

# **Community Participation and the Salvation of Education in Kano State**

By

**Abdalla Uba Adamu**

Department of Education  
Bayero University, Kano  
Kano

*Lead Paper Presented at the one-day symposium on Salvation of Education in Kano State, organized by Kano Old Students Association (Kanosa) at the Murtala Muhammad Library Complex, Kano on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2004*

## **Introduction**

The biggest challenge that faces any democratic society is the education of its populace. In the face of dwindling revenue resources and community malaise, governments all over the world are hard pressed to find ways of supporting education. One area that has not been effectively explored, especially in Kano, is the issue of community participation in general, especially primary education. Lack of significant community input on education has historical antecedents which saw the provision of education as a basic government responsibility. With increased population of learners, deteriorating economy and other more pressing social commitments, it is clear that other avenues of inclusiveness in sustaining the quality of education have to be explored.

This is more so as policymakers, educators, and others involved in education are seeking ways to utilize limited resources efficiently and effectively in order to identify and solve problems in the education sector and to provide quality education for children. Their efforts have contributed to realizing the significance and benefits of community participation in education, and have recognized community participation as one of the strategies to improve educational access and quality.

This is not to say that community participation is something new in the education delivery, however. It did not suddenly appear as panacea to solve complex problems related to education. In fact, not all communities have played a passive role in children's education. For instance, Williams (1994) stresses that until the middle of the last century, responsibility for educating children rested with the community. Although there still are places where communities organize themselves to operate schools for their children today, community participation in education hasn't been fully recognized nor extended systematically to a wider practice.

In preparing and implementing any efforts to promote community involvement in education, it is important to understand the whole picture of community participation: how it works; what forms are used; what benefits it can yield; and what we should expect in the process of carrying out the efforts. A deeper understanding of this issue is important since the link between community involvement and educational access and quality is not simple and involves various forms.

## **Community Participation in General Education**

### **What is *community*?**

Communities can be defined by characteristics that the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class, and race. As Shaeffer (1992) argues, some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and some united while others conflictive. Some communities are governed and managed by leaders chosen democratically who act relatively autonomously from other levels

of government, and some are governed by leaders imposed from above and represent central authorities.

Zenter (1964) points out three aspects of communities. First, community is a *group structure*, whether formally or informally organized, in which members play roles which are integrated around goals associated with the problems from collective occupation and utilization of habitational space. Second, members of the community have some degree of *collective identification* with the occupied space. Lastly, the community has a degree of *local autonomy and responsibility*.

Bray (1996) presents three different types of communities, applied in his study on community financing of education. The first one is *geographic community*, which is defined according to its members' place of residence, such as a village or district. The second type is *ethnic, racial, and religious communities*, in which membership is based on ethnic, racial, or religious identification, and commonly cuts across membership based on geographic location. The third one is *communities based on shared family or educational concerns*, which include parents associations and similar bodies that are based on families' shared concern for the welfare of students.

### **What is participation?**

The term "participation" can be interpreted in various ways, depending on the context. Shaeffer (1994) clarifies different degrees or levels of participation, and provides seven possible definitions of the term, including:

- *involvement* through the mere use of a service (such as enrolling children in school or using a primary health care facility);
- *involvement* through the contribution (or extraction) of money, materials, and labor;
- *involvement* through 'attendance' (e.g. at parents' meetings at school), implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others;
- *involvement* through consultation on a particular issue;
- *participation* in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors;
- *participation* as implementors of delegated powers; and
- *participation* "in real decision making at every stage," including identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Shaeffer stresses that the first four definitions use the word *involvement* and connote largely *passive collaboration*, whereas the last three items use the word *participation* instead, implying a much more *active role*.

Shaeffer further provides some specific activities that involve a high degree of participation in a wider development context, which can also be applied in the education sector, including:

- collecting and analyzing information;
- defining priorities and setting goals;
- assessing available resources;
- deciding on and planning programs;

- designing strategies to implement these programs and dividing responsibilities among participants;
- managing programs;
- monitoring progress of the programs; and
- evaluating results and impacts.

**What is *community participation in education*?**

Education takes place not only in schools but also within families, communities, and society. Despite the various degree of responsibilities taken by each group, none can be the sole agent to take 100 % responsibility for educating children. Parents and families cannot be the only group of people for children’s education as long as their children interact with and learn from the world outside their families. Communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and educating of their children. Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate, by equipping them with skills important in society. Schools cannot and should not operate as separate entities within society.

