International Journal for Social Studies
Available at https://edupediapublications.org/journals
ISSN: 2455-3220
Volume 02 Issue 05
May 2016

Communitisation of Elementary Education in Nagaland: A Case Study of Tseminyu block, Kohima

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Abstract

Elementary education is the foundation for the development of every citizen. It is an important stage for child education development. The government of India has made the elementary education compulsory for every child. Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 stated that every child in the age of group of 6-14 years will be provided eight years of elementary education further strengthen by communitisation of elementary education in Nagaland. Prior to implementation of communitisation of elementary education in the state the government schools in rural areas were in dismal condition. To some extend the scheme has improved the school functions and infrastructure maintenance. Nevertheless, to see further progress in school functioning, teachers, VECs and parents of students need to strengthen their relationship. Since it is a community base endeavour, the competencies of communities toward owning public service need to be strengthened. This paper tries to examine the communitisation of elementary education in Nagaland with special reference to Government Middle School under Tseminyu block. Data were generated from face to face interview with VECs, teachers and visiting sample village /schools.

Key words: Communitisation, Education, Elementary, School

Introduction

One of the major reasons for non-availability or poor quality of material provided by the government such as books, uniform, medicines, food, etc. is often shown to be the centralized distribution and procurement. This leads to, poor quality material, increases possibilities of corruption, delays due to bureaucratic procedures (Pathak, N 2014). Most government public services and facilities suffer from lack of maintenance, inadequate accountability and supervision. The employees entrusted to deliver these

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services have little direct stake, motivation or interest in their delivery (with few exceptions), systemic corruption thus becomes rampant. On the other hand the people for whom these services are meant are not in any way authorized or responsible for their effective delivery (Pathak, N 2014).

"Communitization is a contract between the government and the community. In this contract, the community becomes the owner of the government institutions and assets and is granted powers and resources to manage the employees and maintain institutions. In other words, it is privatization of government-owned public institutions in the hands of the user community. It is 'empowerment, delegation, decentralisation and privatisation at the same time (R.S Pandey 2010). Prior to the implementation of the Communitisation Scheme in Nagaland, public institutions, such as Health, Education and Power were not properly managed. The welfare infrastructure and network of public service delivery institutions were ineffective and dysfunctional. A strongly felt and unmet need was how to revitalize the service delivery network and bring about systemic improvements (R.S Pandey).

The active involvement of the political leadership, bureaucracy, civil society and the church in implementing this innovative and novel approach was a distinguishing feature of this Initiative. The Village Councils and the Development Boards played a supportive role in the new dispensation. The villagers too started making voluntary contributions in cash, kind and/or labor (social work) for developmental activities as well as for the creation of productive and long-lasting physical assets. Members of the village communities were so enthused by the Initiative and its success, they voluntarily participated in: (a) enhancing awareness about the benefits of the Communitization programme; (b) cleaning the school premises and in fencing the compound in their free time and on holidays; (c) conducting tuition classes in the evenings for the poorly performing children; (d) cooking mid-day meals by turns; (e) contributing to vocational activities like carpentry, basket making, etc; (f) preparing educational kits and teaching aids; (g) growing fruits and vegetables in the kitchen gardens attached to the health centres; (h) conducting competitions for the students of all nearby schools; and in (i) in building awareness about important

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issues of common concern like HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, etc.

As a result of the Communitisation Scheme, covering the areas of health, education and utilities (electricity), there was marked improvement in the attendance of teachers and students (to greater than 90%), in enrolment of students (by 50%-500%), in dropout rates (falling to near 0%) and in performance in examination results (with near 100% pass rate). There was also better availability of textbooks, of the required type and in required quantity. With the growing popularity of the communitized schools, many private schools closed down, with a significant percentage of their students shifting to the former (R.S.Pandey).

19th Joint review mission state report also shows positive outcome of the scheme in Nagaland. The report states that "Communitisation of Public Institution and Services Act 2 of 2002, aimed at accelerating the universalization of elementary education, in fact, it predates the SSA. In the rural school that was visited by the team at Dungkye, the community has donated 11 hectares of land for building a high school and have also constructed makeshift classrooms with bamboo and mats. However it was reported by the officials that in spite of strong community involvement, problems of low teacher accountability, absenteeism, appointment of proxy teachers were not uncommon, especially in remote far flung areas. It is expected that with the training of SMC members on RTE and preparation of School Development Plan based on the guidelines prepared by the State Mission Authority, the community will be able to play a more effective role in school management and monitoring".

