Collaborating for educational change: the role of teachers, parents and the community in school improvement

Edited by
Sheldon Shaeffer

International Institute for Educational Planning

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(Established by UNESCO)

IIEP/ko'f

Introduction

At a time when many countries of the world -- developed and developing -- face increasing economic uncertainty, political ferment, and bureaucratic constraints, a question of growing importance concerns how the social services needed by a given population can most effectively be provided. The sharing of responsibilities for such services among government, NGOs, communities, and individuals; the devolution of control over these services and sometimes the actual transfer of resources from government to other partners; and the absolute withdrawal by some governments from the provision of basic services are all more and more common patterns of development.

Because of its importance in terms of political rhetoric, financial allocation, and human resource development, the education sector is especially sensitive to such patterns. This sensitivity was increased by the call of the World Conference on *Education For All* in March, 1990, for the development of "new and revitalised partnerships". Partly in response to this call, the International Institute for Educational Planning began to develop a programme meant to explore ways in which the increased collaboration among, and participation by, various partners could contribute to increasing the quality of basic education. A monograph outlining the conceptual framework for the programme was published late in 1990.[1] This was followed by a report of a seminar held in Indonesia in May/June, 1991.[2] This report presented a summary of the seminar proceedings and results, abstracts of case studies prepared for the seminar, and a brief description of other presentations.

This present document puts into one volume a revised conceptual framework for the IIEP programme; representative case studies from India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand; summaries of other case studies from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Uganda; and a synthesis of these studies. Additional studies and seminars on other aspects of collaboration for educational change have been carried out, or are planned, in Africa, Latin America and North America. Summaries and reports of these activities will be published as available.

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1. Shaeffer S., *A framework for collaborating for educational change*. Paris, UNESCO:IIEP, 1990. (Increasing and improving the quality of basic education series, Monograph No. 3).

2. Shaeffer S., *School and community collaboration for educational change*. Cipanas, Indonesia, 1991, (Report of an IIEP Seminar, Cipanas, Indonesia, 29 May - 6 June 1991).

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by
Sheldon Shaeffer

Chapter 1

A conceptual framework for collaboration in educational change

"Because basic learning needs are complex and diverse, meeting them requires multisectoral strategies and action which are integral to overall development efforts. Many partners must join with the education authorities, teachers, and other educational personnel in developing basic education if it is to be seen, once again, as the responsibility of the entire society. This implies the active involvement of a wide range of partners -- families, teachers, communities, private enterprises (including those involved in information and communication), government and non-governmental organizations, institutions, etc. -- in planning, managing and evaluating the many forms of basic education" (WCEFA 1990a:4).

"In an uncertain and complex world, planning and administration must be adaptive. They require managers who can facilitate rather than control...skilled people who can act as catalysts...[and] administrators who can respond creatively and quickly to changes...administrators who view themselves as leaders rather than as bureaucrats. It calls for managerial systems in international organizations and governments of developing countries that train administrators to join action with learning, to experiment, to test new ways of doing things and to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people they serve" (Rondinelli 1983:148).

I. The need for new approaches to increase educational quality and demand

For many people the world is becoming a more difficult place in which to survive. Despite the accumulation of scientific knowledge, rapid advances in technology, and the increasingly sophisticated analyses of the social sciences, immense challenges of survival and development remain: the degradation of the environment, the continued increase of population and urbanization, the dangers of old diseases and the devastation of new ones, the growing strength of extreme nationalisms and fundamentalisms, and the seemingly permanent risks and reality of war and rebellion.

At the heart of the intractability of many of these problems lies persistent economic and social under development. This process is gaining momentum in many parts of the world as economic growth slows or stops, debt burdens increase, and adjustment policies, designed to reverse such trends in the long-term, take their short-term bite. Such under development has two major results. First, inequalities of social and economic status and opportunity increase within and across societies; these feed, and are often exacerbated by, profound cultural, religious, and ideological conflicts. Second, many governments find themselves unable -- and others, less able than in the past -- to provide an adequate quality or quantity of social services to large segments of their populations. The result in many parts

of the world is the impoverishment of the middle classes and the further marginalization of the already poor and disadvantaged.

It is in this kind of situation where education -- of greater quantity and of highest quality -- is most needed. Although education, as indoctrination, can increase tensions and hatreds, it can also lead more usefully both to concrete outcomes such as reduced fertility and mortality rates, increased productivity, and greater environmental awareness and to more general results such as greater adaptability to change and greater tolerance for diversity. But just when sufficient and good education is most needed, in many countries it is less available and of eroding quality. In many of the least developed countries, the growth of primary school enrolment rates is declining while the absolute numbers of school-age children not in school and of illiterate adults are increasing. Even in countries where enrolment rates have continued to grow, a sizeable percentage of children and adults often remains unreached by primary schooling and literacy programmes. And in many countries, both research data and observation indicate a decline in the achievement of learners and in the general quality of education provided them. These trends, which particularly affect education for girls and women, are closely related to declining investment in education measured both as a percentage of the national budget and as per pupil expenditures (WCEFA 1990).

While the growing lack of resources is an important factor in explaining the stagnation of enrolment and the deterioration of quality, the problem of weak demand is also crucial. Many potential learners in the developing world (and increasingly in the developed world as well) are not enrolling in primary schools, education programmes for out-of-school youth, and literacy courses (Anderson 1988, Prakasha 1986, Roy 1984). Reasons for this include the following:

(1)   *Economics*
        Many families cannot afford education -- even when 'free' -- given the need to provide children in school with uniforms, books, paper, and pencils. Also, the labour of children is essential to the economic well-being of many families, either in productive activities or in the care of younger siblings.

(2)   *Gender*
        Religious and cultural factors related to the seclusion of women, as well as economic pressures, limit demand for the education of girls. Schooling is often seen as producing less visible returns for girls than for boys and as depriving them of experience at home and with younger children -- experience often seen as their greatest economic asset.

(3)   *Culture and politics*
        Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, and political groups at odds with a country's dominant group may be reluctant to send children into a system controlled by what is often seen as a repressive majority culture, language, or ideology.

(4)   *Geography*
        Sheer distance from schools, the geographic mobility of migrants, and the territorial uncertainty of refugees can also limit demand.

(5)   *Health*
        Increasing evidence shows that ill-health and malnutrition influence both initial enrolment in school and repetition and drop-out rates (Leslie and Jamieson 1990).

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Another increasingly important aspect of demand relates to the perceptions of communities, parents, and children in regard to the utility, relevance, quality and responsiveness of the formal education system. Illiterate parents, particularly those within a generally illiterate environment, may not appreciate the potential of education, economic or otherwise. Or they may be convinced that it has little value at all. More and more people appear to lack confidence that the education system can provide the skills required for children or young adults either to break out of the marginal environment of their community (in order to work, for example, in the formal sector) or to return, with additional skills and knowledge and therefore at some profit, to the daily life of their family and community. Schools and adult education programmes are also often seen as being staffed by unmotivated, uncaring, and frequently absent teachers; leading to repetition and ultimate waste; and seldom interested in relating closely to the community around them. In one province of Cameroon, for example, "the schools are empty for weeks and months when teachers fail to arrive or leave the community after a short period of time. The parents react to this situation and the declining job prospects with an increasing lack of interest" (Bude 1985:262). For all of these reasons, education -- at precisely a time when it is needed the most -- is often seen as having little immediate importance or long-term value, especially in comparison to the actual costs of getting an education and to the earnings foregone in getting it.

Attempts by governments to overcome problems of finance, irrelevant content, inadequate facilities, under-qualified teachers, and institutions unresponsive to the needs of particular groups of people have often taken the form of expanding and fine-tuning the traditional and formal school system through (for example) the elimination of formal school fees (which may increase informal ones), the provision of new facilities, the addition of new subjects to the curriculum, and the training and re-training of more teachers. In addition, a variety of alternative, non-conventional, and non-formal approaches to education have been developed in order to make it more accessible and more acceptable to families who, for economic, political, or cultural reasons, are unable or unwilling to participate in schooling and literacy programmes (see Ranaweera 1990, Abreu de Armengol n.d., Dave 1990, Zainal Ghani 1990, Bray 1987, Hamadache 1990). These include such innovations as:

- flexible daily schedules (to fit into children's and adults' work schedules) and yearly calendars (to fit into a family's economic patterns);

- mobile schools, to reach nomadic populations, and small schools, often combined with volunteer teachers, self-instructional modules, and distance education methods, to reach isolated communities with small populations;

- sex-segregated programmes, to overcome cultural barriers to mixed-sex education, and programmes which marry secular and religious education;

- school feeding programmes and the training of older children to care for the health of their younger siblings;

- more flexible age and grade structures to provide a second chance to older children; and

- new policies in regard to language usage in schools and literacy programmes to take into account issues of minority cultures and languages.

But both large-scale reforms of the formal, conventional education system and many of the alternative, more non-formal innovations put in place by the central government have proven difficult to implement, disseminate, and sustain. Debt and recession, the isolation of marginal populations, and the interruptions of war and natural disaster share much of the blame for the persistent inability of many governments both to supply a constant (let alone an increasing) number of educational places and to influence, on a day-to-day basis, the quality of education occurring in their schools. But the limitations of centralized bureaucracies -- and of their traditional technocratic planning techniques -- also play an important role in this regard. Such limitations arise partly from the sheer magnitude and complexity of the problems and partly because "centrally-designed programmes are seldom responsive to the needs of the poor; and the organizations through which they are implemented seldom have the capacity to implement these projects as designed, let alone identify the actual needs and adapt the project accordingly" (D. Korten 1981a:213).

External aid to education, designed to improve education and increase the capacity of national governments to maintain and extend it, can often exacerbate rather than help to resolve these problems. Although some assistance agencies have shown flexibility and imagination in supporting innovations, sometimes to the extent of working with both governments and NGOs, they and their consultants often end up designing or prescribing overly complex innovations which overburdened and under-trained national administrations have been unable to implement (Rondinelli *et al*1990).

In many parts of the world, therefore, good and sufficient education, needed more now than ever before, is more and more difficult to find. Governments, the customary providers of such education (especially at the primary level), are increasingly unable to supply it and, if supplied, to sustain and improve it. As a result, the traditional centralized, top-down processes of educational development are more frequently being called into doubt. In such a situation, governments and donors, decision-makers and planners, educators and trainers must be willing and able to look at other approaches to development and other patterns of planning, financing, and managing education.

This chapter will describe one such approach -- that of participatory development. It will define and characterize it, discuss its benefits and risks, and examine in what areas, under what conditions, and in what ways it can be used to encourage greater participation by various partners (teachers, parents, the community, NGOs) in improving basic education. In the chapters which follow, several Asian case studies of effective participation and collaboration among potential partners in basic education are presented. The final chapter synthesises lessons from these and other studies and proposes a variety of training activities and administrative reforms which can be implemented in order to permit and facilitate greater collaboration for educational change.

II.   Participatory development: what it is and what it can and cannot do

1.   Introduction

In the last 20 and more years, a very different approach to development -- often called 'people-centred' or participatory development -- has appeared on the scene. This approach begins with the assumption that "sustainable development ultimately depends on enhancing people's capacities as individuals and groups to improve their own lives and to take greater control over their own destinies" (Ogun 1982:2). While this assumption may seem self-evident, a participatory approach to development represents a considerable change in the process of governance, in social and political relationships, and in who participates in, controls, and is empowered by the development process.

