

AN IDEAL CLASSROOM IN AN IDEAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Abstract

This will be based on observance through experience, knowledge sharing, and articles understanding the strong requirement for bringing a POSITIVE CHANGE in Community schools across the globe. The focus will be on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system addressed by various factors. This case study will involve the study of "As is" System and a proposal for "To be" System. The paper will be focusing on methods, and approaches to achieve the desired results.

Keywords: Community School, Ideal, classroom

1. BASIC STRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL & SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Scholars have defined the definition of school in several ways. Some called it an institution, which provides a learning environment for the learners, while others suggest this as a place to learn, for bringing improvement and success in life for a better career. It is a place which not only teaches facts and academic skills but also signifies discipline, social and communication skills, leadership and many other things too. Philosopher Freire describes the schooling system as a model of banking education (Freire, Paulo (2006) [1970], pp;105-117) in which there are two characters, a teacher as the data source, while the students as a data storage bank. So according to him whatever the students receive from their teachers, in the form of knowledge, they memorize it and then repeat the same. This is the 'banking' concept of education, which allows students to extend only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits. The primary purpose of education and schooling is to teach students the ways of sensible, realistic and practical ways in their current environment (Dewey, 1838). The role of schooling was to equip individuals with the skills necessary to participate in the social life in the community and to change the nature of the social order as needed or desired (Counts, 1978, p;5). Another philosopher (Alder, 1982) suggested 3 objectives of schooling: development of citizenship, personal growth of self-improvement and occupational development. Expanding the pragmatic purpose of school, Demarais and LeCompte (1995) outlined four major purposes of school, like, intellectual purpose such as development of mathematical and reading skills; political purposes such as the assimilation of immigrants; economic purposes like job preparation; and social purposes such as the development of social and moral responsibility.

In a School, there are three main greatest components, that are, the educators who are not only responsible for facilitating the students to formulate education but also act as motivators to enhance the student's approach towards learning (Turmo, Christophersen & Elstad, 2013, p.128). The second main component is the students, who must adopt a positive approach towards learning, to gain the maximum amount of knowledge. The third and the most important, integral part of any school is the updated curriculum, which will prepare the child(student) to participate as a 'good', 'productive' and 'educated' member of the society, in future (Bloch et al, 2006. P.4).

There are many types of schools, but over here, will focus mainly on Community schools. In a traditional view, the school is limited primarily to the facilitation of academic learning for children and youth. But the community school suggests quite a different approach to education. These schools help both youth and adults in serving the various community and social problems. A group of people living in the same place or having particular characteristics in common is known as Community. Community is a part of society; whereas education is the counterpart of both. The community schools are funded publically as well as through the government too. There is more starvation due to government funding, as such reliance is more on publically generated funds. These schools are the provision of diverse educational services to meet the varied learning needs of community residents of all ages.

Over here, the example of community schools of Pakistan, which are working overseas, in different countries, can be quoted. These schools arrange special evening classes for overaged Pakistani students to provide the provision of educational services. On weekends, they do special classes for the kids of foreign-based Pakistani families to learn their national language. These efforts make the community more attractive to both current and prospective residents (Decker, 1992, P.7). This shows that to bring a change in a community needs a proper, well-designed community educational system.

2. SCHOLASTIC DEFINITION ABOUT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Community schools must reflect at least the five core features for a complete definition. (Melaville, & Shaw (2003)

A core instructional program led by qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum and high standards and expectations for students. There is a high motivation for students engaged in learning both in school and community settings during and after school. There is a recognition of physical, mental and emotional needs for learners and their families and adequately addressed. Sense of mutual respect, effective collaboration among learners, teachers and parents. Community school strive for best efforts to engage the community, promote a safe climate, that is fully supportive and respectful and at the same time connects students to a broader learning community and opportunities. The community schools are designed uniquely in particular time for a particular place (community) However the core principles as defined by (Featuring Design Principles Potapchuk 2013, p. 5) have, developing a shared vision with accountability for results, Expectations for everyone, Respect for diversity, steer assets of entire community and prioritization for local decision making.

The overall premise is that “every child and every school is capable of excellence given the right conditions for learning” (Melaville et al., p. 5). In addition to health and social service agencies and youth development priorities, the (Melaville et al. (2011) strategy include housing, employment, transportation, public safety and municipal services.

