

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF TANDO ALLAHYAR, SINDH, PAKISTAN: A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Education is one of the key indicators which play a significant role in the growth and development as well as prosperity in the country. It makes the nation socio-economically enriched. Like other developing countries, the situation of education in Pakistan is not encouraging and satisfactory. In the Human Development Index in terms of educational achievement, Pakistan ranks 150th of 189 ranked countries. However, provincial governments have been focusing on different aspects of the education sector to achieve success in Education. Accordingly, the Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-2018 was composed by the Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh. This plan was made to revitalized community participation in schools. Additionally, the National Educational Policy 2017 document emphasized the need for community participation. This descriptive research was conducted in the district Tando Allahyar, Sindh. A sample of 150 teachers was taken from Government schools. This research investigated the objectives set by SESP 2014-18, that is whether community participation is revitalized or not, and what role of the community has in government schools.

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This research will address the key findings of the research of the role is played by School management committees, the role of parents of students in school activities and raising funds for the school. At the end of the paper, the conclusion is drawn and recommendations are presented for the Educators, which may contribute to improving the education.

Key words: *Education, Community Participation, National Education Policy, Sindh Education Sector Plan, Government Schools, Career Counselling, Educational Infrastructure, Decision Making, School Development Meetings, Sindh Education Reform Plan Pillars, and Evaluation of the Plan.*

Introduction

Education plays an important role in community-empowerment, economy and human capital development of any country. Education increases the economic growth of the society as well as the usefulness of the individual and thus produces a skilled human resource to become part of the work force for leading the economy. Apart from other developing nations, the state of affairs of education in Pakistan is unfavorable. In the Human Development Index in terms of educational achievement, Pakistan ranks 150th of 189 ranked countries. This ranking shows that the education sector is performing poorly. This is one of the consequences of low enrolment rates at the primary level, student dropouts, teacher and student absenteeism, gender inequality, lack of awareness, lack of trained and professional teachers, inadequate facilities, poor infrastructure of schools and lack of parental involvement all of which contribute to the poor performance of this sector. Because of this situation, over the decades the Government of Pakistan has been revising educational plans and National Educational Policies from time to time and also taking initiatives to improve the quality of education and student achievement outcomes at various levels. In the meantime, lack of community participation in school activities may be considered as one of the key factors influencing education progress negatively. Accordingly, the Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-2018 was assembled by the Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh. In conformity with this plan, in order to strengthen situation of accountability, governance and management in education, a range of initiatives will be introduced. At all levels of provincial hierarchy, i.e. district, tehsil level, effective measures will be taken to ensure availability of necessary resources as well the understanding of decision makers of their roles and responsibilities. In this regard, a professional management group

of officials will be deputed for the revitalization of School-Management Committees (SMCs). As a result of the National Education Policy (NEP) implementation, at the school-level, the decision making process will be possible through the decentralization of education. Apparently, School Management Committees contribute significantly in improving decision-making and problem solving. Likewise, a NEP 2017 was formulated after the consultation of all stakeholders of education of the country. This policy emphasized fixing the minimum standards of distinguishing features to improve the quality of education. This plan of action also highlighted that quality of formal and non-formal education programmes will be improved. In addition, strengthening local, district organizational and management structures as well as mobilizing the community for community involvement in teaching and in the learning process. Moreover, mobilizing the political will and enhancing the role of mass media for the purpose of educational development as well as improving and strengthening school and community relationships are therefore among the main objectives of the National Education Policy 2017. The purpose this study of the study was to investigate these objectives set by SESP 2014-18 and the National Education Policy 2017 (that is whether community participation is revitalized or not) and what role of community is presented in government schools. The argument is that communities can contribute to improved service delivery because they can better observe its quality and have a direct incentive to improve it. Moreover, their contributions can help to increase resources. Resources can be targeted most effectively towards individual priorities in schools, if an effective process of participatory planning is used involving community participation. This may take various forms, but should result in a prioritized list of improvements discussed and agreed upon by the school, the pupils and the community.

Then, as resources become available, the priorities can be addressed. To be effective, this process should be designed in such a way that school and community members can be taken through it step by step, identifying the actual needs and at the same time building capacity to eliminate them.