Unfortunately, much of what has been written and said about participatory development is more rhetorical than realistic, and so-called 'empowerment of the people' is neither easily achieved nor sustained in the face of political and social oppression or the demands of everyday survival. But despite the vagueness of the rhetoric and the frequent difficulties in implementation, participatory development has become a process of considerable importance in the world. Administrative decentralization, sometimes accompanied by the genuine devolution of political and budgetary authority, is the trend in many countries. Provinces, municipalities, local governments, and the 'civil society' as a whole are gaining further responsibility for social services and local development -- a responsibility often thrust upon them by increasingly impoverished and impotent State mechanisms.

Accompanying, and often leading, this process is a growing number of ever more powerful non-government organizations and community associations able both to mobilize populations toward collective expressions of economic power and political will and to influence the assessment of local needs and the design, implementation, and evaluation of local development activities. In many nations these organizations are becoming 'partners in development' with government agencies, are provided government funding for their work, and are developing often powerful networks of like-minded groups. The result of these processes of administrative decentralization and popular mobilization can be the greater participation of people long disadvantaged by class, gender, race, and ethnicity in the institutions, activities, and development processes which affect their lives.

Such 'people-centred' development is not as new as it often appears. The interest in the 1960's in community development, supported by (mostly rural) non-formal education, was linked at least in part to an attempt to make development programmes more relevant and responsive to grassroots concerns. This approach, however, was not necessarily participatory in method and was challenged in many ways by the conscientisation of Freire who urged that the poor, the usual *objects* of development, become critically aware of the reality in which they lived (conscientized) and take control of their own lives. Such a process places particular emphasis on group discussion, self-reflection, and critical thought (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 1990).

The long tradition of *educacion popular* in Latin America, designed to promote more participatory and democratic society, also encourages dialogue and group learning, values

both individual experience and collective views, attempts to break the culture of silence characteristic of marginal and oppressed groups, and is oriented to issues of politics and class and to the transformation of society (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 1990, Durning 1989). The liberation promised by Nyerere was less focused on class and promoted indigenous African (as opposed to imported colonial) ways of thinking and acting. In Castro's Cuba and Mao's China, these ideas, though distorted in many important ways, were carried to greater extremes of social transformation, to be achieved (rhetorically at least) through popular participation. Hints of such thinking and traces of such language appeared in the landmark Alma Ata Conference on primary health care, and the early 1980's saw the more frequent use of terms such as empowerment, popular participation, and local ownership of the development process in documents of governments and donor agencies as well as NGOs.

2.   Definitions and characteristics of participation

Such terms, however, have often remained vague and undefined. Only recently has there been greater clarity in outlining the essential characteristics and implications, as well as the potential benefits and risks, of participatory development. An extensive discussion in development literature concerning participation -- of whom, in what, for what purpose, and to what degree -- has helped greatly in this regard (see, for example, Myers in press, Brownlea 1987, Madan 1987).

As a result, several different degrees of participation in development can be described. These include participation as: (1) the mere *use* of a service (such as a primary health care facility); (2) participation through the contribution (or extraction) of resources, materials, and labour; (3) participation through 'attendance' (e.g., at parents' meetings at school), often implying passive acceptance of decisions made by others; (4) participation through consultation on a particular issue; (5) involvement in the delivery of a service, often as a partner with other actors; (6) involvement as implementors of delegated powers; and (7) most completely, participation "in real decision-making at every stage -- identification of problems, the study of feasibility, planning, implementation, and evaluation" (UNICEF 1986:1).

This last definition is generally considered now as being that which underlies genuinely participatory development. Thus, people participate to the extent that they "choose, cognitively, affectively, and physically, to engage in establishing, implementing, and evaluating both the overall direction of a programme and its operational details. Choice, in this context, implies not merely an agreement to follow but an active decision to assume responsibility in considering the rationale, implications and potential outcomes of the programme" (Bernard 1990:7). Such a definition requires extensive involvement in the various stages of development activities: diagnosing and defining problems; articulating priorities and setting goals; collecting and analysing information and assessing available resources; deciding on and planning programmes; designing implementation strategies and apportioning responsibilities among participants; managing programmes; monitoring progress; evaluating results and impact; and redefining problems generated for further action (Hollnsteiner 1982, NFE Exchange 1981, UNICEF 1986, Durning 1989).

This definition of participation has several important implications. It means that people *gain knowledge and awareness* of their own social, economic, and political conditions (Bhasin 1979). It requires people to *take action* -- to make and act on choices and to construct "their own futures through a process of analysis and action" (Myers in press:310). And above all, it means that people *gain control and power* over resources, over the goals and processes of development, and over regulatory institutions (Hollnsteiner 1982). "If it is accepted that participation should start at the stage of conception and still be in evidence at the stage of supervision, then it is necessary to agree to share certain elements of power" (Bugnicourt 1982:74-5).

This is where the concept of empowerment has become especially important in attempts to move the concept of participatory development from rhetoric to concrete practice. In the process, unfortunately, empowerment has become a much abused word, adopted in many societies by both the political right (who see it as privatization) and the left (who see it as radical social transformation). It is perhaps best defined as "a group process where people who lack an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to, and control over, those resources" (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 1990:2). As a result, "poor communities come more explicitly to assert rights and responsibilities in determining the direction of their own development" (Bernard 1990:7). This power must be real, formal, and legitimate, including both the ability to use formal structures, regulations, and rules and control over decision processes, knowledge, and techniques. People who are empowered "have the power to find direct solutions to their problems -- they propose solutions, they do not beg for them" (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 1990:5).

Another implication of this definition is that there cannot be a standard recipe for achieving participatory development; what makes it 'work' varies tremendously across different economic, political, and cultural contexts. It is certainly facilitated by the organization of groups able to provide mutual support to participants and to gather what are often isolated, individual needs into collective demands. And it arises from several processes: through the mobilization of popular or political will by existing structures (such as political parties), through animators or animating organizations, through the process of the "gradual empowerment of local groups or communities which have organized themselves to defend collectively their livelihood and promote their interests" (Stiefel and Racelis 1990:2), and through the conscious decentralization of government mechanisms or the creation of local institutions of self-government.

The issue of decentralization is particularly crucial in any attempt to encourage governments to facilitate the participation of a broader range of actors in development. Decentralization is a process of growing importance due to what are seen as several key limitations of centralized systems: their limited reach of *effective* service, their inability to promote sustained local-level action, their limited adaptability to local circumstances, and the creation of dependency through their activities rather than self-sufficiency (F. Korten 1981). Because of such limitations, many systems in both the North and the South are going through a process of decentralization, either by territory (to smaller units) or by function (to NGOs, private groups, etc.). This strategy is meant to achieve various results: (1) to generate more resources and assure their more equitable allocation and effective use within the decentralized administrative units; (2) to improve the quality of decision-making and planning by relating these processes more closely to indigenous cultures and to local

conditions, needs, and practices; (3) to encourage innovation and participation; (4) to increase local responsibility and accountability; and (5) to stimulate communication down and (especially) up the system of control. It is ultimately seen to be a "means to ensure wider representation of legitimate interests in education" (Weiler n.d.:4) and to make these interests more responsible for educational quantity and quality.

In theory, decentralization should lead to the redistribution of power. It has been argued, however, that the process is often more rhetorical than real and, as 'compensatory legitimation,' is designed to manage and diffuse conflict and fragment reform movements rather than bring about real change (Weiler n.d.). The important questions in this regard are: (1) *what powers are being decentralized* (e.g., only data collection and not policy-making, only resource extraction and not expenditure) and (2) *why such decentralization is occurring* (e.g., for the reasons listed above or because an impoverished State can no longer finance its services).

The answers to these questions will determine to some extent which of the various and quite different forms and strategies of decentralization -- each with its own particular implications for participation and empowerment -- are adopted (Rondinelli *et al* 1990, Hallak 1990, Bray 1987). *Deconcentration* involves handing over authority and decision-making powers from a higher level of the central government to lower levels -- regional, district, cluster -- a first step to local autonomy, but still accountable to, and staffed by, the central ministry. *Delegation* transfers (or lends) certain specific management responsibilities for some activities to other units, governmental or non-governmental, implying somewhat stronger (but easily recoverable) local autonomy. *Privatization* is the divesting of functions to the private sector, either voluntary or for profit. *Devolution* strengthens sub-national units of government and actually transfers decision-making powers to local bodies. It is in the actual devolution of power to local lower-level bodies of government (and even to community associations and NGOs) that the greatest scope for participatory development can be found.

3.   Advantages and disadvantages of participation

It is important to make clear that participation -- and any accompanying devolution of authority and 'empowerment of the masses' -- should *not* be seen as a new panacea for under development. It is a difficult, frustrating process, sometimes risky and often unsustainable. But in the best of circumstances, it brings two kinds of benefits to individuals, communities, and society at large. Most directly, greater participation in a particular sector of development (education, health, agriculture) can lead both to a greater demand for the services of that sector and to services more relevant to community needs. More generally, participation can also lead to changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and the distribution of power across individuals and communities which can enhance people's capacities to improve their own lives and 'empower' them to take greater control of their own development. Such results can in turn lead to development activities which are more immediately useful and successful and, in the longer term, more sustainable (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 1990, D. Korten 1987, Hamadache 1990, Myers in press, UNICEF 1978, UNICEF 1986, Zainal Ghani 1990).

A great part of the impact of participation and empowerment lies at the level of the *individual* and in the context of 'human resource development'. Some of the impact is cognitive. Through greater involvement in a variety of development activities, people can gain more knowledge, learn better practice, and end with a greater awareness of the problems that exist, the causes behind these problems (which may or may not be amenable to local control), and, in some cases, their possible solutions.

Some of the impact is also psychological: greater self-confidence and self-reliance, less dependence on external inputs and 'wisdom', greater pride in the significance and validity of personal and collective knowledge and experience, a greater sense of accountability and responsibility, less of a feeling of marginalization and powerlessness. The combination of such impacts can lead to greater demand; people gain a better idea of the kind of life they want to lead, a greater understanding of what prevents them from achieving such a life, greater knowledge about what services (and of what quality) should be available to assist them, and more willingness to make their needs known and, when necessary, to play a larger role in fulfilling these needs themselves.

Much of the same kind of impact occurs at the *community* level as well. Communities can feel and become less marginal and powerless, more self-reliant and independent, more accountable and responsible. Empowered communities can: (1) gain greater control over information and local technologies; (2) form alliances and networks within their own area or across to others; (3) work toward the more efficient and effective management of local resources and, in the longer term, greater ecological sustainability; and (4) develop organizations, structures, regulations, procedures -- a 'corporate identity' -- which can serve them well, both in the whole range of community development activities and as the basis for negotiating, from greater strength, with outside institutions and bureaucracies. The result can be greater social cohesion, economic development, cultural unity, and the assurance that local services -- such as education -- meet the needs, reflect the traditions, and share the goals of the community.

In the best of circumstances, such achievements at the community level redound to the benefit of the *society at large*. Greater participation within a society can lower development costs (through more volunteer labour and the use of more local expertise and resources), make development programmes more cost-effective, and ensure greater equity of the benefits of development within and across communities. It can also increase the impact and sustainability of development programmes by encouraging more of a "hand-crafted approach to development" (UNICEF 1986). With such an approach, utilization rates, continuity, and maintenance of development programmes can be improved (UNICEF 1982). Without such participation, the opposite may occur; thus, for example, "if the educational planners fail to consult the teachers before introducing reforms, they cannot but expect half-hearted support on the part of those concerned with their implementation" (Bude 1985:258).