Since each group plays a different role in contributing to children’s education, there must be efforts to make a bridge between them in order to maximize the contributions. Education takes place most efficiently and effectively when these different groups of people collaborate. Accordingly, it is important to establish and continuously attempt to develop partnerships between schools, parents, and communities.

Many research studies have identified various ways of community participation in education, providing specific channels through which communities can be involved in children’s education.

Colletta and Perkins (1995) illustrate various forms of community participation: (a) research and data collection; (b) dialogue with policymakers; (c) school management; (d) curriculum design; (e) development of learning materials; and (f) school construction.

Heneveld and Craig (1996) recognized parent and community support as one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa. They identify five categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the region: (1) children come to school prepared to learn; (2) the community provides financial and material support to the school; (3) communication between the school, parents, and community is frequent; (4) the community has a meaningful role in school governance; and (5) community members and parents assist with instruction.

Williams (1994) argues that there are three models of Education and Community. The first one is *traditional community-based education*, in which communities provide new generations of young people with the education necessary for transmitting local norms and economic skills. In this model, education is deeply embedded in local social relations, and school and community are closely linked. The government, being of little use in meeting the specialized training needs of industrialized economies, plays a minor role, providing little basis for political integration at the national level. The second model is *government-provided education*,

in which governments have assumed responsibility for providing and regulating education. The content of education has been largely standardized within and across countries, and governments have diminished the role of the community. However, a lack of resources and management incapability have proven that governments cannot provide the community with adequate the educational delivery, fully-equipped school buildings, and a full range of grades, teachers and instructional materials. This triggers the emergence of the *collaborative model*, in which community plays a supportive role in government provision of education. Williams further presents a model that shows the relations between the role of community and local demand.

Table 1. Local Demand and the Role of the Community

	High Local Demand	Low Local Demand
<b>Initial Community Attitude Toward Education</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Indifferent/Resistant</b>
<b>Role of Community</b>	Potential support to supplement & reinforce government action; Can support schools in ways government cannot	Can block/underline educational efforts
<b>Key Variables Determining Community Role</b>	Community lacks ways to provide support	Match between content/delivery of schooling & local values, needs, economic constrains
<b>Goal of Government Intervention</b>	Provide useful ways community can support schools	Adapt content/delivery of schooling to local context; Provide education useful to community

Source: Williams, James H. (1994) "The Role of the Community in Education."

Epstein (1995, 1997) seeks ways to help children succeed in school and later life, and focuses on partnerships of schools, families, and communities that attempt to: (a) improve school programs and school climate; (b) provide family services and support; (c) increase parents' skills and leadership; (d) connect families with others in the school and in the community; and (e) help teachers with their work. She summarizes various types of involvement to explain how schools, families, and communities can work productively together:

- (1) *parenting* – to help all families to establish home environments that support children's learning at schools;
- (2) *communicating* – to design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication that enable parents to learn about school programs and their children's progress in schools as well as teachers to learn about how children do at home;
- (3) *volunteering* – to recruit and organize parent help and support;
- (4) *learning at home* – to provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with home-work and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning;
- (5) *decision making* – to include families in school decisions, to have parent leaders and representatives in school meetings; and
- (6) *collaborating with the community* – to identify and integrate resources as well as services from the community in order to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning.

### **What can community participation in education do?**

The goal of any kind of activity that attempts to involve community and families/parents in education is to improve the educational delivery so that more children learn better and are well prepared for the changing world. There are various reasons to support the idea that community participation contributes to achieving this goal. Extensive literature research has resulted in identifying the following rationales that explain the importance of community participation in education.

#### ***Maximizing Limited Resources***

Most governments all over the world have been committed to delivering education for their children. Particularly after the World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, an increasing number of countries have attempted to reach the goal of providing education for all. However, governments have found themselves incompetent to do so because of lack of resources and capacities. Learning materials as well as human resources are limited everywhere, particularly in developing countries. The focus has shifted to finding efficient and effective ways to utilize *existing limited resources*.

