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# UNIT 8 THE VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE (VEC) AND ITS ROLE

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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Our nation's commitment to universalise the Elementary Education (UEE) has been reaffirmed in National Policy on Education, 1986 (as updated in 1992). Since independence, India has tried to achieve this elusive goal of UEE including universal access, enrolment, retention of children upto 14 years of age and providing them good quality of education. To achieve this laudable and significant goal additional participation in elementary education has to come from the local community; without active participation of the local community, UEE cannot become a reality in our country.

This unit presents in brief the various dimensions of eliciting the help of local community and its effective participation for achieving the goal of UEE. Effective cooperation of local community can be best assessed through the functioning of Village Education Committee (VEC). VEC is the living link between the local community and primary as well as secondary education of the children of the local community.

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## 8.2 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the significance, constitution and functions of VEC;
- justify the need for involving various voluntary organisation and representative of various cultural and ethnic groups in VEC;
- explain the importance of planning and organising school improvement programmes with the cooperation of VEC;
- describe the process and functioning of VEC with examples; and
- suggest measures for improved functioning of VECs in a DPEP district.

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## **8.3 VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE — NEED SIGNIFICANCE, CONSTITUTION AND FUNCTIONS**

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### **8.3.1 Need and Significance**

According to Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, “Education should be man making and society making”. Broadly speaking education has to perform its role for ‘all round development of child’ including realization of its ‘social goal’ by providing education through life and for life, so that children may acquire the capacity for self-reliance in a healthy and cultured environment. Education should enable learners to understand the social and moral implications of the above for living such a life. The process of education should be organised in such a way that each child gets maximum opportunities for integrated balanced and harmonious growth of his personality. The school should ‘therefore’ be developed as an instrument for the creation of a cooperative and dynamic social order. In order to realise the social goal of education, schools should be an integral part of community life.

The school has been kept isolated from the society for too long to its own disadvantage. This situation needs to be rectified by transforming the school into an institution, which should be able to enlist active cooperation and support of the people around and to utilise all available community resources for the enrichment and improvement of its educational programmes. For this the school can discover, develop plans and uses all physical and human resources of the community as part of its educational resources and its can while doing so serve the entire local community. In such a scenario the school and the community help one another and the school succeeds in achieving its educational and social goals through participation in community life. For achieving this effectively the school population should be organised as fully functioning small community led by the teachers. It should have most cordial relations with the parents, students, and other members of the community. This will result in continuous, sustained and meaningful school-community interaction.

Our own experience in the context of achieving UEE has established that the UEE is essentially contextual. The context of UEE is very uneven; it varies widely from one state to another, from district to district and even from village to village. Some villages may have the problem of access, while others may have the problem of enrolment or retention. It is quite possible that some villages may be more concerned with issues related to quality only (e.g. Kerala villages). This varying contextuality necessitates local area planning with disaggregated targets and village level planning and management. Centralised planning and management more often than not disregard the unique context of a taluka, or a cluster of villages and thereby the plan becomes dysfunctional.

Ideally the planning for UEE should be bottom-up; from the village to the taluka and to the district. A beginning has to be made with village as the unit of planning. The village plan should be prepared through an intensive process of interaction with the local bodies including teachers, and an NGO active in that area so that it is owned by all who are to be associated with its implementation. It is essential that the plan should be based on and should reflect ground realities. A village education committee (VEC) can be of tremendous use in developing an educational plan for all village.

### **8.3.2 Its Constitution**

To impart universal elementary education in rural India many steps have been taken by Government in order to achieve the goal of UEE. Now it is well established that the Low-durable goal of UEE cannot be achieved unless the community participates in the management, development, planning and other aspects of the education of its young children including content and process of education.

The Kerala experiment of UEE points out that if the planning is done at the local level and the participation of community is ensured then alone we can succeed in attaining

our targets. The entire community may not be able to participate equally in creating awareness and a strong urge about girls education and education for the deprived section of society. Therefore, it is desirable that VEC be constituted for creating awareness, need, preparing based plans and for developing the right sort of educational process that would benefit the community. This VEC can act as the driving force for generating greater motivation. It can also provide a forum for the discussion of various issues of elementary education for achieving UEE.

The Village Education Committee (VEC) can be constituted with following representative members:

1. Gram Panchyat may nominate some of its members including members from each ethnic e.g. Schedule Castes, Schedule Tribes, members from the minorities woman folk etc.
2. Head teacher of the primary school who can act as ex-officio secretary of the VEC.
3. One women teacher deputed by the Head Teacher.
4. One member nominated by an NGO functioning in the area (if applicable).
5. One member each from among Anganwari workers/Balwari workers/the village nurse/ a multipurpose health worker.
6. A member nominated by PTA/MTA.
7. A social worker.
8. The Gram Sachiv or the Gram Savika.

The committee may elect their President and Vice-President from amongst its own members. The tenure of the office-bearers can be decided by VEC.

### **8.3.3 Role and Functions**

It is the primary duty of VEC to help the school in achieving UEE in a phased manner and raising the quality of education available to children by ensuring effective community participation at various levels. For all round development of elementary education in the village, the VEC should prepare a conducive environment in the village and function as a motivational force for the entire local community.

The VEC should provide constructive help for making the school a more attractive place especially for the children by providing physical facilities and making school environment safe and hygienic. The following are the specific functions of VEC, while planning the village educational programme:

- Adopting a holistic planning and management approach which perceives the task of UEE in its totality, and integrates all the various measures needed to achieve UEE in the specific context of the village;
- Planning to incorporate a gender perspective;
- Addressing the various UEE issues particularly the issue of access to disadvantaged groups, and out of school children;
- Improving school effectiveness;
- Strengthening the non-formal education system and other alternatives to schooling;
- Stressing the participative process whereby the local community facilitates participation, achievement and school effectiveness;
- Capacity-building of the school staff;
- Ensuring greater convergence between elementary education and related services like ECCE and school health programmes etc.