But both skeptics and advocates of participatory development recognize that it is a process fraught with difficulties, disappointments, and unkept promises (Brownlea 1987, Bude 1985, Bude 1989, Dove 1980, Hollnsteiner 1982, Madan 1987, NFE Exchange 1981, UNICEF 1978, UNICEF 1986, Zainal Ghani 1990). "For some [participants]...the benefit of the participatory process is suspect; the participation involves people who have less skills or

knowledge than those responsible for making decisions, are less accountable for whatever the outcome might be, or have a more self-interested level of involvement or concern than perhaps might be expected of the ultimate decision-makers. In these situations and for these people, participation is burdensome, an unwarranted cost, and does little to improve the quality of the eventual decision" (Brownlea 1987:605).

Several issues are important in this regard. First, many communities, it is argued -- perhaps especially those most disadvantaged -- are not at all homogeneous in nature. Social stratification, divisions along caste and ethnic lines, personal rivalries and social factionalism, the incompatibility of interests are all factors which make it very difficult to talk of 'community' mobilization through participation. A community seen as 'natural' in some ways (such as a caste) may not necessarily be the community most appropriate to mobilize towards a particular outcome (such as sanitation), and a community defined by geography, perhaps most appropriate for improving sanitation, may be too riven with social discord to permit mobilization. In such a context, participation may bring unresolved and unresolvable conflicts out into the open, exacerbating rivalries of class, caste, and ethnicity by making explicit potential differences in goals and tactics, rather than keeping them constrained and hidden through the operation of traditional roles and responsibilities.

Second, skeptics argue that marginal communities (and many governments) cannot bear the added expense of participatory processes -- often in terms of financial resources and at least in terms of the time and energy of participating community organizations, government agencies, and individuals. These processes can also raise expectations, and then frustrations, and lead to greater political and social instability, and they can mislead marginal populations, who have little margin for risk, into taking risks and then failing, with possible disastrous effects. Others argue as well that the lack of a participatory, grass-roots tradition in many societies (often accompanied by a sense of fatalism about their future and skepticism about their efficacy) and a lack of technical expertise, supervisory skills, and animators lead inevitably to failed projects or a decline in the quality of services provided and therefore lead back to extensive co-operation with external, professional agents.

Third, the participatory process may place greater power in the hands of the 'wrong' people -- factionalists, demagogues, racists, reactionaries. It can also be taken over by those parts of any community -- i.e., often corrupt and inefficient local elites and party cadres -- most able (financially and personally) to 'participate'; these groups may use their increased authority to manipulate the 'participants' and extract further resources from them. Any attempt to encourage *community* involvement in development may therefore lead instead to the encouragement of people who speak only for given segments of the population. It is they, rather than the 'poorest of the poor', who benefit. The result may be an unequal distribution of participation itself and of its benefits -- either of the direct benefits meant to be derived from the new service or of the more generalized benefits of involvement in the development process.

Fourth, a further negative outcome of participatory processes may be the domination, at the local level, of narrow community self-interest, which may be based on short-term perspectives and aim at short-sighted benefits. Such self-interest may ignore longer-term political or economic implications for the community or the larger society and contradict more general goals of national integration, the dissemination of scientific truth, and the

modernization of society. Also, 'popular' traditions and customs in areas such as health, nutrition, productivity, or social justice may, in fact, represent "developmentally inadequate practices and behaviour" (Rondinelli 1983:139) which should not be reinforced in development programmes or reflected in local social services (Schwille et al 1986).

Fifth, another problem lies in the risk of tokenism -- only marginal change, wrapped in new packaging, leading not to an alternative model of development but rather to the reinforcement of central power and the reproduction of central values. Participation, in other words, may end up being 'system-maintaining', "designed to transform disadvantaged and disaffected groups into 'responsive citizens' implementing policies outlined by some higher authority" rather than 'system-transforming', designed to "effectively transfer political and economic power to hitherto disadvantaged groups and thus to introduce more radical social change" (Pearse and Stiefel 1980:65). Attention paid and energy wasted by the general population on such token achievements are then lost to attempts to change more fundamentally the basic political and administrative patterns of a society. The process of change therefore becomes de-politicized. Likewise, the very public efforts to wrap the new package in an attractive cover can make it possible for a government to opt out of its responsibilities for delivering basic social services and for the better management, or more equitable allocation, of resources. This may end up with the government co-opting NGOs and other community-based associations into State mechanisms and bureaucratic processes.

Sixth, the demands of participation can threaten the political order of things. In simple terms, for example, "how many of the ruling elite would be comfortable with a critically conscious peasantry, and how many teachers with a body of educands who are developing critical consciousness?" (Dent Ocaya-Ladiki, quoted in Bude 1985:275). The result may be suspicion and fear among the elite and repression of the population.

Seventh is the sheer inability to know, and to show to others, when a participatory process has succeeded. Participation *is* a process and its products are, as described above, often psychological, procedural, or organizational in nature rather than concrete in terms of money saved or services delivered. "As a process, participation evolves at its proper pace and rhythm, adapted to the people involved rather than to bureaucratically or politically defined projects or goals. It may go in unforeseen directions and may not in the short term have an immediately quantifiable or measurable impact" (Stiefel and Racelis 1990:3). The lack of process indicators and measures means that success is easy to claim but difficult to substantiate.

A final problem relates to the inability to standardize or generalize the implementation of participatory development due to the different configurations of participation in various regions of the world and even in different parts of a country. There are many reasons for such variety: different histories of development, different social relationships and cultural traditions related to participation, and different political constraints or freedoms. Attempts to develop manuals, guidelines, and training materials related to participatory approaches must therefore be tempered by their extensive adaptation to local conditions.

Despite these problems, however, participatory approaches to development have proven instrumental, in particular contexts and under particular conditions, in expanding the

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supply and increasing the relevance of basic social services and in enhancing people's capacities as individuals and as groups to improve their own lives and to take greater control over their own development. This occurs most readily, of course, under two conditions: (1) that the users of this approach recognize, and move to control, the possible negative aspects of participation described above, and (2) that the dominant actor in development -- the government -- is committed, at all levels, to working more collaboratively with, and encouraging the greater participation of, other partners in development. In order to encourage more active partnerships in educational development at the school and community level and the greater participation by educational personnel and the community in educational matters, it is necessary for governments and the donor agencies which support them to affirm such a commitment and then move to develop the organizational norms, the skills and attitudes, and the structures and procedures required to implement more participatory development.

III. Collaboration and partnerships in education

"The educational system should not be regarded as a branch of the bureaucracy. Instead, it should be a subsystem highly interactive with all other parts of the social whole. The point is to give pupils, parents and teachers responsibility over their own affairs, to the point of enabling them to administer the educational system on their own within the context of natural or contractual communities. This assumption of responsibility must necessarily embrace three indispensable areas: participation in design and decision-making processes; regular, structured involvement in the processes of management and evaluation; and finally financial accountability with regard to both income and contributions" (Ki-Zerbo 1990:86)

1. Actors in participation

Before discussing how greater collaboration among partners in education can more readily occur, it is necessary to understand clearly the characteristics of the major actors in this process: the government, the school, the community, and non-government organizations. What, in other words, do these actors typically 'look like' -- their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivations; the organizations in which they work and their procedures of work; and the norms and values which form the 'culture' which surrounds them? And which of these factors are most critical to reinforce or alter in attempts to increase the effectiveness of participatory approaches to educational development?

(i)   The government

"The administration administers: it does not delegate, it does not negotiate, it does not consider groups of peasants or town-dwellers as partners. When it asks for their participation, its aim is the execution of predetermined tasks at the lowest possible cost, or else the alleviation of its own obligations" (J. Bugnicourt, quoted in Stiefel and Racelis 1990:6).

Government administrators and experts usually bring to their work considerable knowledge, skills, and experience. Older educational administrators may often have started their careers as teachers but have likely worked more years in various parts and at various levels of the ministry structure. Younger ones may have moved directly into ministry

positions following university or college training. Their experience has largely been gained, therefore, in academic or office settings (or even in study abroad) rather than in the field. As a result, government officials often have limited knowledge of current community conditions or local experience. Such a perspective, likely reinforced in a position within the central bureaucracy, tends to produce a particular set of attitudes and motivations toward development. In reference to health care, one observer describes a common perception among government managers that "all knowledge, the necessary clinical skills and insights, the right strategies, the right perceptions of the health problems at the local area, all supposedly reside at the centre of the centralized system" (Brownlea 1987:612).

One effect of this perception are particular attitudes toward the 'periphery'. These include: (1) the retaining of firm control over the development process by the centre with full confidence that the periphery will implement the centre's decisions as required; (2) the assumption that lower levels of the bureaucracy are capable merely of implementing policies and decisions made at the top; (3) little appreciation of (or even scorn for) local or indigenous knowledge or creative potential of what are seen as largely passive 'beneficiaries' (UNICEF 1982, Myers in press), especially in comparison with the supposed expertise of professionals in the centre (F. Korten 1981); (3) little recognition of the potential or achievements of local institutions; and (4) a sense that none could be more or less equal in collaboration for development. "One often hears the city people talk in contempt about the village people. They call the masses lazy, ignorant, conservative, fatalistic, even stupid. ..They have no respect for the wisdom of the masses, for the wealth of their experience. They do not realise that the masses have managed to survive and keep the economics of [their] countries going not because of the help of the city people, but in spite of their exploitation by the moneyed and landed urban and rural elites" (Bhasin 1979:70-71).

Frequently related to this is a top-down mentality of officials "whose existence is based on transmitting instructions from above, giving orders to people below them, strictly obeying instructions received (or making a show of it) and making the boss happy" (Pinney 1983:43). This can lead to the discouragement and even the fear of diversity, local initiative, and conflict; the avoidance of open consultation and interaction, except with other professionals speaking the same language; the desire to control information, events, and people; and, ultimately, a resistance to change in structures or procedures. The principle motivation of the public servant and the expert therefore becomes the maintenance and control of the status quo.

So, too, more generally for governmental structures and procedures (F. Korten 1981, Duke 1990, UNICEF 1982). The typical unitary, centralized, hierarchical structure of administration, based on departmental and/or disciplinary lines and frequently staffed with insufficient and underqualified personnel, tends to make difficult any attempt to integrate development efforts. Communication, when it exists, flows down such a structure, with few opportunities for the reverse. And many governments have neither the financial nor human resources to penetrate regularly and systematically, even through local offices, to all of a country's villages and settlements, let alone to those most isolated and marginal. With such a limited reach, governments are hard-pressed to implement standardized policies, let alone react flexibly to the particular needs of diverse communities.

These limitations are particularly acute in increasingly expensive and complex educational systems. "The geographical dispersion of school and the organizational tradition of teacher independence in the classroom give education all of the characteristics of a decentralized enterprise. Yet, in most developing countries the education system is hierarchically structured, with most of the important decisions made by central government ministries" (Rondinelli et al 1990:120). The result is often an attempt "to enclose people in standardized rules, regulations, and official institutions, thereby discouraging voluntary initiatives and promoting apathy, withdrawal and often passive resistance" (Stiefel and Racelis 1990:50).