Although some communities have historically been involved in their children's education, it hasn't been fully recognized that communities themselves have resources to contribute to education, and they can be resources by providing local knowledge for their children. Involving parents, families, and communities in the process of research and data collection can reveal to them factors that contribute to lower enrollment and attendance, and poor academic performance in their schools. Furthermore, parents are usually concerned about their children's education, and often are willing to provide assistance that can improve the educational delivery. In places where teacher absenteeism and poor performance are critical issues, parents can be part of the system of monitoring and supervising teachers, ensuring that teachers arrive at classrooms on time and perform effectively in the classrooms. Parents and communities are powerful resources to be utilized not only in contributing to the improvement of educational delivery but also in becoming the core agent of the education delivery .

In Madagascar, where Government investments at the primary level have been extremely low, parents and communities contribute money, labor and materials (World Bank 1995b). The absence of government support leaves the school infrastructure, equipment, and pupil supplies to the parents and the community. As a result, community and parents are in the center "in keeping the schools going (p.30)."

#### ***Developing Relevant Curriculum and Learning Materials***

Communities' and parents' involvement helps achieve curriculums and learning materials that reflect children's everyday lives in society. When children use textbooks and other materials that illustrate their *own* lives in their community, they can easily associate what they are learning with what they have already known.

In Papua New Guinea, community schools set the goal to link the culture of the pupils' home community with the culture of the school. Accordingly, the schools consider the community as the center of learning as well as the focus of education. As a result, the community schools have become central to the national curriculum development which enables community life, such as festivals, customs, musical

instruments, and local business activities, to be reflected in the curriculum (Goldring, 1994).

Another example is found in Colombia's *Escuela Nueva* program for multigrade schools that incorporates a number of innovative components, including community participation in school curriculum (Colleta and Perkins, 1995). In each learning task, self instructional textbooks guide students to identify examples and cultural elements from their own experience and allows local materials to be accumulated in the learning centers. The oral tradition is transcribed and classified. Local crafts, jobs and economic activities, health problems, geography, landscapes, transport, sports, dances, food, animals, vegetation, and minerals are also described and classified for use in learning experiences. Children in *Escuela Nueva* are using curriculum relevant to their way of life and that of their communities, which helps develop a series of basic learning needs, skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge that enable the children to continue learning and applying what they learn in their communities (de Arboleda, 1991). These are strategies that could be directly used in Nigerian communities which have rich oral traditions in order to sustain the UBE program through community participation.

### ***Identifying and Addressing Problems***

Communities can help identify and address factors that contribute to educational problems, such as low participation and poor academic performance. This is well illustrated in the case of the Gambia, in which the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) were adapted to education. The work was carried out in order to understand why girls do not attend schools, to mobilize communities around these problems, and to assist them in organizing their own solutions (World Bank 1995a).

Thirteen local researchers were trained in PRA which allowed the participation of all groups in a community, including illiterate and literate, young and old, females and males. A sample of seven rural villages was selected, in which a team of researchers worked with residents focusing on group discussions, mapping of the village, calendars of income and expenditure, and matrices of community and education problems. The research revealed that key disincentives to educating girls were related to: (a) inadequate supply of schools, particularly middle schools; (b) high costs of schooling; (c) higher risk of early pregnancy; (d) loss of respect for traditional values, particularly obedience and humility towards husbands; and (e) perceptions, particularly among men, that girls will be less successful in life generally. A further step was taken in two of the seven communities where residents were invited to select six important problems from a longer list that they had developed previously which they could begin to address in a practical way, utilizing mainly their own resources. Various options for solving problems were devised and those seeming to have the highest chance of success were integrated into a Community Action Plan.

### ***Promoting Girls' Education***

Community participation can contribute to promoting girls' education (UNICEF, 1992). Through participating in school activities and frequently communicating with teachers, parents and communities can learn that girls' education contributes to the improvement of various aspects of their lives, such as increased economic productivity, improved family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates, and reduced child mortality rates. Involving parents and communities in discussions as part of

school activities also helps to identify factors that prevent girls from schooling. Parents are encouraged to express their concern, and reasons why they are not sending their daughters to school. For instance, many parents in rural areas are reluctant to send their daughters to schools located in distance, concerned about the security of their daughters on the way to and from the school. In addition, since girls are important labors in the household, helping their mothers to do the chores and take care of their young siblings. The time that requires going to and from school seems too much to waste for the parents. These issues are serious obstacles and have to be addressed and overcome in order to promote girls' education.