**Check Your Progress**

**Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. Describe why should school and community work together. (About 50 words)

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2. List 5 functions of the VEC in the context of UEE.

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### 8.4 PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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India is a pluralistic society. This pluralism is seen in almost all the villages, districts and states of India. In spite of visible common features in some particular regions, you may come across many differences too. For example, people may differ significantly on various social aspects. The situation in respect of ethnicity and socio-religious practices is much more complex in north eastern states of India. All ethnic groups want to maintain their ethnicity. The pluralistic nature of Indian society sometimes makes the task of implementing and achieving the goal of UEE quite arduous and at times frustrating. As discussed earlier UEE is essentially contextual and this contextuality entails local area planning with disaggregated targets and decentralised planning and management. In such decentralised planning and management, the needs and aspiration of each ethnic group should be addressed and each ethnic group should participate in achieving the goal of UEE. Besides resolving the problem of ethnicity, UEE programmes should address themselves to problems of girls, schedule castes, schedule tribes, minorities and other disadvantaged groups of the society. While planning the educational programme for a village, the VEC will have to address the issues and problems of each social group belonging to the village. These social groups if represented in VEC will be able to formulate more feasible, more need-based and more realistic programme. Hence it is desirable that while constituting the VEC the participation of each ethnic or social group is ensured in terms of membership of VEC so that VEC programmes are more acceptable to and are owned by each group.

**Check Your Progress**

**Notes:** a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

3. Explain the concept of contextuality in relation to UEE. (About 40 words)

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4. Why should all cultural and ethnic group be represented in VEC?

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### 8.4.1 Organisation of Village Education Committee: An Example

A typical VEC in Haryana is constituted according to explicit guidelines. For example, the village education will be constituted by the following 12 members:

1. Three members nominated by Gram Panchayat of which at least one member should be from a scheduled caste and one should be female.
2. Head teacher of the primary school who will act as secretary of the village education committee. If the community has more than one primary school, then the senior head teacher will act as secretary of VEC.
3. One woman teacher depute by the head teacher (if the community has more than one school then the lady teacher will be nominated by Secretary VEC from amongst the female staff of other schools.
4. One female member nominated by Mahila Mandal of the village.
5. A female multipurpose health worker.
6. An Aganwari worker of the village nurse.
7. Two member nominated by PTA.
8. A member of an NGO or a social worker, deputed by Block Education Officer.
9. The Gram Sachiv or the Gram Savika.

Of these 12 member at least 6 members should be females. The duration of VEC is 2 years which can be increased if required. This committee would choose the President and the Vice-President from within its members.

### 8.4.2 Expectations from Village Education Committee: An Example

The following are the usual expectation from a VEC in the state of Haryana:

- Helping in attaining the target of UEE through active participation;
- Planning the village education programme for achieving UEE;
- Helping the school in the increased enrolment of students, conduct community survey and providing other general information whenever necessary;
- Laying special emphasis on girls education and education of the deprived sections of society;
- Reducing the problem of wastage and stagnation and finally eradicating this problem;
- Enhancing the quality of Primary Education available in the village school(s);
- Helping the school in procuring necessary physical facilities;
- Encouraging actively community participating for all round development of education-facilities and process-in the village;

- Helping the school in eradicating various social problems and countering negative social attitudes;
- Helping the village, school(s) in capacity building;
- Helping in the implementation of programmes for non-formal education, adult education, anganwari, balwari, and pre-school education;
- Helping the schools in maintaining school discipline, cleanliness, beautification of the school campus and running the school in an effective way;
- Providing feedback regarding the issues and problems of village education to the higher authorities and suggesting possible remedies;
- Evaluating the process and achievement of students and providing feedback;

It is expected that the VEC shall try to achieve the above listed objectives by organising meeting, discussion, personal communication with the villagers, conducting surveys and collecting general information, monitoring, evaluating and providing facility to the school and analyse the programmes and achievements of the schools.

#### **Activities**

1. Talk to the members of a VEC in your area and describe its composition and functions. Identify the gaps in the functions and organisation of the VEC you have visited or seen.
2. Visit a VEC and describe how far it provides representation to various ethnic and disadvantaged social groups.

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## **8.5 LET US SUM UP**

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It can be concluded that for achieving the goal of UEE, issues related to contextuality in all aspects of UEE need to be addressed. Contextuality necessitates local planning and management at the grassroot level in the village. It is desirable if VEC is constituted with the objective of ensuring participation of all social groups and it (i.e. VEC) works with close coordination with school and prepares the village education plan. Village education plan should be implemented with active participation of all social groups keeping in view their needs, and aspirations and problems. Various aspects of UEE viz.; access, enrolment, retention and enhancement of quality need to be planned and monitored by VEC.

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## **8.6 UNIT-END EXERCISES**

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1. What is VEC and what does it do?
2. Briefly describe why VEC is important in achieving UEE.
3. Describe the structure of the VEC.
4. Compare the structure and functions of VEC in your State with those of a VEC in Haryana.

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## **8.7 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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*DPEP Basics*, MHRD, New Delhi.

*Abhiyan -VEC Training Module*, SCERT Gurgaon.

*VEC, Training Package*, SCERT, Gurgaon.

*NPE (1986)*, MHRD, New Delhi.