Therefore, this paper will address the existing literature and research question along with the objectives and an analysis of the educational policy with key findings of the data. At the end of the paper recommendations and conclusions are drawn.

Research Question and Objective

What is the role of community participation in the Government schools of Tando Allahyar?

This research question was investigated and the following objective was achieved.

Objective: To analyze the role of community participation in government schools.

Significance of the Study

This study provides an understanding of the notion of community participation as it emerges in the context of education. This area is under consideration by various scholars but with the coverage that has been absent or is marginal in existing literature. Importantly, this study investigates community participation as planned in SESP 2014-18 and also presents a policy perspective under the National Educational Policy 2017. These findings can be used by the Education and Literacy departments of Sindh and other non-Governmental organizations which are interested in improving education through community participation. The findings of this study illustrate the participation of the community in school activities and an analysis of National Educational Policy 2017 as stated above in the introduction. Furthermore, these findings are also addressed to education stakeholders, providing information about community participation in Government schools of Tando Allahyar.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research approach was implemented for this study. As “Descriptive Research” by Best 1970 is cited by Cohen (2007) this type of research, studies the conditions, phenomena or relationships that exist and the practices that prevail; opinions, beliefs and attitudes that are held, and any progression that is happening. At times, it is also concerned with the ‘how’ of what is or what exists is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected the present condition or event. Primary and Secondary sources of data were used for data collection. Primary data was collected from the participants by conducting a survey. However, secondary data was collected from research articles, journals and official reports. A sample of 150 teachers, both male and female was taken from the government schools in order to collect the required data. Then the computer application “Statistical Package for Social

Sciences” version 20 was used for analyzing the data, and frequency tables and charts were generated. These are discussed in the data analysis section.

Overview of the Basic Concept Regarding this Study

All concepts in the literature review and key findings of this research provide sound knowledge in detail, about the role played by the community in schools. However, before going into the literature review and the key findings of this study, it is important to highlight some key terms:

Community Participation

The term “communities” refers to shared values: social, religious and moral. Similarly, Mitsue (1999) holds that communities can be defined by features that the members share such as traditions, culture, language, races and class. Thus, Community participation refers to the sharing of ideas, resources and labour.

Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-2018

Sindh Education Sector Plan 2014-2018 is the first Provincial Sector Plan for education, which was launched by Nisar Ahmed Khuhro. This plan is made up of four major Sindh Education Reform Plan Pillars (Access, Quality, Governance and Public Finance Management). Curriculum, teacher and student attendance, retention, community participation in terms of SMC are also described in this plan.

The National Education Policy 2017

The National Education Policy 2017 was launched by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan. This official document is composed of 19 Chapters. The following are some of the key areas of this policy:

- Capacity Building of Education Personnel
- Curriculum Reforms and Standard Setting
- Literacy and Lifelong learning
- Early Childhood Education
- Educational Governance and Community Involvement

This policy emphasized capacity building and skill development of educators, setting standards of education, increasing the progress of literacy rate and community involvement in the education and school activities.

Active participation of community and strengthening school and community relationship are considered as the objectives of the Policy.

School Management Committees (SMCs)

School management committees are built upon the mutual agreement and participation of school faculty and parents of students. Lohana, Taherani, and Jhatial (2015) describe the SMC structure as: the General secretary of SMC at school level is the head teacher who formulates the school management committee by calling general body meetings and also arranges the election of the school management committee and is responsible for running the day to day non-academic school improvement activities via participation of the decision making by the members of the SMC. Basically, the SMC is formed for engaging the community members in the meetings for school development.

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to analyze the role of community participation in government schools. A key purpose is to get the opinion of teachers regarding community participation and the activities of the school regarding the control of financial resources, career counseling for students and decision making.

Literature Review

There is a wide range of relevant literature about the aspects of 'Community Participation' in the development of different sectors. The selected body of literature is the most relevant and focuses on the concepts of ideas and theories of teachers, and schools and Community participation in education. This study applies to the role of community participation as a specific situation in the government schools of Tando Allahyar.