Involving parents and communities in school activities also helps to identify possible teachers in the community, especially local female teachers which greatly help girls' education. Furthermore, in places where communities are indifferent in girls' education, elderly people or religious leaders who are respected by community members can convince them to send their girls to schools, if the dialogue with these respected people takes place successfully.

### ***Creating and Nourishing Community-School Partnerships***

There are various ways to bring parents and community members closer to schools which they serve, including: (a) minimizing discontinuities between schools and communities, and between schools and families; (b) minimizing conflicts between schools and communities, schools and families, teachers and parents, and what is taught in school and what is taught at home; (c) making easy transition of pupils going from home to school; (d) preparing pupils to engage in learning experiences; and (e) minimizing cultural shock of new entrants to schooling (Cariño and Valismo, 1994).

Communities can contribute to schools by sending respected community members, such as religious leaders or tribe heads, to the classrooms and talk about community history, traditions, customs, and culture, which have been historically celebrated in the community. Schools themselves can contribute to community efforts by developing sustainable solutions to local problems. One example is found in the *Social Forestry, Education and Participation pilot project (SFEP)* in Thailand, documented by McDonough and Wheeler (1998).

The purpose of the project is to change teaching, learning, and school-community relations by involving fifth and six grade students in studies of local village problems related to forest management. The students visited communities and asked questions about village history and the origins and causes of various forest-related problems. Community members helped them understand concepts taught in schools, and students used any resource available within the communities to enhance their understanding. In addition to gathering data from villagers, students went to nearby forests to study plants and animals as part of their regular science lessons. Some local villagers came along as "experts" to help them understand various species indigenous to that village. McDonough and Wheeler examined the project and found that communities have much to contribute to the education of their youth. If given the chance to become more involved in the education of their youth, communities come to see that their knowledge about village history, social relations, and economic structure is relevant to what students could learn in school. In addition, the

curriculum can be linked to daily life and teachers are able to use a much wider array of resources to improve student learning.

### ***Realizing Democracy***

Where schools are perceived as authoritarian institutions, parents and community members do not feel welcomed to participate in their children's education. They are not capable of taking any responsibility in school issues and tend to feel that education is something that should be taken care of by educational professionals at schools. Many people, especially minority groups in many developing countries, develop this kind of negative attitudes towards schools because they are not treated by teachers with respect. For instance, those who do not speak the country's official language and embrace other than mainstream traditions and culture feel discouraged in classrooms where teachers don't show respect to their linguistic and cultural diversity. In the history, there were times when children were prohibited from speaking their first language in schools and they got severe punishment when they broke the rule imposed by the school or the government. This educational environment is unfavorable to parents and children and, therefore, contributes to these students' low participation, poor academic performance, and high repeat and dropout rates. Involving communities in schools is a way of reaching democracy through identifying and addressing inequities embedded in institutions and society as a whole. In addition, it is a strategy to create an environment in which parents feel comfortable participating in schools.

Reimers (1997) considers the case of *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and Joy), a non-governmental organization which provides formal and nonformal education at different levels in 12 countries in Latin America, as a good illustration of this approach. *Fe y Alegría* schools attempt to achieve the curriculum that recognizes and builds on the community where the students live. The schools also aim to use teacher training to promote appreciation of the diversity of student backgrounds and students' use of non-standard forms of language in school. This innovation attempts to place the schools where they belong in the community, and promote mechanisms for community involvement in running the school. Reimers argues, "this is very important for the support of democracy as it promotes local participation to solve local problems-education (p.41)."

Moreover, parental involvement in education is seen as a right, or as an outright democratic value in some countries. According to OECD study (1997), "in Denmark, England, and Wales, parents have a right to be represented on the governing bodies of schools; in France, they have a right to representation on a whole range of policy-making bodies; the Parent's Charter gives English and Welsh parents a number of rights, including the right to certain information from the school; in Spain, the Constitution recognizes the right of teachers, parents and students to participate in defining the scope and nature of the education service; and forthcoming legislation in Ireland will place parents at the center of the education process, and give them a wide range of statutory rights in relation to education (p.26)."

### ***Increasing Accountability***

Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. This has been witnessed in some places such as England and Wales, Canada and the United



States. The notion of parental involvement for accountability derives from a more market-oriented concept in which school-family partnerships are viewed rather like business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and complementary benefits which enable them to operate more effectively (OECD, 1997).

