reviewed in this document used empirical strategies open to question.
- Some studies found that SBM policies actually changed the dynamics of the school, either because parents got more involved or because teachers' actions changed.
- Several studies presented evidence of SBM's positive impact on reducing repetition; failure; and, to a lesser degree, dropout rates.
- The studies that had access to standardized test scores presented mixed evidence, with countries such as El Salvador, Kenya, Mexico, and Nicaragua showing positive results.
- Research in the US suggests SBM reforms take 5 years to make changes seen at school level and 8 years to yield improved test results.
- SBM is generally cost effective, even if only a few benefits result, as programmes are inexpensive.

The paper goes on to describe SBM reforms in Latin America (Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua), Southern Africa (Benin, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal), Asia (Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia), and the Middle East (Israel, Qatar). It discusses evaluations of reforms in each country. A large amount of success is documented, particularly increased enrolment. Failures and data limitations are examined.

Some interesting findings in Latin America include:

- The EDUCO programme in El Salvador showed no difference in test scores compared to regular schools. This could be positive since students were from poorer backgrounds and lower scores would be expected.
- Teachers in PRONADE schools, Guatemala, resigned at a rate 3 times higher than in traditional schools thought to be prompted by salary, working conditions and job security.
- The Quality Schools Program (PEC) in Mexico had least effect on states with low levels of development possibly because their education departments had less capacity to support schools.

Evaluations underway in the African countries are described but results are not yet available in most cases. In Kenya, parent and students recruited teachers with some positive results. Note, earlier programmes in Africa were known as 'Whole School Development' (WSD) rather than SBM.

Successful examples of community involvement in Indonesian projects—such as the National Program for Community Empowerment, the Urban Poverty Program, and the Kecamatan Development Program— all indicate that social pressure from an informed local community can help reduce corruption and the misuse of funds.

Advice for implementing SBM programmes:

- Take account of capacity issues.
- Clearly state what is to be achieved, as well as how and in what time frame.

- Establish goals including short-term process goals, intermediate output goals, and longer-term outcome goals.
- Spell out what will have to happen at different stages for the reform to reach its goals.
- Base interventions on whatever evidence is available and include a strong impact evaluation component that is appropriate for the program, its duration, and its time frame.

The paper concludes with a cautionary note about the possibility of resentment by teachers from monitoring leading to deterioration of school relationships.

3. Key reading

Reaching the Underserved: Complementary Models of Effective Schooling
DeStefano, J. et al., 2007, *Equip2*
http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-CompModelsEffectiveSchooling-Book.pdf

This book begins with a section on the challenge of achieving education for all: quality basic education for underserved children. Key points on complementary, community-based approaches include:

- A well-known complementary model, BRAC in Bangladesh, has graduated 2.5 million children from its rural schools over the past 18 years. A recent evaluation of the quality of education in Bangladesh found that pupil performance in complementary schools—with BRAC as the dominant provider—was consistently superior to government and private schools, in both rural and urban settings.
- Escuela Nueva in Colombia, with more than 20,000 schools, serves more than half the country's rural areas. Pupil learning outcomes are superior to those in conventional schools. The model has inspired similar schools in at least 10 other Latin American countries. One example is Guatemala's Nueva Escuela Unitaria, with 1,300 schools reaching the indigenous population.
- More than 2,000 community schools in Zambia, many of which target HIV/AIDS orphans, now serve 25,000 children.
- Egypt's community schools, started in 1992 in just four villages in Assiut, have spread to more than 1,000 and serve some 25,000 children.
- Community-organized schools in northern Pakistan now reach 53,000 girls in approximately 2,200 communities. They employ 3,000 young women as teachers.

The successful Balochistan Community Girls School Project in Pakistan is described. The critical factor of success was that the government accepted locally recruited young women without full qualifications as teachers. Because they had less education and no pre-service training, they received support from a mobile female teacher training program. Experienced women teachers provided regular onsite training and guidance on lesson planning, organisation, and instructional materials. Among other factors, the official curriculum was revised to reflect a more balanced gender picture, new texts were developed that promoted teachers' use of child-centred methods, and schools permitted multigrade, activity-based groupings of students.