Perspectives of Community Participation in Education

The idea of community participation is the most discussed aspect of school-community relations in third world development (Midgley, 1986). In many developed and developing countries communities are contributing to educational service delivery because they can better observe its quality and have a direct incentive to improve it. Participation of the community is the theoretical and successful model for the effectiveness of the school management committees (Lohana, Taherani, & Jhatial, 2015). SMCs can be more effective when the community participation is greater.

School faculties require support and assistance of parents of students because in most cases, leaders in the community are also the most active parents. Active parents do not only do what they are told to do by faculties. Instead, they demand more transparency in decision making, which increases the flow of information between actors in increase in transparency of actions (Winkler, 1989). Moreover, community contributions can help to increase resources and funds.

The Concept of Community Participation

The idea of Participation has turned out to be standard in contemporary discussions for the development of its characteristics. Research suggests that the concept of community participation is practiced to address a range of development problems extensively (Fitrah, 2010). Community participation brought successful results through various project implementations by different international and national government organizations, development institutions of developing countries (Michener, 1998). Cohen (1977) and his colleague stated that 'Community Participation' basically involves all associated stakeholders of the effective decision making processes in order to achieve programme objectives and evaluate programmes against each set objective. From these studies, it can be concluded that collaboration and coordination of society members in problem solving is necessary, and also so for the adequacy of decision making. Additionally, this participation is practiced in such a way that no participant of decision making is a person who may influence any decision (Bauch and Goldring, 1998).

In addition, Community Participation in education is viewed as a way of increasing resources and improving accountability of schools to the community they serve, ensure a more cost-effective use of resources and, importantly, be responsive to local needs. As a result, it intends to improve equitable access, retention, quality and performance of schooling (Kambuga, 2013). These are all areas which impact on schools but can be improved by engaging community members in the schools. This engagement can also monitor school resources and improve accountability.

According to Mitsue (1999), community involvement in education improves the instruction process, consequently pupils learn more quickly.

Mitsue also argued that community participation is important because of the following reasons (1999):

Maximize Limited Resources

When resources are limited, communities themselves can be resources by providing local knowledge for their children. Engaging parents in the research and in the process of research and data collection can reveal to them reasons that contribute to lower enrolment and absenteeism, and poor performance in academics.

Developing Relevant Curriculum

Community participation also helps in formulating new curriculum as well as collecting learning materials that reflect children's everyday lives. When children

use textbooks and other materials that illustrate their own lives in their community, they can understand the relationship between what they are learning with what they have already learnt.

Promoting Girls Education

The education of girls can be promoted by engaging the community in academic and non-academic activities in the schools. Such involvement can be useful for investigating factors that prevent girls from going to school. After that, the community can be mobilized to believe that the educating girls can foster economic productivity and improve family health and nutrition.

Creating and Nourishing Community-School Partnership

Communities can participate by sending respected community members, such as tribe heads, religious leaders and socialists to the schools to talk about community history, customs, traditions and culture, which have been historically celebrated in the community. Such practices can build good community-school partnerships.

Likewise, community participation not only increases resources but also utilizes resources effectively. This may foster the performance of schools.

In this regard, Emmanuel (2015) with his colleagues presented two main aspects:

i. Community Participation and Educational Infrastructure Planning

In principle community participation is expected to shift decision-making closer to local actors and stakeholders to improve access to services including education; the argument goes that this will create a more equitable society. The community plays a key role in planning and decision making in school activities.

ii. Community Participation and Educational Infrastructure Management

The community contributes significantly to the management of the educational infrastructure by providing physical resources such as infrastructure material as well as funds. In addition, communities are also encouraged to participate in the development of schools through all phases including operation, construction and planning.

Community Participation in the Perspective of National Educational Policy 2017

In the minds of academics, the concept of community mobilization and community participation plays a vital role. However, lack of coordination between the public and the private sector, lack of community and parents of student's participation are the major issues in our educational governance and

management. Therefore, there is a need to sensitize and mobilize the community to strengthen the parent-teacher and community relationship. Community participation in the curricular and extra co-curricular activities can contribute to improving the education.

In short, these aspects suggest that the community can contribute significantly to Educational Infrastructure planning as well as Educational Infrastructure Management. Sharma and her team discuss community involvement in education and its importance for many reasons. It aids the ability to identify local educational problems and to develop strategies to resolve problems that impede access and retention and compromise quality. Community participation in the life of the local school also helps to ensure the application of the curriculum and its adequate delivery. Besides, it is an effective component in monitoring the process and educational outcomes at multiple levels.