The extensive examination of six case studies on the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Colombia and Bolivia lead Rugh and Bossert (1998) to the conclusion that teachers and other school staff feel they should be accountable to community clients only when the community holds some power over them: when they either come from the same village and have social ties; if their continued employment or salaries depend on community satisfaction; or sometimes when community education committees exist to manage the schools and members are empowered to exert their influence (p.157). They also argue that accountability is developed through routine parents' meetings and reporting systems on student progress. When parents contribute their time, labor, materials, land, and funds, they tend to be more involved in school activities, including participating in meetings with teachers and monitoring teachers' performance. Teachers and school staff, in turn, feel more obliged to deliver better education for the students in order to respond to the needs of parents and communities. Participation can greatly help develop accountability, which contributes to improving the education delivery.

A Community Support Program (CSP) process in Balochistan, Pakistan, was developed to ensure village commitment to girls' education. It defines the responsibilities of the community and the Directorate of Primary Education. The greater the participation of the community, both financially and in-kind, means they are more likely to demand accountability from staff. Parents are also more involved in the day-to-day management of the school where they see what is happening and what needs to be corrected. The CSP has formed Village Education Committee (VEC) that consists of five to seven men whose daughters will attend the school. VECs are formed to serve as the school's official representative to the government. The forming of VECs has contributed to the CSP's establishment of an organizational structure that encourages teachers' and local administrators' accountability to parents. Once the school is opened, VEC members are empowered to report teacher attendance or behavior problems to the government and to recommend teachers for training.

### ***Ensuring Sustainability***

One of the major factors to ensure sustainability of programs is the availability of funds, whether from governments, private institutions, or donor organizations. In this regard, community participation in education cannot ensure the sustainability of schools by itself since communities oftentimes have to rely on external funding to keep the program sustained. However, involving community is a way to ensure that the benefits brought by a development program will be maintained after the external interventions are stopped. Thus, sustainability is dependent on the degree of self-reliance developed in target communities and on the social and political commitment in the wider society to development programs that support the continuation of newly self-reliance communities (Lovell, 1992). Community members are expected to be actively involved in the process of interventions through planning, implementation,

and evaluation. Furthermore, they are expected to acquire skills and knowledge that will later enable them to take over the project or program.

### ***Improving Home Environment***

Community participation can contribute to preparing and improving home environment, by encouraging parents to understand about the benefits of their children's schooling. A World Bank study (1997) which analyzed primary education in India, discovered that families aware of the importance of education can contribute much to their children's learning achievement, even in disadvantaged districts. It also shows that students from families that encouraged children's schooling, by allocating time at home for study, encouraging reading, and supporting their children's educational aspirations, scored significantly higher on tests of learning achievement.

Furthermore, families who are involved in schools not only have a better understanding about education but also become more willing to cooperate with schools in attempts to improve children's learning. In addition, parents can help their children with homework, and make sure that children are physically ready to learn at schools. From their extensive literature research, Heneveld and Craig (1996) argue that the parent and the community are one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness because they can prepare children's readiness to come to school and their cognitive development, by ensuring children's well-balanced nutrition and health.

### **How can community participation improve Education?**

We have seen the significance of community participation in various communities around the world. Let us now focus on how these models of participation can empower the UBE program in Nigeria.

Community participation can contribute to UBE delivery through various channels. The following is a list of ways through which communities can contribute to the education delivery

- advocating enrollment and education benefits;
- boosting morale of school staff;
- raising money for schools;
- ensuring students' regular attendance and completion;
- constructing, repairing, and improving school facilities;
- contributing in labor, materials, land, and funds;
- recruiting and supporting teachers;
- making decisions about school locations and schedules;
- monitoring and following up on teacher attendance and performance;
- forming village education committees to manage schools;
- actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress and classroom behavior;
- providing skill instruction and local culture information;
- helping children with studying;
- garnering more resources from and solving problems through the education bureaucracy;
- advocating and promoting girls' education;
- providing security for teachers by preparing adequate housing for them;

- scheduling school calendars;
- handling the budget to operate schools;
- identifying factors contributing to educational problems (low enrollment, and high repetition and dropout); and
- preparing children's readiness for schooling by providing them with adequate nutrition and stimuli for their cognitive development.