From this come inflexible procedures (of planning, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, accountability, etc.) which favour quick solutions, rapid assessment of quantifiable output, and immediate success. In such a system, there is usually little advantage seen in attempts to encourage messier, more complex, and potentially less immediately visible and successful activities. This generally rigid approach is reinforced by the importance assigned to national goals of unity and integration and by the necessity imposed by both internal auditors and external funders for detailed and finite planning and budget cycles, work schedules, and target dates. Such pressures can make it difficult to adapt to local circumstance and therefore tempt a ministry to finish a project, declare it a success, and move to yet another rather than reinforcing the operations, maintenance, and sustainability of the first (F. Korten 1981). This approach has been called the 'blueprint approach', reflecting "the textbook version of how development programming is supposed to work"...with ..."clear-cut orders, allocation of funds for precisely-stated outcomes, reliance on 'hard' data and expert judgement, and the clearly-stated implementation schedules [which] make project justification easy in budget presentations" (D. Korten 1981:4).

In such a system, evaluation of staff performance is based on development projects completed or budget spent rather than local capacity developed, and personnel are accountable solely to superiors within the bureaucracy and not to the so-called beneficiaries; they also tend to be interchangeable from one location or department to another (F. Korten 1981). As long as members of the bureaucracy "remain unconvinced that they need the willing co-operation of local-level people to improve their performance in ways significant to their careers, they are unlikely to facilitate 'animation techniques' and they may well sabotage them" (Charlick 1980:6).

(ii)   The school

The school, as an actor in educational development, is composed of teachers and managers. Both are included in this heading, though their roles in various contexts are often quite different. In some contexts, headmasters are seen as the lowest end of the *government* bureaucracy, trusted to carry out its administrative tasks and delivering its educational instructions to teachers; they therefore tend to share many of the characteristics of the government administrators described above. In other contexts, however, headmasters are seen more as senior teachers -- above all responsible for pedagogical issues, with administrative tasks added on, but generally treated in the same way as teachers by the bureaucracy.

Though there is, of course, a huge variety of conditions in schools within and across countries of the developing world, there are certain characteristics more or less common to schools of poorer countries and for marginal and disadvantaged populations. There are shortages of books and materials and inadequate or deteriorating facilities. For teachers there are insufficient and irregularly paid salaries, an absence of professional supervision and assistance, poor promotion opportunities and living conditions, the burden of excess subject content, reduced prestige, low enrolment rates, and often absent pupils (or sometimes overcrowding). "Nearly everywhere [teachers] suffer from a sense of grievance. One reason for this is that their rates of pay are usually not so favourable as those of many others who have received the same amount of education. Another reason in many countries is that their prestige, which once was high in rural areas when they were the only educated person, has inevitably slumped with the spread of education" (V.L. Griffiths, quoted in Bude 1985:259). The result can be heavy teacher absenteeism, an erosion of self-confidence (and of community confidence in teachers), a feeling of non-accountability to parents and the community, and a general decline in respect (Williams 1989).

Teachers also often consider themselves masters or mistresses of their classrooms, trained and certified, and therefore little interested either in receiving advice from superiors or in sharing experience with peers. For a similar reason, they also often reject the involvement of parents in issues relating to teaching and learning, having the attitude that parents, generally 'unaware' of the benefits of education, should 'surrender' their children to the school from the age of six or seven and thereafter not get involved in its activities. Yet teachers also often have considerable knowledge of their pupils and their environments and of what is feasible and useful in the context of the local school. Such experience, however, is often ignored both by the central bureaucracy and by local officials, supervisors, and even headmasters. This is partly because such officials are often chosen more for seniority of tenure than for expertise and thus may have neither the knowledge nor the status to assist their colleagues professionally. Mechanisms of teacher support, let alone of administrative or pedagogical consultation, are therefore often weak.

Finally, and more generally, schools are often only 'loosely coupled' to the larger education system (Cohn and Rossmiller 1987). While part of a network of central, regional, and local interests and heavily dependent on complementary institutions and sub-systems (training colleges, examination systems, curriculum development centres, various statistical offices at several levels, all requiring periodic reports), they are often only weakly linked, at the end of a long chain of command, to this bureaucracy. This makes problematic the success of any central and standardized reform at the school level.

(iii) The community

The nature of the 'community' and of the conditions which determine its fate are perhaps even more varied than those of the 'school'. Communities can be defined by law and geography, culture and language, class and caste. They can be heterogeneous or homogeneous, united or conflictive, poor or rich, sunk in fatalism or vibrant with optimism (and the last are not necessarily correlated with levels of prosperity). They can be governed and managed by leaders chosen democratically (informally or through formal channels) and acting relatively autonomously from other levels of government, or by leaders imposed from above and representing central authorities. Many communities, especially in disadvantaged

areas, lack homogeneous social units and even informal local organizations which might be mobilized for greater participation (F. Korten 1981). Each of these characteristics will influence the degree to which communities themselves, their leaders, and any existing community-based associations are involved -- or are able and willing to be involved -- in development issues, including education.

In general, especially in socially and economically marginal regions, communities are not deeply involved in formal education. There are several reasons for this: (1) a lack of appreciation of the overall objectives of education; (2) a mismatch between what parents expect of education and what the school is seen as providing; (3) the belief that education is essentially the task of the State; (4) the length of time required to realise the benefits of better schooling; and (5) ignorance of the structure, functions, and constraints of the school (UNESCO/PROAP 1990). Any involvement is largely extractive in nature; that is, community participation is limited to the provision of resources -- money, materials, labour. Other, more substantial involvement in terms of consultation or management or control -- in the diagnosis of needs, the development and implementation of school policies, the design of educational content, or the delivery or evaluation of such content -- is usually seriously constrained, either because of the energies consumed in the community's struggle for survival or because of the school's disinterest or resistance to community or parental involvement in what are often seen as specialized and professional matters. The mobilization of communities to play a larger role in education, and of school personnel to work with communities, is therefore not an easy task (Dubbeldam 1990).

But communities have strengths of their own -- energy, resources, knowledge, and experiences -- all rarely used in centrally- and bureaucratically-determined development programmes. "That the rural poor continue to survive under the most extremely unfavourable circumstances is testimony to the fact that they possess a good deal of technical and social knowledge relevant to their condition -- knowledge of which many a university trained technician may be unaware. The best solution to any given village level problem is likely to be one to which both the technician and the villager have contributed their respective knowledge" (D. Korten 1981a:210).

(iv)   Non-government organizations

In 1987 $2.2 billion (or 5%) of the world's official development assistance was provided by donors to non-government organizations; another $3.3 billion was added to this total through NGO efforts (OECD 1988:82-3). This considerable sum and percentage have no doubt increased over the last few years. As NGOs play an increasingly large role in the collection and distribution of development assistance, their involvement in the planning and delivery of development programmes also mounts.

There is no universally accepted definition or classification of NGOs (or PVOs -- private voluntary organizations -- as they are often called). Some classifications include under one label organizations ranging from small village-level associations through national institutions operating in thousands of villages to international agencies with hundreds of staff and dozen of regional and national branches (Hall n.d.). Others distinguish between grassroots organizations of the poor and 'popular' sectors (such as peasant movements, tribal associations, women's clubs, and labour unions) and more 'intermediate' agencies or

non-government *development* organizations (NGDOs) -- "non-profit private organizations staffed by (semi)professionals who are engaged, full-time, in the design and implementation of grassroots development projects and programmes with and for the poor in the third world" (Wils 1990:1). Yet others include profit-making organizations, foundations, churches and missions, medical organizations and hospitals, unions and professional organizations, business and commercial enterprises, and co-operatives and cultural groups (OECD 1988, Pinney 1983). NGOs can also be classified as "sectoral, integrative, action-oriented, research-based, educational bodies, policy organizations, politically focused, or any combination of the above" (Hall n.d.:5).

Recent literature has developed more precise classifications of NGOs through an analysis of their evolution. In this analysis, NGOs have developed from agencies primarily concerned with relief and welfare activities, to those encouraging small-scale, self-reliant local development projects and processes, to those more directly involved with community empowerment and social transformation (Elliott 1987). Further evolution has led to two other categories (Bhatnagar 1990). One is the type of large, umbrella, 'policy-advocacy' NGO, in some ways a sector in itself, which forms networks or federations of advocacy organizations and develops distinct social, political, and economic functions and influence within the policy-making processes of a country. Another is the "service provider" organization which sees its role more in terms of supporting, protecting, linking, and developing the capacity of a myriad of action-oriented but often weak and relatively powerless grassroots NGOs -- "more in the manner of a foundation, directing its attention to facilitating development by other organizations, both public and private, of the capacities, linkages, and commitments required to address designated needs on a sustained basis" (D. Korten 1986:12).

Such diversification of roles should not obscure a general commonalty of functions and characteristics. In ideal terms, NGOs are most often described as people-centred, flexible and responsive, creative, democratic and non-hierarchical, cost-effective and pragmatic, often independent and non-aligned (Hall n.d.). They generally develop as the result of community support, are able to tap local knowledge and resources, and usually have a small core of paid staff and (often) many volunteers. They are concerned with empowering the poor and the oppressed; with building and strengthening people's organizations and community associations; with re-energising, and rejuvenating social movements; and with promoting democratic practices and processes (Tandon n.d.). They see development "not merely as an activity geared towards producing a certain output but as a process of developing community motivation and awareness, of promoting people's abilities so that they can help themselves and, in turn, create a self-reliant community and nation" and "have an approach which stresses the participation of all involved parties in each stage of the development process" (Hadad 1983:10).

NGOs generally carry out several functions: (1) They provide development services in those fields, activities, or regions either underserved by government or parallel to those provided by the government, often with greater effectiveness and equity. More and more frequently, they also work directly *with* governments (and sometimes with donors) in the provision of services, often as an intermediary between government agencies and the poorest levels of society (PRISMA 1983, Annis 1987). (2) They explore new issues of social concern and experiment and test new approaches to development and service delivery. (3)

Increasingly, within individual countries and internationally through networks and federations, they serve as advocate and 'noise-maker' in regard to issues such as the environment and health, human rights, women's issues, and peace (Tandon n.d.). (4) And they help to build consensus and initiate policy change around such issues (Bhatnagar 1990).

Given these functions and characteristics, there is clearly a clash of organizational norms and cultures between government and aid agency bureaucracies and non-governmental organizations -- a clash which can often lead to adversarial relationships and to government intimidation and regulation (Tandon n.d.). One problem is the differing unit of activity -- the discrete, defined, elaborately planned and budgeted, and carefully timed 'project' of governments and aid agencies versus the more interactive, unbounded, often vaguely-defined and open-ended 'process' of NGOs.

Another problem is the ingrained suspicion between the two 'sides'. Governments often believe that NGOs encourage division and sow discord between the people and government agencies, expose government shortcomings, and confuse people concerning government aims. They also often feel that NGO activities, by raising questions concerning economic distribution, social control, and the accountability of power -- and even the very models and frameworks of development in place -- are a challenge to State authority; this may particularly be the case in one-party states where the party itself is seen as the 'voice of the people' and therefore the channel through which all community-level work should flow (Tandon n.d.). NGOs, on the other hand, often believe that government officials and bureaucracies are inefficient and slow with a limited capacity for intellectual and technical inputs, more interested in personal gain than social welfare, dominated by corruption, biased toward support to the elites and other civil servants, and ignorant of the real problems of the people (Pinney 1983, Picon 1990). And they believe that the more and more frequent legislation and regulation concerning NGOs in the developing world may cripple rather than support their activities.