Data Analysis and Findings

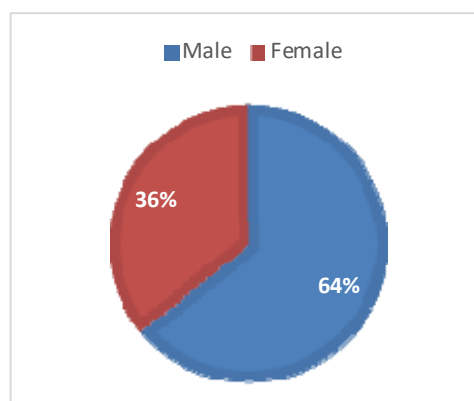
As per the objectives and research question of the study, a descriptive statistics were applied in order to calculate the reliability scale percentage of the respondents, Cross tabulation frequencies and mean score were applied and the SPSS V.20 were used to generate the charts.

In this regard the Table No.1 shows the number of male and female respondents who participated in the survey.

Table No.1 Respondents Participated

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	96	64.0	64.0	64.0
Valid Female	54	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table.1 shows that the majority of the respondents was male which is 64 % of the total respondents. The remaining 36% were female respondents. These percentages can also be seen in the Pie Chart.1

Pie Chart No.1

The responses of the participants for the different items of the community participation are tabulated below:

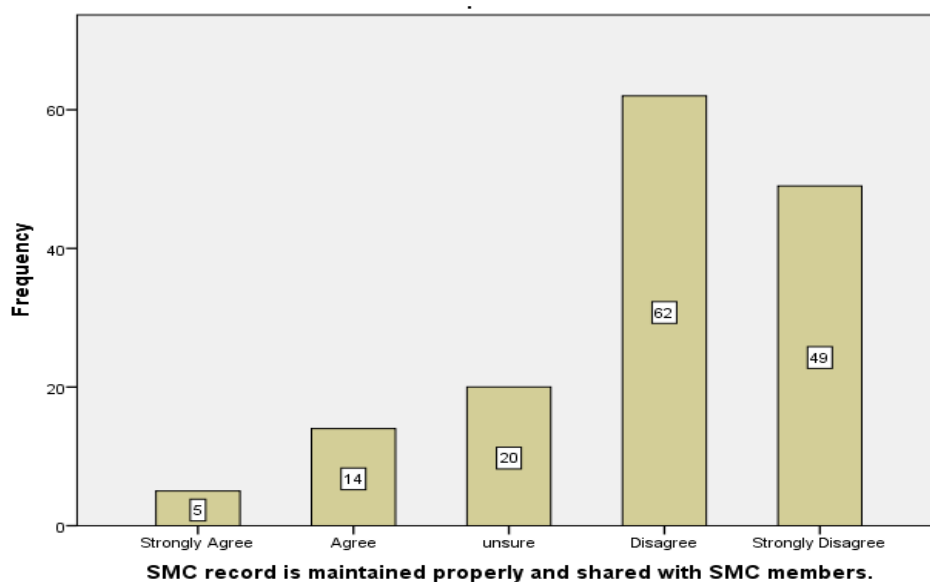
Table No.2 shows that the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement “ SMC record is maintained properly and shared with SMC members”. It means that the SMC record is not maintained and also not shared with the community members who are the key members of the SMC. This may be inferred that Community members have no interest in participating in the SMC activities. These frequencies are graphically represented in the Bar chart No.1.

Table No.2 SMC Record Is Maintained Properly and Shared with SMC Members.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	5	3.3	3.3	3.3
Agree	14	9.3	9.3	12.7
Valid unsure	20	13.3	13.3	26.0
Disagree	62	41.3	41.3	67.3
Strongly Disagree	49	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

From the findings in this table, it can be seen that only 3.3% and 9.3% of the respondents Strongly agreed and agreed.