These principles serve as the foundation for an expansive and compelling vision and conceptualization based on citizen participation on behalf of children. Community schools are hubs for multiple partnerships that connect schools with families, community leaders, and relevant community organizations.

3. VALUES BEHIND THE PRACTICE

A school should have a system to monitor and control the applicability of Rules for all in a transparent manner (Bootery, M.1990). Similarly, the punishment should not be biased. Freedom to defend and explain the self-rights should be there. The same must be in agreement with all stakeholders.

The learning should be an active interactive process covering all the social needs, must establish a guideline and should not reflect a dominance by teachers. In brief, it should be child-centred and focused. This will bring maturity in the system. An example of the same is the difference between the culture of the teacher and students. This can create a considerable gap in the learning curve of the student.

Freedom for children to select subjects of their key subjective interests concerning their nature supported by teachers accordingly. The cultural transmission model must prevail to adjust the perception of each student. We cannot force a learner to adapt the perception of the teacher and will ultimately lead to failures.

To make a student, to learn and align properly, a process to ensure understanding, motivation and appreciation should exist. The same should be aligned and periodically reviewed for updates as required. The school must be a center for changing and bringing a positive change in society. Similarly, the student is a receptor of values taught and hence enhance their learning. They should not just be a passive receptor through transmitted knowledge. Every student has creative qualities which need to be gauged properly.

4. VALUES BEHIND THE ACTUAL PRACTICE IN THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Contrary to the basic requirements as laid down above our analysis reveals that there is no system as such to monitor and control the rules in a transparent manner equally applicable to teachers and students. Teachers are delivering the subjects based on their concepts and philosophy without quantifying the mistakes and learning from past experiences. Self-analysis is lacking at all levels. Irrespectively the teachers centered approach without self and external audits is prevailing in abundance. Students are not motivated or even allowed to express their thoughts and creativity.

5. CURRICULUM

The curriculum is a definition of what is to learn (Ross 1999, p.8). It is widely divided into three distinct categories, namely, formal, informal, and a hidden curriculum. The Formal Curriculum may be defined as the set of instructions that are designed and formulated by the education team of the school itself. This is purely based on the education system, governed by the educational policies of the country. In contrast to the same, the Informal curriculum can be defined as the practical education that a school delivers to its learners. Finally, the hidden curriculum has implicit instructions plans of the teachers which normally comes out without the purpose of delivering it. Marsh (1997) quote Seddon, that the hidden curriculum involves the learning attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and assumptions often expressed as rules, rituals and regulations (p, 35) which students achieve in school through their daily interaction, by leaving both negative and positive effects on learners and mediators.

The learning opportunities for community schools can be designed by innovative approaches that expand before, during, and after school (Dr Carrie Paechter, 1999). This requires strategies as a core component to use for increasing learning opportunities for teachers and students. The learning opportunities proposed by the school, are for everyone, however, they need to be utilized by a proper orientation. Every community school design a curriculum according to the moral, social and ethical values of the community living around it. In most of the community schools, there isn't any proper procedure of bringing a change in the curriculum with the passing by years. The old methodologies and systems are still being practised by the administrations and teachers. We can say that there is no periodic review system. The learning opportunities can be self-created by the teachers too to organize a particular learning situation. The core of the curriculum should explain the requirements of the student's learning (Dr Carrie Paechter, 1999). The same should be aligned with the thoughts of social groups.

In most of the cases, there is a considerable gap between curriculum design and execution. Normally a gap of 10-20% may exist due to variations in the system. While designing the curriculum the expected gap is intended, and during execution, unintentional gaps may arise. Eisner (1985) refers to 'null curriculum' as those aspects of the curriculum which are not part of the intended curriculum but they can make a significant contribution to the tradition, which can lead to positive expectations with predictability and sustainability. It appears remote that even with the transition into the child-centred approach, existing teachers will be able to differentiate between the roles of students and society.