The Ghanaian Schools for Life programme is also described. Factors for success in Ghana and Pakistan include:

- Approaches rely on local initiatives, management, and decision-making, and they make use of a broad array of actors. Relying on government-managed systems cannot reach the level of effectiveness and efficiency that is achievable when there is

partnership between government, nongovernmental intermediaries, community-based organisations, and other social actors.

- Limited, more focused curricula are delivered through child-centred, activity-based approaches that are locally relevant in terms of language and content. Also important is the focus on local management and on-the-ground, ongoing support through partnerships and collaboration with local communities and civil society organisations such as local or international NGOs.
- Approaches identify, recruit, train, and support teachers far differently than the formal system does. Locally recruited teachers are drawn from an available pool. Little or no prerequisite training is expected. This essentially redefines teachers' roles. They are not seen as experts dispensing knowledge, but as responsible young adults who facilitate children's learning and development. Investments are made to provide them with ongoing support and help, not in pre-service credentialing. In many cases, the evidence is that radically less qualified teachers—in terms of formal education and credentials—are highly effective in helping students achieve learning outcomes.
- Cost effectiveness. They are cheaper than government run schools.

Factors consistently present in successful complementary approaches are:

- clear vision and local leadership
- local design and sensitivity
- innovative and effective management partnerships
- clear definition of roles
- starting small
- managing for quality

The second chapter introduces and summarises the case studies in the following chapters. Examples of significant improvement in access include:

- CARE's community schools (COPE) account for 9 percent of the enrolment in six provinces in Afghanistan.
- BRAC provides 50 percent of the enrolment in rural areas in Bangladesh.
- Save the Children community schools doubled the enrolment in Kolondieba, Mali.
- PRONADE accounts for 15 percent of the enrolment in Guatemala.
- Community schools provide 25 percent of the total enrolment in Zambia.

The factors that most contribute to the success of the kinds of complementary programs reviewed in this study include:

- smaller schools established in collaboration with communities
- locally recruited teachers supported through ongoing, regular supervision and training
- school-based decision-making and community-based management and governance
- simplified curriculum and increased instructional time devoted to basic literacy and numeracy

The chapters that follow are each a case study of community (or similar) schools in these countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali and Zambia.

4. Research from Latin America

Does Parental Participation in Schools Empower or Strain Civil Society? The Case of Community-managed Schools in Central America

Corrales, J., 2006. *Social Policy & Administration*, 40 (4)
https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/47805/original/spol_498.pdf
This article looks at some possible ways to conceptualize and assess the relationship between parental participation in self-managed schools and civil society. The article draws from the experience of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, these reforms have advanced significantly since the 1990's.

The article concludes:

- The Nicaraguan and the Salvadorean reforms were the most disruptive of civil society. The Salvadorean reform, through a policy of widespread dialogue, seems to have done more to 'clean up' the societal debris caused by the reform.
- All four cases show that despite low levels of pre-existing human capital and institutional facilities, participating citizens, in most cases very simple folk, have been able to carry out their duties, in most cases quite complex ones.
- The survival of the Guatemalan experiment, despite significant evidence of adverse external conditions (a hostile administration), suggests that council empowerment extends beyond the mere capacity to carry out assigned tasks. It also means that councils are capable of fighting for their interests, including mobilizing other citizens and even forcing the state to change its stands.

EDUCO Schools in El Salvador: A Democratic Tree in a Globalized Forest?
Desmond, C.T., 2009. *International Education,* 38 (2)
http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1160&context=internationaleducation
This research on the Educacion con Participacion de Communidad (EDUCO) rural schools in El Salvador examined the nature of the reform and its impact on parent involvement and engagement for the local community; and the underlying economic and political ideologies of EDUCO. The author interpreted these findings to uncover the implications of the reform for democratic participation for the local school and community and for the more broadly constructed meaning of democracy, nationally and internationally.