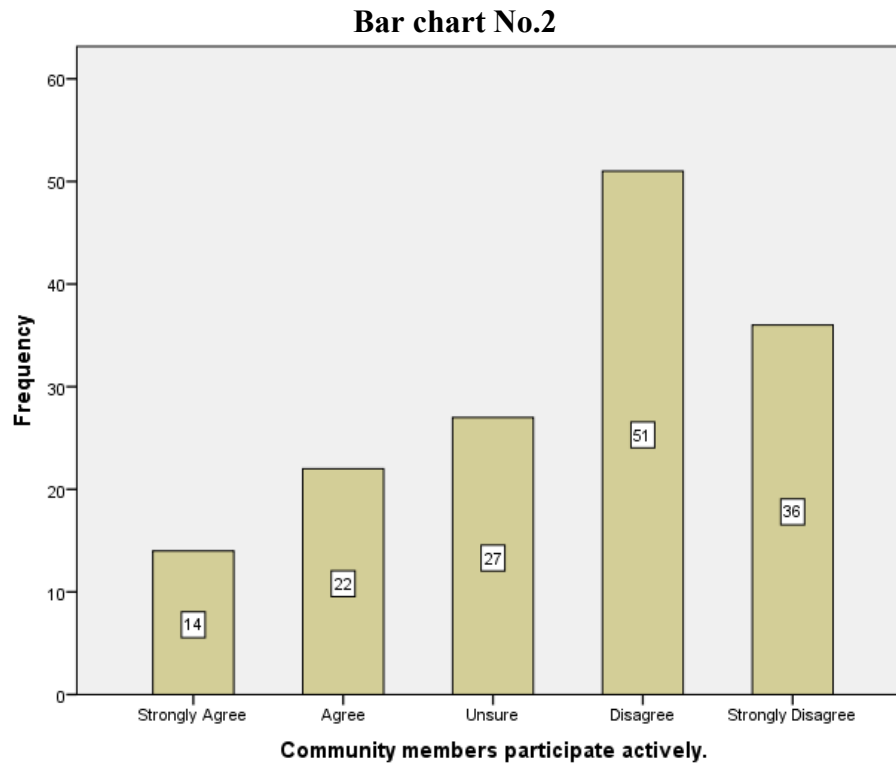
Bar chart No. 1



The Table No.3 and Bar Chart.2 of Item community members participate actively in school activities” showed that only 9.3% of the respondents strongly agreed and 14.7% agreed. However, 34% and 24 % disagreed and strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that Community members are not active in school activities. Hence, there is no community participation.

Table No.3 Community Members Participate Actively in School Activities.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	9.3	9.3	9.3
Agree	22	14.7	14.7	24.0
Unsure	27	18.0	18.0	42.0
Disagree	51	34.0	34.0	76.0
Strongly Disagree	36	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