The total enrolment in the elementary level schools in the year 1996-97 was 2, 24,394. This has increased to 3,84,475 in the year 2002-03 and thereafter there is an increasing trend in enrolment. This increasing trend of enrolment is due to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which was formally launched in the state of Nagaland in the year 2003. Prior to this, the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002 was legislated. As a result of these two programmes, there is sudden increase in the enrolment in the year 2002-03 and in 2007-08, the enrolment stands at 4, 48,014.

Nagaland is the sixteenth state of the Indian Union which lies between 25°6′ N and 27° 4′ N latitude and 93°2′ E and 95°15′ E longitude. The state comprises mostly of high hills bounded by Myanmar and Arunachal Pradesh in the east and state

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of Assam in the west and North and Manipur in the south. It covers a geographical area of 16,579 sq.km with remarkable topographical variation. It has only 8% of the total geographical area under plain adjoining to Assam state. The location of the State is strategically sensitive and political significant as the State share a long international boundary with the Myanmar. The State is also easily assessable from China side. Giving important to the sensitive nature of the border, there is a heavy patrolling by the security force.

Kohima district is the oldest district in Nagaland. It was the chosen seat of the British administration and served as the headquarters of the Naga Hills district under Assam. On the inauguration of the Nagaland state, Kohima town has being institutionalized as the state capital. The district of Kohima initially included the districts of present Kohima, Phek, Dimapur and Peren, which over the year are bifurcated to a separated district upon the attainment of requisite status. Presently Kohima district covers a total geographical area of 1291 km^2 and lies between 93°53′ E to 94°16′ E Longitude and 26°1′N to 25° 31′ N Latitude. The altitude of the district ranges from 600 msl to 3048 msl. The district is divided into four blocks, namely, Kohima, Jakhama, Chiephobozou and Tseminyu respectively. It is further sub divided into eight circle, namely Jakhama circle, Chiephobozou circle, Secu circle Kezocha circle, Tseminyu circle, Kohima circle, kohima unban circle and Kohima rural circle. At present the district has two ADC headquarter viz., Tseminyu and Chiephobozou. Two SDO (C) headquarters viz., Jakhama and Sechu (Zubza) and three EAC headquarters viz., Kezocha, Chogizun and Botsa. As of 2011 census, Kohima district has a population of 270,063. Males constitute 140,118 and females 129945. Kohima has an average literacy rate of 85.58 per cent higher than the National average of 74.04 per cent; male literacy is 89.28 per cent and female literacy is 81.56 per cent.

Study area

Tseminyu block is inhabited by Rengma Naga tribe. Tseminyu town is the headquarter of the Rengma Naga. As per 2011 census, the Rengmas has 50966 populations with 39 recognised villages. Tseminyu block covers geographical area of 329.05 Sq. Km. The block record 70.34 per cent literacy rate with 75.47 per cent male literacy rate and 64.74 female literacy rate.

Methodology

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This paper is primarily based on face to face interview with teachers, Village Education Committees, parents of students and collection of data by visiting sample schools/villages. Secondary data are collected from government records, journals and other publication. 9(Nine) Government Middle Schools were considered for sample.

Discussion

One of the primary objectives of the government for its citizen is to provide basic public welfare services, such as access to adequate and affordable education, health services, transport, electricity and water. Since the Independence the government has set up an extensive network of institutions and administrative infrastructure to fulfil this responsibility such as rural primary and schools, health services, water supply, transport and rural electricity. While this spread and reach is extensive their efficiency and effectiveness in delivery is abysmally low as has been shown in studies conducted for different public services sectors. In order to bring communities into management of public welfare service Mr. R.S Pandey (the then Chief Secretary of the Government of Nagaland) conceptualised the initiative and coined the term "Communitization" as a more effective means of conveying the concept underlying the scheme than "decentralisation". Communitisation of public institution in the state is to improve the situation, the government proposes to share 'management responsibility for such institutions with the community for whom the 'institutions' have been set up.

The concept of Communitisation was introduced in 2002 under the "Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institution and Services Act of 2002". With the enactment of Nagaland Communitisation Act on public institutions and services, the government in phases handed over ownership and management of education, health care, water supply, electricity, tourism and bio-diversity conservation to the communities.

Communitisation contain a unique partnership between the government and the community involving transfer of ownership of public resources and assets, control over service delivery empowerment, decentralization, delegation and building capacities, all with the aim of improving the delivery of public utility systems. Communitisation therefore involves transfer of government assets to the community, empowerment of community through the delegation of governmental power of management and

supervision of day to day functioning of employees to village committees to be managed by committees/boards under the aegis of the Village Council as prescribed by the Act.