As NGOs increase in number and gain in credibility and influence, and as more and more development assistance, both international and national, is channelled through them, they face, as a sector, many important issues. These include: (1) the fear that increased funding of NGOs may lead towards the privitization of services to the poor and thus the withdrawal of the State from its social responsibilities; (2) the trend for NGOs to become sub-contractors for development programmes designed and funded by others rather than creative, responsive actors in their own right; (3) the risk that the increasing co-ordination of NGOs, either through government regulation or donor preference, might harm their principal focus on decentralized, community-based initiatives; and (4) the possibility that too much NGO criticism of the policies and programmes of the State might weaken it at the expense of international, exploitative forces.

The basic question is how can "the provision of resources and capacities from the State and its agencies to the NGOs be done in a manner that does not undermine the latter's autonomy and independence, but in fact contributes towards strengthening the same?" (Tandon n.d.:24). This is the fear of some NGOs of the possibility of dependency and co-optation -- that too close an approach to government on the part of NGOs, and too great an acceptance of funding from national governments and international donors, will make them lose their identity and their (often) hard-won autonomy. But others fear that if NGOs

are too small in scale, they become insignificant; if too independent, powerless; if too low-cost, of low quality; and if too innovative, temporary and unsustainable (Annis 1987:129). NGOs therefore need to "learn to sup with a long spoon and to balance co-operation and confrontation in their dealings with officialdom" (Duke 1990:209).

2. Where participation and collaboration can occur

Given the quite profound differences between government agencies and non-government organizations, and given the usual patterns of interaction among the other various actors in education at the school and community level, it should be clear why it can be difficult to develop and maintain collaboration and genuine partnerships among them. The technocratic, centralized, uniform, supposedly 'scientific' authority usually imposed by the State -- with all of its related values, priorities, and approaches -- is not easily wed to, or even tolerant of, the more culturally-based, decentralized, diverse, supposedly traditional authority derived from the 'people'.

Such differences are reflected in differing views of how schools can best be managed:

> *"Those who champion democratic participation in education believe that communities will be served best when decision-making is decentralized and when people -- teachers, parents, and students alike -- are encouraged to participate directly in making the decisions that affect them. ...In contrast to this view, the notion of administrative leadership is one which implies hierarchical elevation of the ...principal to an extraordinary level of power, centralising decision-making and control of resources in the hands of the few. ...It is assumed that strong leaders, with their expertise, technical know-how and experience, can solve administrative problems more efficiently than could cumbersome and wasteful community participation in decision-making." (Rizvi, quoted in Gregg 1989:19)*

The ideal compromise between such views -- the ideal partnership or 'hybrid' of such forces (Hallak 1990) -- would accept the need for some kind of central government agenda or framework to establish common goals, general policies, national planning processes, basic content, and uniform standards and "to co-ordinate local action, reconcile divergent interests and protect the weak, the losers, and, sometimes, minorities" (Stiefel and Racelis 1990:3). At the same time it would recognize the right of local authorities and of the popular sectors to adapt and implement this framework and fill it with local content. It would encourage a distribution of power in which either side has an equal opportunity to influence the other (Gregg 1989), and it would respect the traditional wisdom of local communities, the experience of teachers and principals, and the legitimacy of non-government organizations. It would also encourage the exchange of experiences, information, techniques, approaches, and resources among governments, NGOs, and community groups.

Most importantly, perhaps, this ideal partnership would see the usual 'controllers' of development -- governments and the donors which support them -- rather as 'enablers', charged with permitting other actors to assume both the rights and the risks of being partners in educational development (Myers in press, Garilao 1987, Duke 1990) and with "preserving, protecting, opening or creating necessary 'spaces' -- political, legal, social, economic, and cultural -- for participation to emerge and thrive" (Stiefel and

Racelis 1990:3). It would encourage participation by these actors, not only to share responsibility with them for the failure of projects and programmes, but also to build the capacity of otherwise marginal groups through collaboration in assessing needs, designing and managing programmes, and making decisions. Finally, it would reduce the "constraints to local initiatives imposed by absolute and unresponsive administrative forms" (Hollnsteiner 1982:14) and search for the optimal, if ever-changing, mix of centralized and decentralized structures and procedures (Rondinelli et al 1990).

To achieve such an ideal mix or balance is a difficult task. If achieved, it can be fragile and highly dependent on the personalities of the actors involved or on the nature of ever-changing political and economic conditions. But there are quite concrete areas where such collaboration and participation in education should most probably work and where concrete evidence is available to prove that they have. There are also certain conditions and factors which, although dependent on context and time, tend to encourage the development and sustainability of such collaboration.

This collaboration relates to the increased participation both of teachers and of parents and the community (directly or via community associations and NGOs) in school. Such participation in education can be analysed in terms of both the *degree* and the *area* of participation. The first, related to the earlier analysis of the possible kinds of participation in development, posits a range of involvement of outside actors in school, from (1) complete non-participation and exclusion from school affairs, except (usually) in the provision of resources, through (2) assistance (at home) with motivating children and helping them with homework, to participation as (3) an 'audience' and as passive supporters at school-run meetings or assemblies, (4) 'consultants' on school issues, (5) 'partners' in teaching or even training, (6) implementors of delegated powers, and (7) ultimately, citizens or a community in control of the school (Gregg 1989, Stallworth and Williams 1983, Arnstein 1976).

Second, this possible range of collaboration with outside actors, as well as the more active participation of teachers within and across schools, can further be seen in relation to involvement in several different areas of education: (1) school resources, (2) policy and governance, (3) school operations, and (4) the instructional programme, comprising both educational content (the curriculum) and methods (the pedagogy).

The first involves *the contribution and management of resources*. Participation, as we have seen, is often defined as extraction; that is, parents and the community at large are seen as sources of financial and material support and of physical labour but are otherwise not encouraged to participate in school activities. This does not need to be the case. The provision of labour, for example, might include help not only in building and furnishing classrooms and buying textbooks but also in organising pre-schools or day-care centres and assisting as teaching aids. More significantly, both teachers and parents (the latter through school committees or parent groups) can assume a larger role in examining and approving school budgets and, preferably in collaboration with school managers, in deciding how resources, both parental and governmental, might be spent.

Policy and governance represent a further area where collaboration can be encouraged. First, teachers can be encouraged to play a more collective and collegial role in this area, with more responsibility for setting policies related to school calendars and

timetables, enrolment and promotion, and educational content. Of greater importance, perhaps, is community involvement in policy and governance.

> "*A more decentralized governance structure is needed so that schools, as unique educational entities, can offer their local communities the services, programmes, and activities which they desire. ...If adults are going to develop this ownership and commitment to their local schools, the governance of education must be decentralized so they can participate in decision-making activities, at the local school level, which directly influence the quality and quantity of education offered to children. The school committees, school councils or parent-teacher groups established to facilitate participatory decision-making must be based on a collaborative management philosophy of governance*" *(Sander and Murphy 1989:41).*

This includes "the establishment, modification, and implementation of schools' goals and objectives. This type of involvement would allow parents to shape the tone of their school, have it conform to their value systems, and truly address their perception of the type of schooling their child receives" (Gregg 1982:46).

Participation in *school operations* is another possible area of collaboration both among teachers and with the community. Again, school committees and PTAs can assist school personnel in issues such as administration and discipline, and community groups, through the suasion of traditional authority, can help encourage or even compel school enrolment and attendance (Bude 1985, Singhal et al 1986). Involvement in identifying and selecting staff is a further area for possible community participation in the day-to-day operations of the school as is participation in the evaluation of both student achievement and general school operations.

A final area of potential greater participation lies in *the instructional programme*, both *its content and its pedagogy*. Curricular content, teaching materials, and even texts can be chosen or developed in collaborative ways. Teachers themselves can be given more responsibility for such work, perhaps to assess local needs and adapt or enrich centrally-determined curricula and material. The involvement of parents and local community leaders may help to ensure the use of local content, the marriage of traditional and modern knowledge, coverage of local culture and history, and the inclusion of economically-relevant practical subjects (Punch and Bayona 1990). And teachers, parents, and even pupils can be involved in collecting information for such material and in designing various practical school activities (Bude 1985, Dave et al 1990).

The process of instruction may also provide room for collaboration. Teachers can work together to evaluate each other's teaching, assess training needs, design and test upgrading activities, and therefore develop, among themselves, greater personal and professional capacity (Veda et al 1986, Shaeffer 1990). Parents and community groups, though usually kept clearly away from what are considered 'professional' matters of teaching processes, may also have a role to play in monitoring and supervising classroom performance and teacher absenteeism, in participating in in-service training activities, and in serving as teacher aids or teaching resources for particular subjects (Durning 1989).

In summary, there are major roles which teachers within schools -- and parents, community associations, and NGOs from outside of schools -- can play in attempts to

improve educational quality. The conditions necessary to introduce some kinds of collaboration -- the establishment of school committees or PTAs, for example -- may appear quite simple to put in place. But to guarantee genuine participation as we have defined it -- to empower teachers and the community to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to participate and the necessary power to take action -- requires a considerable change in the way education is planned and managed and therefore the conscious enhancement of those factors and conditions which encourage participation.

3.   The factors and conditions which encourage collaboration

Greater collaboration and greater participation by the under-represented do not occur because they are willed or legislated. "Success requires major transformations in the way an agency performs its task, in the way the community relates to the agency, and in the way the society views the poor and their rights. Such transformations are inevitably slow and filled with set-backs" (F. Korten 1981:199-200). These transformations have been called 'micro-policy reforms' which "depend on the accomplishment of highly complex and difficult institutional changes -- commonly involving the development of significant new capacities and norms and a redefinition of institutional roles. Needed re-orientation of existing professional and managerial practice may depend on achieving changes in deeply held personal and professional values" (D. Korten 1986).

Certain factors and conditions can be consciously created and nurtured in order to make these changes easier to achieve. Some can be considered as *institutional and system-wide norms*. The first of these norms required for the encouragement of optimal collaboration is central, *governmental commitment* to "removing obstacles to participation -- ideological, structural, and administrative" (Stiefel and Racelis 1990:2). Many could argue, in fact, that genuine participation is "feasible only in a political system in which efforts are undertaken to remedy economic and social injustice" (Bude 1985:275) -- where there is some 'space' provided for communities and NGOs to act and explore (Myers in press) and where greater participation in development is encouraged in all development sectors. It should be clear, however, that even in repressive societies there may be certain geographic regions, certain administrative levels of the nation, or "certain historic moments in the life of a nation [where] democratic spaces open up" (Picon 1990:5). Seizing these where available, and attempting to extend their reach, become critical tasks.

The second norm is one of *institutional change* -- a willingness on the part of the system and the institutions within it to adapt and adopt at least some new forms of work behaviour, new skills, and new ways of relating to others, and, in some cases, to employ new people with different values and objectives. To the extent that the institution and their strategies of change seek to move "away from using mechanistic strategies toward more open or adaptive strategies, the scope of change will be larger, and it will be necessary to use a slower, more bottom-up, and more participatory process of organizational change" (Rondinelli et al 1990:149).