The paper concludes that the EDUCO reforms created and have sustained local democratic participation in schools through increased parental engagement and local decision making but have contributed to a reduction of citizens' democratic participation in the larger national and global arena where political parties and supranational lending agencies determine policies. As small democratic trees, the EDUCO schools are operating in a large forest managed by antidemocratic, globalized forces whose harvest has been cheap basic education and compliant local teachers.

Do Community-Managed Schools Work? An Evaluation of El Salvador's EDUCO Program
By Jimenez, G., 1999. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 13 (3), 415-41
http://wber.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/3/415.full.pdf+html
This article examines how decentralizing educational responsibility to communities and schools affects student outcomes. It uses the example of El Salvador's Community-Managed Schools Program (*Education con Participacion de la Comunidad*, EDUCO), which was designed to expand rural education rapidly following El Salvador's civil war. The article finds that enhanced community and parental involvement in EDUCO schools has improved students' language skills and diminished student absences, which may have long-term effects on achievement.

The Politics of School-based Management Reforms in Central America: The Case of Honduras
Ganimian, A., 2009. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the 53rd Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, South Carolina*

In Central America, 'school-based management' (SBM) reforms, which sought to decentralize decision-making in education through parental and community participation, became exceptionally popular during the 1990s. Yet, nearly twenty years since their inception, SBM reforms vary widely in the extent to which they have remained in place, stayed true to their original goals, and secured the acquiescence of their initial opponents. What explains the uneven outcomes of these reforms? This paper offers an explanation for the mixed record of SBM reforms in Central America. It uses the case of the Honduran Community-based Education Program (PROHECO) to argue that SBM reforms—at least as designed in Central America—pose three political challenges to governments that make these initiatives more contentious than other education reforms: they benefit some groups at the expense of others, they bring new players into the policy-making process, and they depend on both, domestic leadership and foreign support. The paper begins with an explanation of these three challenges, followed by an overview of the state of education in Honduras prior to the adoption of PROHECO. It then examines how the challenges mentioned above can throw light on the adoption and expansion of PROHECO during three periods of time.

(The full version of this document is unpublished and unavailable. The author has been contacted.)

5. Research from Africa

Negotiating 'Education for Many' Enrolment, Dropout and Persistence in the Community Schools of Kolondieba, Mali
Laugharn, P. (2007). *Create, Institute of Education, University of London*
http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA14.pdf
This monograph uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the following questions: How did the activity of the SMCs influence enrolment within the community school villages? How were gender-equitable enrolments arranged and maintained? Though it had originally been expected that the SMCs would be effective at promoting persistence in school, initial levels of dropout were high. What were the reasons for dropout from the community schools? How effective were the SMCs in reducing dropout and promoting persistence?

Parental Participation and Accountability in Primary Schools in Uganda
Suzuki, I., 2002. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 32 (2)
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/646036385-29757913/content~db=all~content=a713657545~frm=titlelink
Participation, a 'buzzword' in social development in both developed and developing countries, has several different interpretations in terms of purpose, form and implication. For instance, parents are encouraged to participate individually in choosing the school for their own children, and they are expected to participate collectively in school development through the work of school governing bodies. Furthermore, participation in education is often considered to be a means of assuring accountability of decentralised institutions. This paper explores the notion of parental participation in school governance, based on data obtained from field research in Uganda. It argues that parents' perceptions of the accountability of the school affect the way they participate in education. Thus, accountability is one of the crucial factors for realising local democracy through decentralisation.