It also demand ensuring accountability to government employees posted at the service delivery level to local committees and control of government assets by village committees including the responsibilities for maintenance and augmentation of assets. As such Communitisation is based on triple „T" approach viz:

- Trust the user Committee,
- Train them to discharge their new found responsibilities and,
- Transfer governmental powers and resources in respect of management.

Salient Features of the Nagaland Communitisation Act 2002:

i) Boards or committees constituted under the aegis of Village Councils to own and manage the communitised institutions.

ii) A representative Committee of the community: Members are from the user community … the actual stakeholders.

iii) Assets, powers and management functions of the Government transferred to Committee through MOU.

iv) Responsibility of the Committee: Disbursal of salary, grant of casual leave, control of employees including power to exercise 'No work No pay', maintenance of buildings and assets, purchase of essentials e.g. textbooks, medicines.

v) Responsibility of the Government: Ensure deployment of health workers, provision of funds for salaries and other grants, provision of technical guidance and support.

vi) Government to be in assistive, monitoring and regulatory role.

The concept of communitisation is very different from decentralisation and privatization. communitisation develops partnership between Government and the people through delegation of powers and responsibilities to the community for the management of public institutions, so that the performances of the public utilities improve. Communitisation of public welfare institution means community takes over ownership and management of institutions and services. It also means

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active participation of community in preventive and promotive measures, contributing their share to make institutions to deliver productive service in their villages.

Communitisation of Elementary Education in Nagaland

Communitisation of Elementary Education is one of the components of Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institution and Services Act of 2002, aimed at accelerating the universalization of elementary education. The State education department has framed guidelines for the communitisation of elementary education.

The salient features of communitisation of elementary education are;

i) It empowered the village community to own and to develop the government elementary school(s) in the village as their own.

ii) The Village Education Committee (VEC) was to act as the legal local authority to manage elementary education in the village.

iii) Salary amount for government employees in the school(s) was to be deposited in advance by the government into the VEC Account. The VEC disburses the salary on the first of the following month.

iv) The VEC ensured discipline and regularity of teachers. It empowered to operate the principle of "No work, No pay". Any deduction from the salary to be utilized for the school after observing prescribed formalities.

v) Funds for key purposes such as purchase of text books, furniture, construction and repair of buildings etc. to be deposited by the government into VEC account.

vi) VEC arranged for inter-school utilization of teachers and other resources such as buildings etc within the village schools including the private ones.

vii) VEC was empowered to select and recommend appointment of substitute teachers against long term vacancy.

viii) VEC had the power to grant casual leave, and to recommend appointment, earned leave and other types of leave for school employees.

ix) VEC/community could contribute in cash or kind or

free labour towards development of schools.

x) The VEC engaged local craftsmen, artisans and experts in folk songs and games on voluntary basis or on payment of a token honorarium for teaching in the school. Their services to be recognized in benefitting manner by the community.

xi) Government supervised/supported the VEC and the schools and issued whenever deemed necessary, directives which were binding on the VEC.

xii) Government could withdraw some or all powers from VEC in case of misuse or mismanagement.

Village Education Committee/Common Education Committee (VEC/CEC)

Village Council representative, Chairperson; Village Development Board, Secretary; Head-teacher of the school; 3 parents (at least 1 woman); 2 teacher's representatives; 1 VC member; 1 representative of different churches; 2 members from the village community knowledgeable about education (1 woman); sub inspector of the school of the area; head-teacher of Government Middle School or senior most teacher of the school member secretary; other members can also be co-opted.

Powers and functions of Village Education Committee (VEC)

Administration:

i) Ensure regular and effective running of school.

ii) Ensure discipline and regularity of teachers by withholding pay or enforcing 'No work, No pay'.

iii) Recommendations in transfer and retention of teachers

iv) Construct and maintain school buildings

v) Compile and furnish annual reports of schools.

Academic:

i) Ensure universal enrolment and retention in school children up to the age of 14 or class VIII.

ii) Ensure daily running of classes and implementation of annual plans.

iii) Make available free school uniforms, free text books and other learning materials.

Financial:

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i) Receive grants from government, generate resources and operate on education fund.
ii) Disburse monthly salary of teachers and other staff, deduct salary not due based on a 'No work, No Pay' principle.
iii) Maintain proper accounts of income and expenditure, assets of the school
iv) Get accounts audited and bring out authentic report of the same.