Thirdly, greater collaboration also requires a commitment to the norm of greater professional *autonomy and empowerment* at the school level (Greenland 1990) and greater social autonomy and empowerment at the community level. "In a development organization that seeks to be responsive, the dominant goal must be to facilitate self-determination among

its clients or within the community with which it is dealing. The role of a government agency in this case is to provide support for community initiatives and to make available modest amounts of unrestricted resources. Beneficiaries are seen as independent initiators of activities" (Rondinelli 1983:127). This commitment to autonomy may imply the need for legal or quasi-legal frameworks for participation and certainly implies that the government is meant to become an enabler rather than a controller and regulator of local initiative and is "prepared to limit the role of the state sector and give more opportunity to the community sector to take a larger role in development activities" (Hadad 1983:19). This leads to greater tolerance of political competition, national and local; greater trust and delegation of authority to lower levels of the bureaucracy; and greater value placed upon group expression and group demands.

Finally, within the school itself, two norms -- *collegiality* and *continuous improvement* -- are particularly important. "The first is collegiality, the notion that the work of teachers is shared, not to be done exclusively in the isolation of a classroom. Continuous improvement, the second work norm, reflects an expectation that improvements in teaching are continuous and life-long (rather than limited only to beginning teachers)....Schools where such norms are present and salient are characterized by frequent talk among teachers about the practice of teaching...; frequent observations by teachers; and teachers working together to plan, design, research, and prepare materials for teaching" (Schwille et al 1986:16).

If these norms are present or potentially can be developed -- some public commitment to greater participation, to institutional change, and to greater autonomy, empowerment, and collegiality -- then a number of more specific factors and conditions can be more easily brought into play within the education system. These can be divided into conditions related to: (1) resources; (2) structures; (3) procedures; and (4) knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours.

In terms of *resources*, the necessary condition is clear. The central government must be prepared to allocate (or reallocate) at least some funds and personnel to local levels. "Participation, if it is to be done well, has to be adequately and appropriately resourced; otherwise it is simply tokenism and does nothing to alter the knowledge balance, the skills balance, and the power balance in the community" (Brownlea 1987:607). This may take the form of additional staff charged with encouraging participation, the provision of incentives for the extra work often required in implementing more participatory processes, and resources provided directly to schools for school-improvement activities designed by the local partners.

Another factor which can facilitate participation and collaboration and can be strengthened through training and administrative decision relates to *structures*. At the micro-level, school committees and parent-teacher organizations or more *ad hoc* groups for particular purposes such as curriculum development or fund-raising can be established and strengthened. These cannot simply be set up by fiat and expected to flourish; they require, instead, animation, resources, and continuous recognition and support (Bray 1986, Bude 1985). Other structures such as 'learning laboratories' -- where adults may follow literacy programmes, out-of-school can participate in youth various non-formal education courses, and pupils can pursue their regular school programmes -- might also be developed (D. Korten 1981, Anderson 1988).

At a macro-level, it is necessary to ensure strong *vertical* administrative structures (between the State and the community) -- not to impose centralized, standard decisions from above but rather to clarify national policies, standards, and basic content; guarantee the implementation of the procedures by which local actors can adapt and implement them; and serve as a conduit for information *up* the system as well as down. Equally strong *horizontal* structures and networks are also required, at both the national and local levels, of public, non-government, private, and community organizations (Hamadache 1990). Special inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary working groups or task forces of people from various offices of the system as well as organizations outside of the system, can also be formed to work on long-term problems (F. Korten). Trilateral forums among governments, donors, and NGOs and the creation of NGO liaison units to work with governments might also be useful (Bhatnagar 1990).

Specific *procedures* can also be developed and implemented. These can include procedures at the micro (school) level and the macro (system) level. At the school level, methods can be developed which lead to greater collaboration among teachers and with headmasters and supervisors; to more systematic communication and interaction with parents and the community; and to more community consultation and collaborative planning in regard to the development and revision of school goals and objectives and the implementation of school programmes (UNICEF 1982, Bude 1989, Fullan 1985). Schools or local district offices (as well as other levels of the system) can establish formal written policies regarding the role of parents and community advisory groups in school governance; encourage professional development activities attended by parents as well as teachers and administrators; and carry out community profiles and local surveys of needs, where possible with the assistance of local associations.

It is particularly important to establish procedures to encourage the development and adaptation of curriculum to local conditions so that site-specific factors and local expertise may be used. At the school and cluster level, both teacher and community panels may be established. Greater dialogue between the community and the school may be needed so that parents understand the need to improve the curriculum, clarify their needs and aspirations (perhaps after some collaborative information-gathering process) and then, within any existing national guidelines, help in drafting new curricula (Commonwealth Secretariat 1980, Bude 1989, Adams 1978).

At the macro-level other procedures can be established. National, system-wide guidelines can be drawn up concerning both desired levels and types of (1) decentralization to district offices and to school and cluster committees, and (2) teacher, parent, and community involvement in areas such as those mentioned above. Legislation, policies, and practices concerning NGOs, community associations, teacher organizations, and private school systems can be reviewed to ensure that their efforts as partners in the improvement of basic education are encouraged and perhaps assisted. Information (such as about budgeting and staffing procedures) can be more widely shared with NGOs and regular communication established with them for the discussion of major educational problems. And, resources permitting, governments can assist community associations with technical expertize, logistical support, and seed money (Stiefel and Racelis 1990).

Procedures can also be initiated to allow greater flexibility in the timing and budgeting of often slow, time-consuming, and labour-intensive school-based improvement projects and to provide block grants for such projects, with accountability for these activities and other planning and budgeting processes pushed lower down in the system (Korten and Alfonso 1981, UNICEF International Child Development Centre 1990) -- even to the level of the community itself. And, very importantly, the government can make a more conscious effort to hire personnel committed to participatory processes. The evaluation of ministry and school personnel, at various levels, can use as a criterion the extent to which individuals have emphasized local capacity-building and participation in their work. This implies the need to discourage the rapid turn-over and transfer of effective personnel so that they have the time to implement more time-consuming participatory activities.

A change in *knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours* -- the instilling of new capacities, roles, and values -- is essential to ensure that the new norms are strengthened and the new structures and procedures effectively implemented (Hollnsteiner 1982, Allen 1982, Bhasin 1979, Roy 1984, Rondinelli et al 1990). As one observer notes, "the task of educating the communities toward participation is less difficult than that of educating administrators to accept it as a strategy" (Allen 1982:2). There is thus the need to re-train government officials -- administrators, politicians, technocrats, fieldworkers, and extension agents -- to become what has been called 'social development managers'. These are people who need "not only a capacity to break a problem down into its components, but also to view it in context -- to examine the characteristics of the system in which it is embedded; to be comfortable with diversity, multiplicity, simultaneity, uncertainty, and paradox; to pursue complex strategies involving multiple outcomes and simultaneous facilitating actions; to sense where there is harmony or 'fit' between two or more elements of a system and where there is discord; and to identify where, when, and how to intervene to improve fit or to generate a desired tension" (D. Korten 1981a:218-219).

Specifically, one principle capacity of those involved in 'people-centred development' is the ability to work collaboratively with people: that is, to be (1) patient, self-effacing, and flexible; (2) willing to share plans, procedures, and information openly and, especially, laterally; (3) tolerant both of conflict, dissent, and compromise and of active behaviours from active partners (rather than the usual passive 'recipient'); and (4) willing to see knowledge as residing in both professionals and beneficiaries. A particularly important part of such capacity is the willingness and ability to respond to the needs, knowledge, and experience of women -- those often most marginal to development processes but most critical to the process of education. Another is the ability to focus on process rather than product; to reflect, re-examine, explore alternatives, and confront novel situations; to revise plans and adjust to changing conditions; and to accept the necessity of trial and error, a slower pace of development, and the complexity and uncertainty of change (UNICEF 1986, NFE Exchange 1981).

In any school-based reform, a focus on the knowledge and skills of the headmaster is especially important. Leadership training is usually essential for headmasters in teacher support and supervision; in consistent and continuous implementation of change; in the clarification of policies, practices, and expectations; and in strengthening ties and collaboration with the local community (Zainal Ghani 1990). Teachers and teacher trainees can also be trained in these skills.

These kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours are difficult to transmit through traditional top-down, 'cascade' methods. The training required is more usually horizontal, experiential, and community-based, and is often centred on group learning, case studies of concrete problems, field visits, and self-criticism (Bhasin 1979) -- the kinds of training which NGOs might be in the best position to offer to government personnel and fieldworkers. Guidebooks and manuals on specific issues are also useful; these include how to run meetings, how to strengthen local and self-reliant PTAs and encourage parental participation in them, how to delegate tasks and evaluate achievements, and how to analyse and overcome the passivity of long-ingrained poverty (Bray 1987).

Useful also are attempts to sensitize senior officials concerning the need to formulate and implement State policy to help "create a 'space' for NGOs to perform on the national development stage" and lower-level officials concerning the importance of participatory development paradigms (Bhatnagar 1990:19). Evidence of successful NGO involvement in development and of NGO-government collaboration may also help in this sensitization process.

The encouragement of institutional norms of commitment, change, and autonomy; the provision or reallocation of additional resources; the inculcating of more supportive skills and attitudes; and the development of more flexible, collaborative procedures and structures can facilitate rather than hinder the greater participation of the various actors in education -- from the school and the community -- in educational policy and practice. This can help increase the demand for -- and the quality and relevance of -- education and may in turn reinforce other, more participatory processes of development. But these links are often fragile, tenuous, and dependent on particular contexts and personalities. They are forged with difficulty, difficult to sustain, and easily broken. Governments and the agencies which support them -- especially at a time of educational crisis and socio-economic uncertainty -- must make a conscious effort to encourage the conditions which make greater participation possible. In the case studies which follow and in the synthesis chapter, more specific information is provided concerning the conditions which might facilitate such participation and the training and administrative reform activities which can permit such co-ordination to flourish.

The innovations and reforms chosen for these case studies share one common goal: they attempt to enhance the quality of primary education by encouraging greater collaboration among, and participation by, various actors at the school (and usually at the community) level. In a sense, they all begin with the assumptions that the ability of a central administration to implement major educational reform through its traditional hierarchical structure is necessarily limited, for bureaucratic or economic reasons; that greater responsibility and opportunity for change must therefore be shared with other partners and/or devolved to lower levels of the system; that these processes succeed to the extent that participation and collaboration among the various partners in education at these levels can be enhanced; and that this can result in the development of enduring partnerships which will lead to a greater supply of school places, a greater demand for education, and/or a better quality of education.

Despite these shared assumptions, there are differences among the cases studied. Two of them -- analyses of school cluster projects in Thailand (chapter 2) and Indonesia

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(summarized in the Appendices) -- focus largely on *the enhancement of participation and collaboration within and across schools,* between teachers and headmasters, and between clusters of schools and local education offices. Community involvement, though not unwelcome, is not a major objective of the projects.

Another set of cases deals with *school-community interaction.* Several alternatives are described in this regard: (i) in Indonesia (chapter 3), the activities of parent groups and parent-teacher associations (in Jakarta and Central Java) and the involvement of the community in curriculum development (West Java) and in teaching in isolated schools (Kalimantan); and (ii) in chapter 4, the training of parents in ways to support both the school as a whole and particularly their children's participation in it (the Parent Learning Support System in the Philippines).