### **What are the challenges?**

Involving communities in the education delivery requires facing and tackling a number of challenges. In general, as Crewe and Harrison (1998) articulate, participatory approaches tend to overlook complexities and questions of power and conflict within communities. They are designed based on the false assumption that the community, group, or household is homogeneous, or has mutually compatible interests. Differences occur with respect to age, gender, wealth, ethnicity, language, culture, race and so on. Even though marginalized or minority groups (such as female, landless, or lower-caste people) may be physically present during discussion, they are not necessarily given a chance to express their views to the same degree as others.

In attempts to understand factors that prevent communities from being involved in formal education, Shaeffer (1992) found that the degree of community participation is particularly low in socially and economically marginal regions. This is because such regions tend to have the following elements: (a) a lack of appreciation of the overall objectives of education; (b) a mismatch between what parents expect of education and what the school is seen as providing; (c) the belief that education is essentially the task of the State; (d) the length of time required to realize the benefits of better schooling; and (e) ignorance of the structure, functions, and constraints of the school.

Challenges vary from one stakeholder to another because each group has its own vision to achieve the common goal of increasing educational access and improving its quality. The section below attempts to turn to specific challenges and problems that have been witnessed among teachers, and parents and communities.

### ***Resistance among teachers***

Not all teachers welcome parents' and communities' participation in education. They tend to feel that they are losing authority within schools, as power is taken by community and parents. At the same time, they are encouraged to involve community members who sometimes are not willing to get involved in any school activities.

Gaynor (1998) analyzes the complex relationship between teachers and parents in her study on teacher management with a focus on the decentralization of education. She argues that many parents in many countries would like to be more involved in selecting and monitoring teachers. However, analyzing impacts of the El Salvador's EDUCO project in which parents are responsible for school management and monitor teachers, Gaynor stressed that the teachers feel threatened by parental involvement, believing that it will diminish public regard for their professional status.

### ***Parents and Communities***

Not all parents and community members are willing to get involved in school activities. Some have had negative schooling experiences themselves, some are illiterate and don't feel comfortable talking to teachers, and getting involved in any

kind of school activities. They feel they don't have control over the school. Some parents and families are not willing to collaborate with schools because they cannot afford to lose their economical labor by sending their children. Even though they see the benefits to send children to schools, opportunity costs are oftentimes too high to pay.

A World Bank study of social assessment on EDUCO, community managed-schools, in El Salvador (Pena, 1995) reveals that even though the parents valued education and had a positive attitude regarding the teachers, they were suspicious about the government. This wariness, combined with lack of communication, fostered the fear that education would be privatized and parents would have to pay for education services. Parents are optimistic about the economic value of education, but their optimism decreases when they are asked to think about the role of education in their own lives. Furthermore, because of parents' relative lack of education and the way the traditional school systems are structured, parents and teachers perceive their roles as separate from one another, without substantial parental interaction with teachers or involvement in the schools themselves.

### **What needs to be done in order to improve the practice?**

Although community participation can be a strong tool in implementing and monitoring the UBE program in Nigeria, it is not panacea that can solve all the problems encountered in the education sector. Any strategies to achieve a high degree of community participation for the successful sustenance of the UBE program require careful examination of communities because each community is unique, and complicated in its nature. The following are some of the issues that need to be solved in order to improve the practices of involving communities in the education delivery.

### ***To Understand the Nature of Community***

As discussed previously, no community, group, or household is homogenous. Thus, it is crucial to examine and understand community contexts, including characteristics and power balance. It is important to examine the degree of community participation in some activities in society, since some communities are traditionally involved in community activities, while others are not used to working together with schools or even other community members. Careful examination of communities is necessary to successfully carry out activities promoting community participation. Narayan summarizes elements that contribute to forming well-functioning groups as seen in the box 1.

#### **Box 1. Five Characteristics of Well-Functioning Groups**

- ◆ the groups address felt needs and common interests;
- ◆ the benefits to the groups of working together outweigh the costs;
- ◆ the groups are embedded in the existing social organization;
- ◆ the group has the capacity, leadership, knowledge and skills to manage the tasks; and
- ◆ the group owns and enforces its rules and regulations.

*Source:* Narayan (1995)

Within the education sector, it is important to understand the current formal structure and the function of school/parent/community organizations. As Shaeffer (1994) articulates, various kinds of organizations exist in many countries in order to bring parents together. Some organizations include teachers and other school staff.