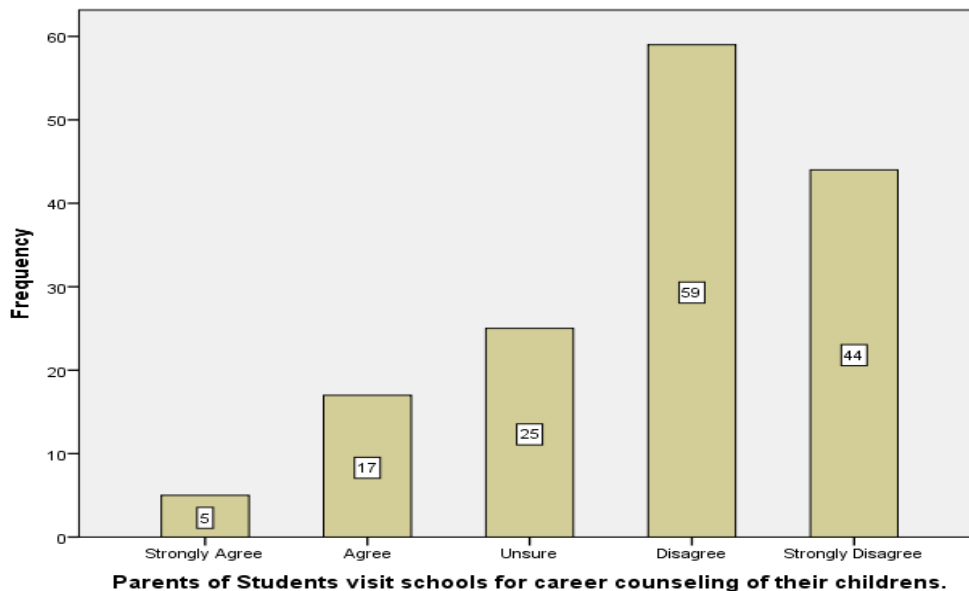


The greatest response of the participants to this item was disagree, which is 39.3% of the total respondents. However, only 11.3% and 3.3 % of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the parents of the students visit schools for career counselling of their children. The remaining 16.7% respondents were not sure about this item of community participation. Those percentages of the responses are well presented in Table No.4 and Bar chart No.3. Such findings to this item show that parents of students from the community rarely visit schools for the career counselling of children. Hence, community-school relations are not good.

Table No.4 Parents of Students Visit Schools for Career Counselling of Their Children.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	5	3.3	3.3	3.3
Agree	17	11.3	11.3	14.7
Unsure	25	16.7	16.7	31.3
Disagree	59	39.3	39.3	70.7
Strongly Disagree	44	29.3	29.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Bar chart No.3

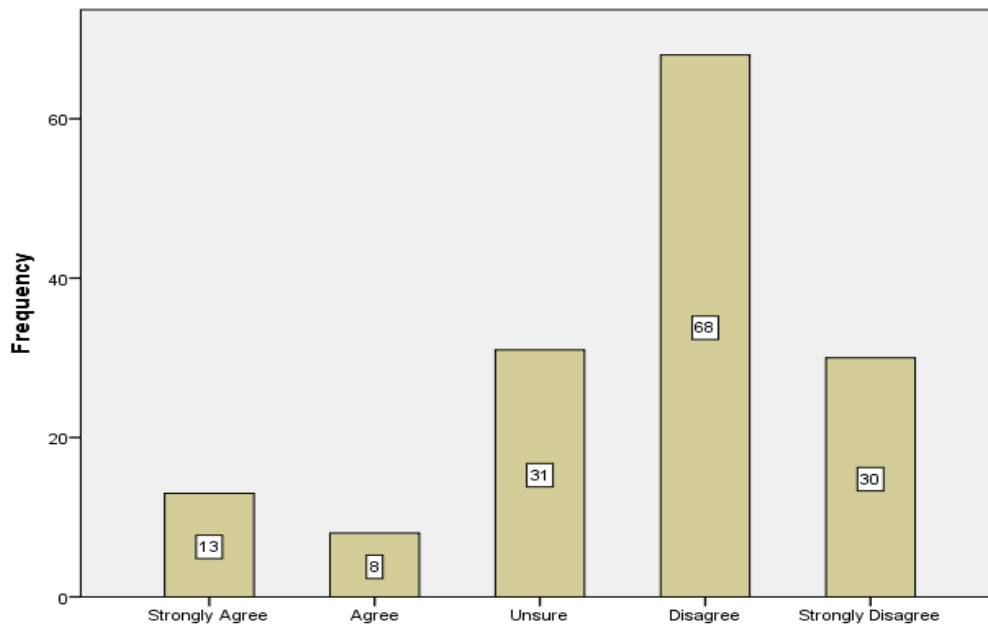


The findings of Table.No.5 and Barchart.4 show that the majority (45.3 %) of the participants disagreed with the item that members of the community are invited to meetings regarding school development. However, only a negligible 5.3 % which is negligible. Furthermore, 20 %, 20.7 % and 8.7 % of the total participants strongly disagree, were unsure and strongly agreed respectively. In this regard, 8.7% is a disappointing result regarding the participation of community members at school meetings.

Table No.5 Community Members are Invited to School Development Meetings.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	13	8.7	8.7	8.7
Agree	8	5.3	5.3	14.0
Unsure	31	20.7	20.7	34.7
Disagree	68	45.3	45.3	80.0
Strongly Disagree	30	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Bar chart No.4



Community members are invited in schools development meetings.