Result

Tseminyu block has 37 (thirty seven) Government Primary Schools, 9 (Nine) Government Middle Schools, 7 (Seven) and 1 (one) Government Higher Secondary School. For research 9 (nine) Government Middle Schools were selected for sample collection. Name of Government Middle Schools are; Logwensunyu, Rengmapani, Rumesinyu, Tesophenyu (Upper), Yikhannu, Sendenyu, Tseminyu, Kandinu and Tsosinyu. The enrolment of students in elementary section is not very encouraging. In 2011 the total enrolment was 2230 which has decrease to 1798 in 2014.

Analysing various field report, it can be stated that there is no uniform agreement on the impact of communitisation of elementary education. The responses differ from village to village and from individual to individual. Some of the positive results have been discussed below;

Attendance: Prior to the implementation of this scheme, teacher's attendance in the schools was very weak. In some school it is learned that the government appointed teachers never come to school instead they sent proxy teacher. The study shows that out of nine sample school, 3 (Three) schools shows above 90 per cent attendance in 2014, 2 (two) shows 80 to 90 per cent attendance and 4 (four) school shows above 75 attendance. This according to VECs has shown tremendous improvement in teacher's attendance. The number of proxy teacher has tremendously decreased. The success of huge teachers attendance can be attribute to "No work, No pay".

Sense of ownership: The level of community participation in school management and maintenance has increase to huge margin. According to VECs and Teachers of the school, in time of needs villagers voluntarily come forward to help school. There are some school which has never been repair prior to implementation of communitisation scheme. The study

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shows that there is a tremendous improves in school infrastructure.

The research also finds some setback in communitisation of elementary education;

i) There is a general feeling that VECs are not competent enough to handle their responsibility.

ii) Corruption, mismanagement and authoritative by VECs caused misunderstanding. Some VECs members remain in the post even after stipulated tenure.

iii) There are some schools run by single teacher and shortage of subject teachers is a common phenomenon in most of the school. In two of sample school, there is no school assistant, PET and computer instructor.

iv) VECs members controlling teachers sometime caused misunderstanding.

v) There is no impact assessment on learning performances.

vi) Government facilities such as free text book, uniform, school maintenance fund never reach in time.

Teaching communities are of the opinion that if the power goes in the hand of wrong person than the scheme will be paralysed. In one of the sample school professionalism of VEC members is lacking. Since it is a community base endeavour, personality clash / egoismwithin the committees hamper the progress of the school. In spite of all hardship face by the famers, they wish to send their children to nearby unban centre for schooling. This is a clear picture of how schools have been functioning in rural areas.

Despite of some weakness, the overall performance of the scheme is worth appreciation. The scheme has place Nagaland State in global platform for its success story. The venture paid off with Nagaland being selected for United Nations Public Service Awards in 2008 for Communitisation programme in recognition of its innovative use of rich social capital. Moreover, the UNICEF's current International issue on the State of the World's Children, has also devoted a full page on "Imagine Nagaland". Nagaland is the only State, which has featured this way in the publication. The State Government of Nagaland was also conferred the United Nations Public Service Awards for Communitisation

programme in recognition of its innovative use of rich social capital on June 23, 2008 at New York. And Nagaland is the only award winner in Asia Pacific region in the category of fostering participation in policy-making decisions through innovative mechanism and one among the 12 awardee selected globally in different areas of public services. At the grassroots level, Government Middle School Tesophenyu, was adjusted best government school in sub division level as well as in district level for increasing enrolment of students which is an indication good infrastructure, efficient administration and teachers.

Conclusion

Communitisation of elementary education is a virtuous initiative by State government and has witness improvement inschool infrastructure, teacher's attendance and management of schools in rural areas. Nevertheless, agency that is responsible for implementing the scheme should visit schools to give a reality check and review the guidelines periodically for better result. Misunderstanding over, school functioning, management of funds and midday meals will hamper the smooth functioning of the schools. To achieve the objectives of the scheme, misconception has to be remove within the committee and teachers. Since it is a community base scheme transparency and accountability of VECs in fund utilisation is a must.

For better understanding of communitisation and to create awareness among the teachers, communitisation scheme has been introduced in B.Ed courses in Nagaland. However, theoretical understanding of the scheme and applied aspect doesn't go down well in reality because most of the VEC members are ignorant of the guidelines of the scheme. On the other hand, teaching community too need to respect the decision of VECs whether they are educated or uneducated. Precautionary measures should be taken to avoid outside influence over the function and management of schools. The practices of keeping proxy teacher should not be encouraged. Parents in rural areas prefer to send their child in private schools in nearby urban centre is a clear indication of poor performance of village government schools. Decreasing student's enrolment is a sign of mismanagement of schools. It is a serious matter and need thorough assessment. Setting up of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and conducting regular parents-teachers interaction can improve the functions of the schools.

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