Membership, mandate, and level of activity vary from one organization to another. For instance, in the Philippines some schools have PTAs based on classrooms, grade levels, and the school itself; in Indonesia only organizations of parents are allowed to exist; and in Papua New Guinea boards of governors and of management also include representatives from other parts of the community. In many countries, these organizations exist within some formal framework of laws and regulations which govern their structure and functions. Such regulations may be quite specific in their definition of what the organization can or cannot do, or they may be very general in nature, allowing for considerable flexibility in their application.

Some specific questions to understand existing organizations include (taken from Shaeffer, 1994):

- what kind of school/parent/community structure(s) or organization(s) are found?
- who can be members of these organizations?
- what are the criteria for membership?
- how are members chosen?
- what are the functions, responsibilities, and rights of these organizations?
- what, if anything, are they prohibited from doing? and
- what is the nature of the laws and/or regulations which govern these organizations?

Furthermore, the following questions are useful in understanding the actual nature and performance of the organizations in the community, beyond the mandated functions.

- how do existing school/parent/community organizations participate in school affairs?
- what level of participation is actually achieved by such organizations?
- does level of participation differ widely by region (rural-urban), by the social and economic class of pupils and their families, and between public and private schools?
- does the Ministry simply assume these organization exist, or does it actively seek to learn if they exist and what they do?
- is there any attempt made in the Ministry's data gathering exercises to learn about the existence and activities of such organizations?

### ***Facilitative Environment***

Preparing the environment that can facilitate active community participation is also important. Campfens (1997) summarizes main factors for effective participation (Box 2).

## Box 2. Key Factors for Effective Participation

- ◆ an open and democratic environment;
- ◆ a decentralized policy with greater emphasis on local initiatives;
- ◆ reform in public administration;
- ◆ democratization of professional experts and officials;
- ◆ formation of self-managing organizations of the poor and excluded;
- ◆ training for community activism and leadership;
- ◆ involvement of NGOs; and
- ◆ creation of collective decision-making structures at various levels that extend from the micro to the meso and macro levels and link participatory activities with policy frameworks.

*Source:* Campfens (1997)

### ***To Establish Communication Channels***

In order to exercise any kind of community participation, there needs to be understanding among all stakeholders, all people who are targeted. Reasons and benefits of community participation have to be clearly addressed and understood by people. In addition, a continuing dialogue between schools and community is essential because it usually takes a long period of time to yield any benefit. Also all the stakeholders need to share the understanding that responsibility to educate children cannot be taken by single group of people.

One of the strategies to contribute to successful community participation in the UBE is to intensify the *social marketing campaign*, and an *awareness campaign*, in order to promote community involvement in children's education. Such campaigns, already embarked on by the unit on Social Mobilization in the UBE, and designed to target parents and community members can help them increase the understanding of the communities on the benefits of their collaboration with teachers and schools. It is also helpful if community members themselves can get involved in the campaigns, so that they feel more responsible and attempt to recruit more people from communities.

### ***To Conduct Continuous Assessment***

It is important to conduct assessment of any practices of community participation continuously, once the implementation gets started. The communities are always evolving and so are their needs and demands; therefore, the strategies need to be modified and tailored accordingly. Original plans need to be carefully designed and examined, but also need to be flexible enough to leave room for making changes in the efforts of the implementation.

Specifically, the assessment should look at the degree of the effects of the practices. Also important is to make sure that the different stakeholders' voices be reflected in the implementation practice.

## **Conclusions: Critical Partnerships to achieve effective community participation in Basic Education**

### ***Teacher unions and the Ministry of Education - a quality alliance:***

Teacher unions and the ministry of education could form an alliance with the shared objective of achieving *Education For All* through community participation. The ministry has to:

- put in place a mechanism for information, consultations and negotiations;

- solve basic problems concerning teachers' salaries and school equipment; and
- improve teacher education.

The teacher union has to:

- take initiatives which will support improvements in the quality of education;
- negotiate a transitional arrangement with the ministry concerning the recruitment of teachers; and
- play a role in mobilising teachers on voluntary basis for literacy programmes.

***Schools and local communities - the democratic community based school:***

A democratic community based school has to be developed based on:

- democratic participation of, and accountability to civil society in decision making at all levels;
- a partnership to elaborate new ways of co-operation between school and parents based on the legitimate right of parents to have a say in their children's education and the acknowledgement of teachers' professional knowledge;
- a partnership between schools and companies based in the community;
- a partnership between schools and the local trade unions; and
- shared commitment to combat child labour.