If we go through the cultural values of Pakistan, still there are so many tribes who do not want their 'females' to be educated or just restrict them up to a certain level of education (Pappas G, Agha A, Rafique G, 2008; 8.). Studies suggest that the root causes of this gender gap are multifaceted and complex. The resistance behind this can be their rigid mindset due to social, economic, political and religious issues. Poverty, the lower status of women in society, and socio-cultural issues, coupled with poor access to schools, security, transportation, and lack of female teachers might be some other reasons too. So in such above conditions, the irrelevance of the curriculum may cause accumulative failures and gaps between the curriculum executors and the students. In most of the community schools, due to the mix breed students, the aims of the curriculum cannot be achievable. There may be several aspects which stop the school administration to acquire the desired goals. The pressure of parents, their ethical values, religion, culture, financial issues may be the reasons of hurdles in achieving aims of the curriculum (Cynthia B. Lloyd / Cem Mete / Zeba A. Sathar, no.3, April 2005).

6. PEDAGOGY

The role of the teachers is the most important part of any school. In addition to the responsibility of communicating education and knowledge as per curriculum to the students, they assist in personality development meeting the social need of the society. Pedagogy is the practice of teaching framed and informed by a shared and structured body of knowledge (Pollard, 2014, page 267). Positive behaviour support(PBS) and Functional behavioural assessment(FBS) of teachers are two significant concepts that are

important for improving the quality of efforts to educate children. The PBS interventions and supports involve the whole school, and successful implementation emphasizes the identification, adaptation, and sustained use of effective policies, systems, data-based decision making and practices (Sugai, George, et al. 2.3 (2000): 131-143)

6.1 An Ideal Classroom in an Ideal Community School

An ideal classroom of an ideal community school must be highly interactive to execute the desired curriculum effectively, provides the learner with a democratic environment to exchange knowledge. According to Tokoro and Steel (2003, p.16), it is necessary to form an educational system that follows a “child-centred learning” in an ideal school for a full functionary classroom.

An ideal community school should have a transparent system to monitor the system of rules as applicable to teachers and learners. Interaction with the community must be positive and self-aligning or must be able to quantify the gaps at all levels for alignment. Must have a freedom of expression for learners, appears like a full optimum model of the community itself. Ability to deliver to the community on a succession plan basis, generate responsible civilians. The curriculum must be dynamic concerning learning situations. Have a balance between child-centred and teachers centred approach. A system to monitor and track the Key performance indicators of the same as defined from time to time. The ideal Curriculum of a community school should not be like a hard and fast rule. It should be mold according to the availability and situation on sight, to grab more chances of learning. *The curriculum must be redesigned as a first step to establish a baseline. The basic need of the curriculum must be understood as the key of success, not only for academics but also to develop and prepare the minds of students about the positive aspects of life, culture and modern technologies (Jacbs, Heidi Hayes, 2010)*

Communication Approach is the use of modern, positive communication methodologies without any gaps in the system, must be introduced in every classroom of a community school.

7. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF AN IDEAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

There has been a strong emphasis on the role of community school as part of globalization. This has resulted in a growing number of alternative designs for schools worldwide. More than a nation-specific phenomenon, cross-national exchanges and deliberate replications are underway. (H A Lawson and D.Van veen) . As an ideal community school as such should be at least address the followings:

7.1 Integration with other Cultures and respect for values

It is imperative to mention that multicultural integration in community schooling system is the key to successful adaptation to variable learning situations. The cultural values per learner have an ethical value and importance, as such the implementation of a curriculum aligned to the needs is of vital importance.

7.2 Recognition of Global Issues / Awareness

The community school must be able to deliver global issues and concerns, which might affect the learner’s specific country issues. The importance lies in addressing those issues which may threaten the community survival model. The integration with social organizations during operation of schools is mandatory.

7.3 Ideal Class Room in Community school

In the light of above-mentioned facts, a formulated approach to address all the community issues through classroom must be achievable. This may translate from Teachers, students, community interactions and implementations of designed and periodically reviewed curriculums.

7.4 Democratic Approach

Since the community schools are pumping educational values into the community, the democratic approach across teachers, learners, social organizations integrated with the system is essential. Community school must be able to align the changing demands and values of the community from time to time.

8. CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth study of an “as is “community schooling system and “to be “ideal community school under the global perspective, we can conclude that in community schools, there is always a need of more

integration not only at a single school but also in multi schooling levels too.

This has to be supported by a curriculum which is specifically designed and aligned for a particular community, having dynamic reviews, fulfilling the standards required.

Therefore, through the combined effect of the above factors, an ideal community school can be formulated, integrated with effective policies and reviews.

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