Community Participation in School Policy and Practice in Malawi: Balancing local knowledge, national policies and international agency priorities
Rose, P., 2003. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 33(1)
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a713657595

Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 2003
Community participation has become increasingly formalised in international and national educational policy-making in recent years. The concept has, however, been interpreted in particular ways in the context of the post-Washington consensus, with implications for the success of its implementation. Drawing on research in Malawi, the article explores the extent to which publicly-stated policy commitments towards community participation are realised in practice. In particular, it finds that the main motivation for 'participation' is extractive rather than a genuine attempt to encourage local ownership and accountability. Furthermore, marketisation of community participation is evident, signifying the entrenchment of individual responsibility for meeting social needs which was previously associated with advocacy for user fees during the Washington consensus era.

School Building Design for Feeding Programmes and Community Outreach: Insights from Ghana and South Africa
Uduku, O., 2010. *International Journal of Educational*, 31(1)
http://bit.ly/agWaQz
This article investigates how school building design can support primary school feeding programmes in low- and middle-income countries. Furthermore it argues for schools to become community "development hubs"; incorporating both local access to education and also to programmes for nutrition, ICT, health education and other services, outside of school hours. It reviews the literature on school feeding programmes. Data from field research on schools in Ghana and South Africa is used to identify the key design issues for schools delivering feeding programmes. It considers how national education policies can affect school planning and building priorities. The article concludes by calling for the evolution of a new school design model, in which the school site becomes a "development hub", supporting children's education, associated support activities including school feeding, and importantly also, integrated community development outreach activities.

The Pedagogy of Empowerment: Community Schools as a Social Movement in Egypt
Zalouk, M. (2004). *The American University in Cairo Press*
http://bit.ly/b2jCGV
There is only a limited book preview available on Google. It seems relevant and worth getting hold of a copy.

6. Research from Asia

'Empowering' the 'Local' Through Education? Exploring Community Managed Schooling in Nepal
Carney, S., Bista, M. & Agergaard, J., 2007. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(5)
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a780515805
This article attempts to unpack the policy vision and discourse driving community management of schooling in Nepal and to consider the ways in which these policies are being experienced by bureaucrats, teachers, parents and children. The focus is on the World Bank funded Community School Support Project (CSSP) launched by the Government of Nepal in June 2003 and currently being used as a basis for extending community management to all of the country's 26,000 public schools. The article illustrates how national level policy prescriptions lead to a range of outcomes, many of which are unintended. Community-based schooling in Nepal is intended to shift the role of the State from manager to *facilitator* of schooling. However, the article suggests that reforms carried out in the name of greater efficiency, accountability and empowerment are driven primarily by a desire to limit the role of the State in the provision, but not necessarily control, of public education. The consequences of this include the on-going marginalisation of many of the country's poor and disadvantaged groups, a de-motivated and further politicised teaching force and continued chronic under-funding of public education.

Decentralisation Policy in Cambodia: Exploring Community Participation in the Education Sector
By Pellini, A., 2007. *University of Tampere*
http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/978-951-44-6978-7.pdf

This study analyses the characteristics of community participation in Cambodian rural schools. It looks at the spaces for participation created by the decentralisation reforms that the Government of Cambodia has undertaken in the education sector through 'school clustering' and 'priority action' programmes.

Research in Kampong Thom shows the difficulty for communities and schools to bridge the gap that divides them, especially in terms of more active involvement in school activities. This is due partly to the reluctance by community members and association leaders to get involved in matters that are perceived to be the responsibility of teachers; and partly to the limited efforts by schools to provide greater room for participation in school activities.

Public Participation, Teacher Accountability and School Outcomes in Three States
Pandey, P., Goyal, S. & Sundararaman, V., 2010. *Economic and Political Weekly*
http://eledu.net/rrcusrn_data/Public%20Participation,%20Teacher%20Accountability%20and%20School%20Outcomes%20in%20Three%20States%27.pdf
This paper presents findings from baseline surveys on student learning achievement, teacher effort and community participation in three states – Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The results indicate low teacher attendance and poor student learning. Parents and school committees are neither aware of their oversight roles nor do they participate in school management. However, there is substantial heterogeneity in outcomes across states. Karnataka has better student and teacher outcomes, as well as higher levels of community awareness and participation than the other two states. The authors find substantial variation in teacher effort within schools, but most observable teacher characteristics are not associated with teacher effort. One reason for low teacher effort may be a lack of accountability. However, the gains in test scores associated with higher rates of teacher attendance and engagement in teaching are estimated to be small in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, suggesting that teachers themselves may not be effective.