A third set of cases deals more explicitly with *collaboration among a larger range of government officials and agencies, non-government and village organizations, and private enterprises* in programmes aimed at school improvement. These include: (i) the PROPEL programme in India, where a large variety of government agencies, individuals, and educational programmes collaborate toward an integrated system of rural education (chapter 5); (ii) the BRAC case in Bangladesh, where a already highly collaborative process between NGO-sponsored schools and their communities is being introduced by the NGO to government officials, thereby encouraging links among BRAC staff, district officers and government education offices, community leaders, parents, and school management committees, (iii) the new COPLANER project in Indonesia where Community Fora for Educational Development, composed of representatives of various types and levels of education and of other sectors, are being developed; and (iv) the MINDSACROSS project in Uganda where pupil involvement in the development of reading materials is being encouraged through collaboration among a wide range of government, community, donor, and private sector actors. (The last three cases are summarized in the Appendices).

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Improving basic education through collaboration and co-operation: school clusters in Thailand

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Chapter 2

Improving basic education through collaboration and co-operation: school clusters in Thailand

I.   Executive summary

School clusters represent an international movement to implement organizational strategies for school improvement close to the building level. Thailand's experience with clusters suggests that, under certain conditions, they play a useful role in this effort. Specifically, their mission of promoting collaboration and co-operation within and across schools can be used by a principal intent on improving school performance to enhance his or her own efforts. This capacity-building role is especially important, since it contributes to building and supporting the very components of collaboration and co-operation which are important determinants of quality within an individual school.

Cluster activity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for cluster influence. Actual influence depends on the receptivity of the school. In this context the principal plays a pivotal role. Three cases (Schools One, Three and Five) illustrate how school response to the same cluster policy (testing) varied by school, depending on the internal dynamics of each. Another case (School Two) provided an apolar example of how influential a cluster can be when it actively pursues both accountability and capacity-building policies and the principal is intent on improving his or her own school. Two other cases (Schools Four and Six) illustrate what can happen when clusters are relatively inactive, because of weak principal and district office support. Such principals either ignored cluster policies or created programmes, like test preparation, to insulate their schools from outside pressure to embark on programmes of internal reform.

To improve clusters requires a serious training initiative, partly because impending changes in the regulations will likely lead to a large turnover in cluster staff, and partly because previous in-service programmes were not as effective as they could have been. The lessons from the most active clusters studied suggest the need for new ways of thinking about cluster initiatives. New forms of staff development emphasizing the use of local knowledge of good practice, more effective methods for getting materials and equipment to teachers so they actually benefit from the cluster's resource centre, assistance in developing new materials and new curricular lessons and units, and support for innovative programmes to help teachers are some of the most important training needs. Specific attention should be devoted to the two new office staff, since it will be their responsibility to carry out the cluster's programme. But the principal of the core school, who will become the head of the cluster office, will need to participate in this training in order to understand what will be expected of his or her staff. In addition, cluster committee members (including principals of all schools in their *ex officio* role) need training in how to perform their roles more effectively, specifically on the importance of principal support for cluster activity. District

office staff, similarly, need training in how to help clusters become more active, especially in the area of capacity-building initiatives.

But training alone will not lead to clusters performing their roles as intended. Clusters operate within a set of organizational and political constraints. Unless national policy provides more support for capacity-building initiatives to improve schools, it is unlikely that district offices will do much to support capacity-building programmes at the cluster level. Unless there is a greater focus on prodding inactive principals at low-achieving schools through the co-ordinated efforts of district offices and school clusters, school receptivity, and, thereby, cluster influence, will remain limited in such schools. It is time to rethink the multiple roles of the state. In so doing, training, emphasizing collaboration and co-operation through cluster activities, may have its biggest impact on schools.

II.   Improving primary school quality: school clusters in Thailand

School clusters have a history of more than 40 years in Thailand. As a management strategy for improving primary school quality, their goals have remained clear and simple, yet their accomplishments have been limited. By administratively grouping schools in close geographic proximity for educational purposes, school clusters have consistently been charged with two major responsibilities: to improve student learning across the cluster and to provide special help to low-achieving schools.

This paper examines school cluster contributions to improving primary school quality in Thailand. In so doing, it focuses on the major enduring dilemmas and tensions that have affected cluster influence and the implications of these for training programmes to improve the collaborative and co-operative roles of clusters.

First, an historical account of school clusters in Thailand is provided, placing that movement in an international context of efforts to create similar structures in other parts of the world. Then a model is provided for understanding the scope and limits of cluster influence drawn from three field studies of cluster activity carried out between 1987 and 1990 as a part of the Thailand/BRIDGES project, a multi-year study of primary education in Thailand funded by USAID. Six case studies of schools in these field studies show the internal components of primary school quality. The next section shows how clusters influenced (or failed to influence) such components. Changes needed to improve cluster influence are then discussed, focusing specifically on training needs. The final part shows that improved cluster performance is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for improving primary school quality; what may be required is a rethinking of roles at different administrative levels, including the cluster level, if primary school quality is to continue to improve during the 1990s.

The argument is that clusters can play an important role in school improvement as one of many government strategies. The major determinants of effective school performance reflect collaborative, participatory relationships within schools, and between schools and their communities. School clusters, with their mission of supporting and encouraging such relationships, are uniquely situated, given their close geographic and administrative proximity to schools, to foster, encourage and nurture such relationships within and across schools. Their responsibility, however, for holding schools accountable for improved

performance through testing, supervision and recommendations for promotions has affected their ability to play a helping role. Since both strategies are important for stimulating school improvement, the question becomes whether clusters should promote both or emphasize one over the other. If the latter, then what roles should higher administrative agencies play?

Part I: Background

l. The international context of the school cluster movement

Many countries around the world face conditions similar to those which led to the development of the cluster movement in Thailand and have responded by creating analogous organizational structures. Some of these conditions include: the existence of many small rural schools, each having insufficient resources for effective management; the disparities between small, remote schools and larger, in-town schools; a scarcity of educational supplies and equipment, so that individual schools cannot be self-sufficient; under-trained principals and staff; and a large *de facto* sphere of autonomy for individual schools from district, provincial and national efforts to promote greater accountability. Given the shortage of resources at the national level to improve education and the inherent difficulties of stimulating improvement from district levels, which are often far removed from the level of individual schools, the school cluster creates an administrative organization closer to schools so that principals and teachers can be more involved in local efforts to improve quality.

The school cluster movement, the administrative grouping of schools in close geographic proximity for educational purposes, has proven especially prominent in Latin America and has taken root on other continents as well. In Latin America, they have been introduced in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru; elsewhere they have been introduced in Burma, India, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Sri Lanka (Bray 1987). In Latin America, clusters are usually called 'nucleos'. Other names include 'complexes', 'zones' and 'school learning cells'.

School clusters share many common purposes:

* economic (sharing resources);
* pedagogic (staff development and curriculum improvement);
* administrative (accountability through testing and monitoring, reporting information to higher administrative authorities, acting as conduits for national policy to schools); and
* political (raising awareness of problems of economic and social development and of government programmes to meet such problems, stimulating local involvement in and contributions to schools, and reducing inequalities by reducing the disparities in performance among schools).

School clusters differ in important respects as well. Some include only primary schools, such as in Papua New Guinea; others integrate primary with secondary schools, such as in Sri Lanka, India, Peru and Costa Rica. Clusters differ in terms of geographic coverage. In Thailand (primary) and Sri Lanka (primary and secondary) all schools are required by law to belong to a cluster; in Colombia and Guatemala, clusters have been introduced as part of initiatives for disadvantaged areas; in parts of India, cluster programmes have covered only schools that have chosen to join. Cluster size also varies. In Thailand between seven and ten schools make up a cluster; in India's Rajasthan State, school complexes contain up to five secondary schools and up to 25 primary schools. In some systems, like Thailand, cluster officials are elected for fixed periods; in other countries the cluster head is appointed by the government and holds the position indefinitely. In terms of

financing, some systems, such as Thailand's, are allocated both administrative staff and an extra budget; in others they are expected to subsist on existing resources (Bray 1987). Where school clusters include all schools at the primary and secondary levels and perform the functions described above, they take on characteristics similar to those performed by local school districts in the USA. Where their authority is more limited, they represent more of a consortium for sharing resources, similar to the role of intermediate school districts in some US states.

II.   School clusters in Thailand: an overview

1.   Origins of the cluster movement

The school cluster movement in Thailand originated in 1950 as a pilot project between the Ministry of Education and UNESCO in Chachoengsao province. By the late 1960s, clusters were expanded to all provinces in Thailand, and by the early 1980s, to all districts in Thailand. By administratively grouping primary schools near one another, it was hoped that staff at larger, better equipped, and often more academically effective schools would assist smaller, often less effective schools to improve the quality of their instruction.

2.   Organizational structure and responsibilities

As an organizational entity, school clusters are consciously designed to occupy an anomalous position in the administrative hierarchy. From Bangkok the administrative line of command goes from the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) in the Ministry of Education to the province to the district to the school. Districts in Thailand, however, are large entities, generally with 40 to 60 schools. Their restricted ability to monitor and improve schools, given limited staff, means that without some entity closer to schools, the effect of government policy would be severely constrained. School clusters are designed to fill this gap. While the district office plays the critical role in promotions and school budgets, for monitoring school performance and for providing some limited staff development, school cluster responsibilities include recommending promotions for teachers and principals, evaluating principal performance, monitoring teacher performance, reviewing and recommending individual school budgets for district approval, and encouraging school improvement initiatives, staff development activities and school-community programmes. As *Figure 1* shows, the concept of a school cluster is neither directly under the district office nor entirely separate from it.

Figure 1.   Organization placement of clusters in the administrative chain of command,
Thailand