***Teacher unions and NGOs - an on-going campaign for Education For All:***

Further cooperation between teacher unions and NGOs have to be developed based on:

- non-formal education as a supplement to formal education, but not as a substitute, which could take many initiatives to support formal education;
- non-formal education as an emergency solution, which will give back the right to education to those who were denied this right as children;
- non-formal education as a transitional solution to gradually integrate certain groups in society into the regular education system and allow the formal education system to make the
- adjustments needed to meet the needs of such groups;
- working together so as to mobilise people to demand their right to education; and
- establishing broad national alliances working for education for all.

## References

- Bray, Mark. (1996). *Decentralization of Education: Community Financing*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Campfens, Hubert. (Ed.) (1997). *Community Development around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press.
- Colletta, Nat J. and Gillian Perkins. (1995). *Participation in Education*. Environment Department Papers. Paper No.001. Participation Series. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Crewe, Emma and Elizabeth Harrison. (1998). *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- de Arboleda, Vicky Collbert. (1991). "The Colombian Escuela Nueva Educational Experience." *Bulletin/The Major Project of Education in Latin America and Caribbean (International)*. No. 26:47-52 Decembe.
- Epstein, Joyce L.; Lucretia Coates; Karen Clark Salinas; Mavis G. Sanders; and Beth S. Simon. (1997). "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action." (ERIC: ED 415 003).
- Epstein, Joyce Levy. (1995). "School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share." In *Phi Delta Kappan*. v.76 (May 1995). pp.701-712.
- Gaynor, Cathy. (1998). *Decentralization of Education: Teacher Management*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Goldring, E. B. (1994). "Community and Parents' Participation in Curriculum Decisions." In *The International Encyclopedia of Education*. Second Edition Volume 2. By Husén, Torsten and T. Neville Postlethwaite (Editors in Chief). New York: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Heneveld, Ward and Helen Craig. (1996). *Schools Count: World Bank Project Designs and the Quality of Primary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Lovell, Catherine H. (1992). *Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: The BRAC Strategy*. West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, Inc.
- McDonough, Maureen H. and Christopher W. Wheeler. (1998). *Toward School and Community Collaboration in School Forestry: Lessons Learned from Thai Experiences*. Washington, DC: Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project, supported by US Agency for International Development and housed in Academy for Educational Development.
- Narayan-Parker, Deepa. (1995) *Designing community based development*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). (1997). *Parents as Partners in Schooling*. Paris: OECD, Center for Educational Research and Innovation.
- Pena, Valeria Junho. (1995). "Second Phase of the Social Assessment for the El Salvador EDUCO Program and the Basic Education modernization Project." LATEN dissemination Note #13. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Reimers, Fernando. (1997). "The Role of NGOs in Promoting Educational Innovation: A Case Study in Latin America." In *Education and Development: Tradition and Innovation*. Volume Four, Non-Formal and Non-governmental Approaches. Edited by Lynch, James; Celia Modgil and Sohan Modgil. London: Cassell
- Rugh, Andrea and Heather Bossert. (1998). *Involving Communities: Participation in the Delivery of Education Programs*. Submitted to Advancing Basic Education and Literacy Project. Washington, DC: Creative Associates International, Inc.
- Shaeffer, Sheldon (Ed.). (1992). *Collaborating for Educational Change: the Role of Teachers, Parents and the Community in School Improvement*. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Shaeffer, Sheldon (Ed.). (1994). *Partnerships and Participation in Basic Education: A Series of Training Modules and Case Study Abstracts for Educational Planners and Mangers*. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.
- UNICEF. (1992). *Strategies to Promote Girls' Education: Policies and Programmes that Work*. New York: UNICEF.
- Williams, James H. (1994). "The Role of the Community in Education." In *The Forum For Advancing Basic Education and Literacy*, Volume 3, Issue 4, September 1994. Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development.
- World Bank. (1995a). *The Gambia: Why Gambian Households Underinvest in Education of Girls*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (1995b). *Madagascar: Towards a School-Based Strategy for Improving Primary and Secondary Education*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (1997). *Primary Education in India*. Development in Practice Series. Washington, DC: The World Bank.



Zenter, Henry. (1964). "The State and the Community." In *Sociology and Social Research*. 48: 420. pp. 414-427.