Janshala in Jharkhand: An Experiment with Community Involvement in Education
Pailwar, V. K., & Mahajan, V., 2005. *International Education Journal*, 6(3)
http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v6n3/pailwar/paper.pdf
This paper analyses the crucial aspects of community participation in education and supports its importance by reviewing the basic framework and outcome of Janshala – a Government of India-UN program in Jharkand, India. Though community participation is not a panacea for addressing all barriers, the Janshala experience in Jharkhand and cross country experiences involving community in educational programs indicate that the active involvement of the community has facilitated in identifying community specific education issues and formulating effective strategies to address those barriers by mobilising resources within the community.

Community Participation in Public Schools: Impact of Information Campaigns in Three Indian States
Pandey, P., Goyal, S. & Sundaraman, V., 2009. *Education Economics*, 17(3)
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a914034669
This study evaluates the impact of a community-based information campaign on school performance from a cluster randomized control trial in 610 villages. The campaign consisted of eight or nine public meetings in each of 340 treatment villages across three Indian states to disseminate information to the community about its state-mandated roles and responsibilities in school management. No intervention took place in control villages. At baseline there are no significant differences in school outcomes. This paper reports on the first follow up survey that took place two to four months after the intervention. We find that providing information

through a structured campaign to communities had a positive impact in all three states. However, there are differences across states in where the impact occurs. The most notable impacts occurred on teacher effort, while impacts on learning were more modest. Some improvements also occurred in the delivery of benefits entitled to students (stipend, uniform and mid-day meal) and in process variables such as community participation in each of the three states.

Can Information Campaigns Spark Local Participation and Improve Outcomes? A Study of Primary Education in Uttar Pradesh, India
Banerjee, A. et al., (2006). *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/Khemani_CanInformationCampaignsRaise.pdf
Key public policy for improving primary education services in India is the participation of village education committees, consisting of village government leaders, parents, and teachers. This paper reports the findings from a survey in a rural district in Uttar Pradesh. Rural households, parents, teachers and Village Education Committee (VEC) members were surveyed on the status of education services and the extent of community participation in the public delivery of education services. Most parents do not know that a VEC exists, public participation in improving education is negligible, and large numbers of children in the villages have not acquired basic competencies of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Based on the findings of the baseline survey, this paper also describes a set of information and advocacy campaigns that have been designed to explore whether local participation can increase, and future research plans to evaluate the impact of these interventions.

Community involvement in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: an assessment of the Village Education Committees in India
Girija, S. K., 2008. *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social Sciences*
http://www.thefreelibrary.com/_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=183317325

Village Education Committees (VECs) are discussed in this paper. A VEC is the executive body of a school made up of parents and village council members. Assessments of these are reported on from different monitoring institutions.

7. Community-based approaches

Community-based Approaches and Service Delivery: Issues and Options in Difficult Environments and Partnerships
Slaymaker, T. & Christiansen, K. with Hemming, I., 2005. ODI
http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/slaymaker_sdde.pdf

Discussion of service delivery as a community-based approach (CBA), particularly in post-conflict settings, including education. Identifies limits of community participation suggesting the same community group helping to run a school may not be suited to organising water provision and other projects.

Conclusions include:

- a need to differentiate between adopting a CBA and simply implementing projects at the community level
- danger in assuming that because CBAs *can* be used to achieve a range of different objectives that using them *will* achieve those objectives
- CBA objectives are generally empowerment of people and communities, improving efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, building organisational

capacity at local level and strengthening local governance. The author notes that these objectives can be treated as a means to an end or an end in themselves.

8. Additional information

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