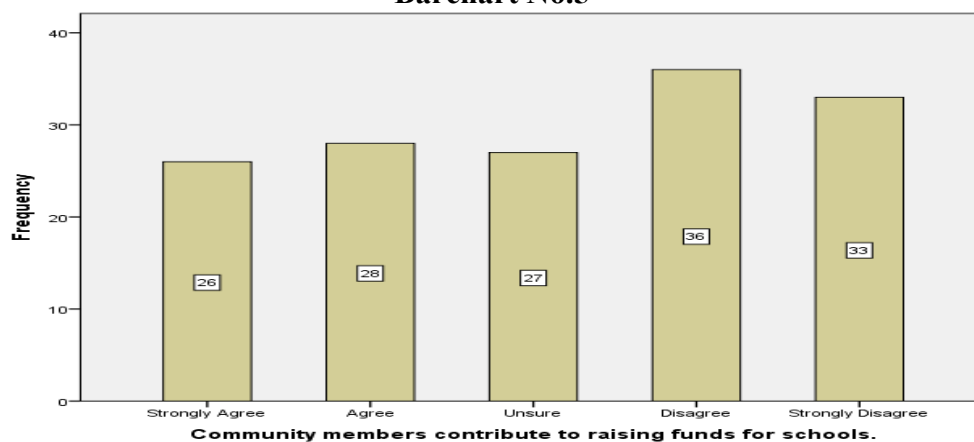
In many developing countries communities contribute to generating funds for school development. For this purpose the opinion of teachers were obtained regarding the contribution of community members in generating funds for schools. These responses are tabled and graphically represented in Table.No.6 and Barchart.5. The findings depict that 17.3 % strongly agreed and 18.7 % agreed that community members contribute in raising funds for schools. However, 22 %

strongly disagreed and 24% of the total respondents disagreed. The reminder of the respondents was not sure about the said situation.

Table No.6 Community Members Contribute to Raising Funds for Schools.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	26	17.3	17.3	17.3
Agree	28	18.7	18.7	36.0
Unsure	27	18.0	18.0	54.0
Disagree	36	24.0	24.0	78.0
Strongly Disagree	33	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Barchart No.5



The interpretation of tabulated and graphical data leads to the conclusion that the SESP -2014-18 objective regarding revitalizing SMC for 2014-18 and engaging the community was not achieved in government schools. The majority of the survey participants did not agree that the community is engaged in schools or contributed to any SMC meetings by raising funds for schools, as Community members were not invited to school development meetings. Furthermore, parents of the students do not visit schools for their children's career counselling. Overall, the community is not playing any role in government schools and therefore the function of SMC is not satisfactory.

Recommendations

The above key findings of the study helped to formulate the following recommendations for the Educators, Education Department, government and non-government educational organizations.

- The stakeholders of the schools should be engaged in all the academic and non-academic activities of the Schools.
- School administrations should invite stakeholders and try to involve them in SMCs.
- Community should be involved in identifying community resources relevant to the schools and efforts should be made to utilize them in co-operation with the community.
- Social mobilization and awareness is needed so that the community can be involved so that the objectives in SESP-2014-18 and National Education Policy 2017 could be achieved on time.
- School faculty should devote their time to create awareness in the community about its role in the management of schools.

Conclusion

To sum up, the literature review rationalises the importance of community participation in schools. Community participation should significantly build relations with schools, helps in decision-making, raising funds and utilizing resources, and increases students' enrolments. However, in government schools of Tando Allahyar, Sindh, community participation is negligible and the SMC's role is not satisfactory. The findings of this study provide evidence that community members were not invited to academic and non-academic school activities. This shows that SESP 2014-18 and the National Educational Policy 2017 has failed to engage the community and revitalize SMCs. The serious implementation of the Sindh Education sector plan 2014-18 as well as National Educational Policy 2017 could engage communities in schools that provide outcomes in education. In this regard, educators and policy makers should work upon the implementation of such policy, to ensure that the process of monitoring and evaluation of plans be fair.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This descriptive research was limited to selected schools of district Tando Allahyar. Hence, it shows the contemporary situation of the role played by the

community in government schools. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized for other districts of Sindh. This study was carried out only with the opinion of teachers of government schools so further study is needed in which teachers, community and students may be involved to investigate in detail their situations. Because of these reasons, these findings are only applicable to the government schools of Tando Allahyar.

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