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            ┌─────────────────────┐
            │ Ministry of Education │
            │       (ONPEC)         │
            └─────────────────────┘
                       │
                       ▼
            ┌─────────────────────┐
            │  Provincial Office of │
            │   Primary Education   │
            └─────────────────────┘
                       │
                       ▼
            ┌─────────────────────┐
            │   District Office of  │
            │   Primary Education   │
            └─────────────────────┘
              ╱                  ╲
            ◀ ╱                   ╲
         ┌────────┐                ╲
        │ School  │                 ╲
        │ Cluster │╲                 ▼
         └────────┘ ╲        ┌──────────────────┐
                     ▶──────▶│ Individual Schools │
                             └──────────────────┘
```
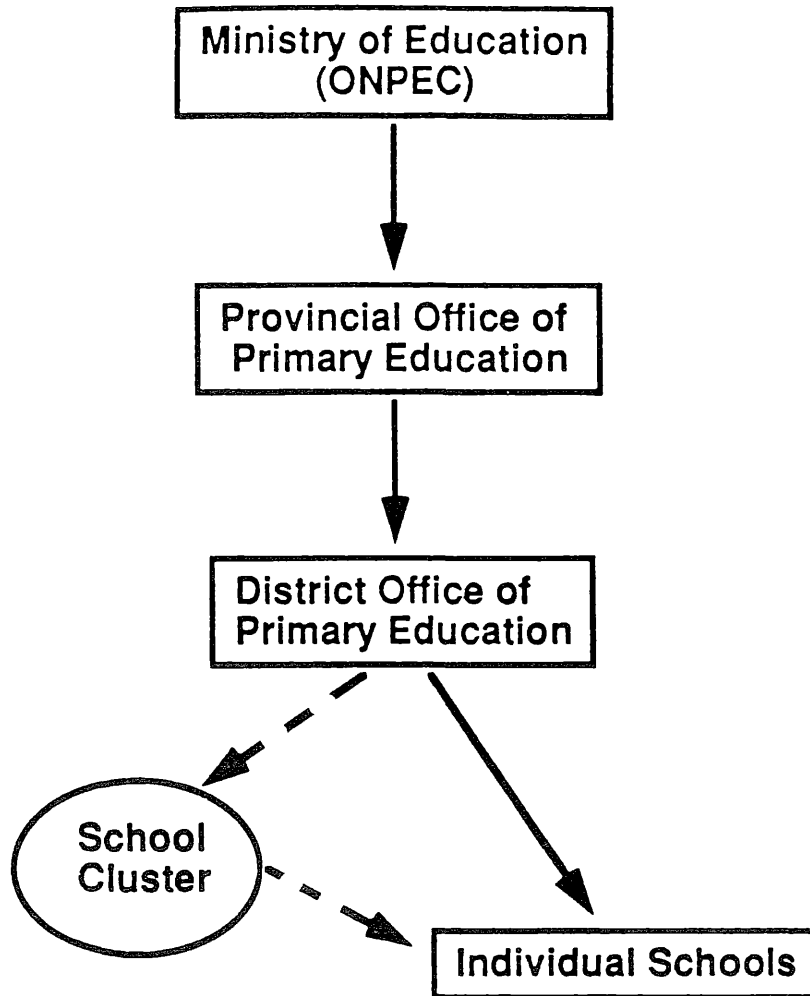
_____   =   direct authority

- - - - - - -   =   indirect authority

3. Administrative structure

By the late 1980s school clusters consisted of the following: a permanent cluster office, housed usually in the largest school (the core school); a cluster chairperson; two to three office staff; a resource centre and library; six academic cluster teachers; and a cluster committee.

A cluster chairperson is expected to play a leadership role in cluster activities, while continuing to administer his or her own school. As chair of the cluster committee, which meets monthly to make policy and review progress, he/she is expected to set the agenda for school improvement and accountability. Cluster staff report directly to the chair, who reports annually to the head of the district office on the accomplishments of the cluster, to evaluate each principal and each cluster staff person, and to provide recommendations to the district office regarding possible merit or 'double promotions'. The cluster chair is also expected to co-operate in planning carried out by the district office and to facilitate supervision activities by district supervisors. Finally, the chair is expected to perform other assigned duties by the district office.

The cluster office also has important responsibilities. The head of the office is second only to the cluster chairperson in terms of importance for cluster activities. He or she proposes ways of improving academic outcomes to the cluster chair and the cluster committee; to act as the secretary to the cluster committee; to prepare the data for teacher promotion for the chair and the cluster committee (including participating with office staff, academic cluster teachers, and cluster committee members on supervision visits to schools and evaluations of teachers recommended for double promotions); to oversee the activities of the cluster staff, including the academic cluster teachers; to be responsible for the activities of the resource centre and library; to prepare the annual report to the district on cluster activities; and to carry out other tasks assigned by the chairperson and the cluster committee.

The two office staff are responsible for making the resource centre and the library work effectively. This means getting teachers to use resources and training them in how to effectively integrate such resources into their teaching. They are expected to support the work of the academic cluster teachers, to participate in the supervision and evaluation visits to schools, and to carry out other academic work assignments from the chair and the school cluster committee. They are also required to teach 8-10 hours a week.

The six academic cluster teachers are selected on the basis of experience and outstanding performance in their particular area of competence; they include one teacher each in the areas of Thai, mathematics, life experience (health education, social studies and science), character development (art, music, physical and moral education), work-oriented subjects (home economics, carpentry, agriculture and handicrafts), and extra-experience (students in grades V and VI in either English or a work-oriented subject). They are expected to assist teachers improve their pedagogy, for example, by demonstration teaching, to provide leadership in developing materials, to participate in supervision and evaluation visits to schools, and to provide advice to the cluster committee on ways to improve academic work across schools. They are also expected to provide a model in the use of the services of the resource centre and the library and to assist in the academic improvement of

teaching, e.g. by developing, administering and reporting cluster tests. They are expected to devote at least one day a week to cluster activities. Meanwhile they continue to teach their regular classes at their home school.

Such responsibilities represent a considerable commitment by the Thai Government. Between 1982-1986, for example, the government borrowed over 160 million Baht (over $6 million) from the World Bank and the Japanese Government to finance the implementation of the pilot and initial phases of establishing resource centres (Interview, February 1991). (After 1986, the government assumed responsibility for establishing resource centres in the remaining provinces, approximately 40 of 73). These figures, of course, do not include the costs, over the 40 years of this initiative, of time devoted to cluster activities by various officials associated with the programme.

III.   The context of education in Thailand

The period of most dramatic educational reform in Thailand was from the 1960s to the 1980s. Certainly, earlier periods are important. For example, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) proclaimed his intention in 1874 to extend educational opportunities to all social classes, created a Department of Education in 1884 and developed a national plan for education by 1895 (ONPEC 1984). By 1921 compulsory primary education had been mandated for all children. The infrastructure in terms of teachers, principals, buildings and textbooks, however, was lacking, which meant this important policy initiative existed more on paper than in practice during the next 40 years.

While the legal basis for Thailand's educational achievements in primary education had been created by 1921, its realization (universal, compulsory attendance) came only during the decades 1960-1980 as shown by the percentage of students who actually attended and completed primary school. For example, in 1960 of those 25 or older only 33.5 per cent had completed four years of primary school; by 1980 the figure had risen to 69 per cent. The most remarkable fact, however, is that this accomplishment occurred while Thailand's population was nearly doubling -- 26 million to 44 million (Wyatt 1984). Not only was educational opportunity expanding, but it was expanding exponentially. Currently 96 per cent of any age cohort is enrolled in primary school. By any standard this is a remarkable accomplishment.

However, Thailand's success in creating universal access to primary school brought to the fore another problem: the quality of instruction. To accomplish equality of access required a dramatic increase in the infrastructure of education: more buildings, more textbooks and more teachers. Valenti (1979) pointed out that in the early 1960s, 5,000 to 6,000 new teachers were graduating each year from teacher training programmes; yet the need was for 8,000 to 10,000 a year. "Assuming a pupil/teacher ratio of 35:1 in primary schools and a ratio of 20:1 in secondary schools," he argued, "the teaching force would have to increase from 183,000 in 1967 to 400,000 in 1987" (p. 72). Indeed, the teaching force for primary schools by the mid-1980s did reach more than 330,000, and the number of primary schools more than 30,000 (ONPEC 1989). The number of graduates from teacher training institutions had doubled, doubled again and doubled yet again as newly created teacher training programmes began providing graduates by the tens of thousands (by 1970, 31,000 teachers a year were graduating from teacher preparation programmes). But the largest

increase occurred as a result of candidates passing through the 'external examination system' (Valenti 1979). While this examination system was roundly criticized by educational leaders and Ministry of Education officials alike as woefully inadequate for ensuring that competent teachers entered the classroom, programmes of teacher education, particularly the newest ones, also received their share of criticism. Although it can be argued which avenue produced the least competent teacher, the fact remains: a significant percentage of new staff lacked adequate pedagogical skills and sufficient content knowledge. Programmes established during these years to help staff already in the schools and those joining their ranks to improve their knowledge and skills proved not to be very successful (Interview, March 1991). 'Twilight' study programmes conducted during the evenings for teachers did not have much impact.

During the 1980s, this problem of teacher competency took on an added dimension as government family-planning initiatives took hold and the population growth rate fell from 3.2 per cent in the 1960s to less than 2 per cent in the early 1980s (Krannich and Krannich 1980). The mid-80s saw fewer students enrolled in primary school. This reduced the demand for new teachers and made the need for improved teaching even more apparent as student/teacher ratios plummeted to less than 20:1, in many classrooms without appreciable gains in student performance. In 1985, for example, ONPEC, the agency responsible for administering about 85 per cent of the primary schools in Thailand, assessed pupil achievement and found that mean test scores were lower than the 50 per cent standard required by the government in almost all subjects (Bhumirat et al 1987). Clearly the teaching force represented an underdeveloped and under-utilized resource for improving the quality of primary education.

Improving the teaching-learning process by improving the quality of teaching in classrooms, however, represented only one possible avenue of productive (and needed) reform. Teaching occurs in an organizational context, as studies of effective schools in the USA and Third World countries have demonstrated (see Schwille et al 1986). Administrative policies and procedures play a crucial role in creating or destroying the preconditions for effective teaching. The massive expansion of the primary system necessitated not only hundreds of thousands of new teachers but also thousands of new administrators as well. Most of these new principals were simply promoted in their positions from the teaching ranks and few, if any, had received training for their new responsibilities. The organizational context of schooling, therefore, represented a second major area of possible fruitful reform.

IV.   A system-wide approach to school improvement

Poor student performance, ineffective teaching, and weak school administration were only some of the problems facing primary schools in Thailand at the start of the 1980s. There were other problems which required attention, such as student malnutrition, high repetition rates and high drop-out rates between grades IV and V (many small schools in rural areas went up to only grade IV, which necessitated some form of transportation for students to a neighbouring school if they were to complete grades V and VI of primary school).

To address the problems described above, ONPEC implemented a series of initiatives during the 1980s which touched virtually every facet of the system. It reformed

existing programmes at the national level, expanded previously existing provincial programmes to the national level and implemented new innovations. These combined efforts included: a national school lunch programme (involving community participation) to address problems of student malnutrition; a pre-primary education programme to address problems of student readiness; a number of assistance programmes such as lending bicycles, providing transport allowances, and establishing school bus and ferry transport services to increase student accessibility to grades V and VI; support for curricular innovations such as the Reduced Instructional Time Project (RIT) (designed to help teachers instruct students of diverse ages and competencies in small rural schools); staff development programmes to improve teacher competencies in subject matter and pedagogy as well as programmes for selected 'master teachers' (academic cluster teachers); programmes to improve principals' knowledge of their administrative responsibilities, including monitoring teacher performance in classroom teaching; programmes to improve district and provincial staff knowledge of their administrative, financial and personnel responsibilities; programmes to improve parental knowledge of school activities and to stimulate community involvement in school decision making; programmes to stimulate student participation in school life; a national testing system to monitor and improve student achievement; a series of organizational reforms to decentralize decision making to provincial offices, district offices and local school clusters to stimulate local efforts at school improvement; and various changes in the financial incentives for teachers to reward academic success as a criterion for merit promotions and transfers to other schools (Interviews, March 1987, October 1987 and June 1988; see also Wheeler et al 1989 and Wheeler et al in press).

In addition to a general policy of improving the resources for schools, embedded in this array of initiatives were two approaches to improve primary school quality. One set of policies was designed to hold teachers and principals more accountable (i.e. to focus their attention more on the academic tasks of schooling as a way to increase student learning), while another set was designed to build teacher and principal capacity -- teacher capacity to provide quality instruction and principal capacity to create the context for such instruction. The national testing programme illustrates the accountability approach, for example, while certain staff development programmes emphasizing interaction between trainers and participants illustrate the capacity-building approach.

The accountability approach, as it developed during the 1980s, used regulations, requirements, testing and hierarchical patterns of decision making and control to improve the quality of education. It assumed that teachers needed direction from above, especially poor teachers who might otherwise do little or no teaching. Rewards and incentives were primarily extrinsic, such as salary promotions (double promotions). Public ranking of test results was used as a way to stimulate greater effort by individual teachers. In contrast, as the capacity-building approach evolved, it emphasized more collaboration and co-operation to improve the quality of teaching. Under this approach, participation was emphasized in the belief that teachers and principals would collectively develop goals for improving the quality of education in individual classrooms. Teachers were assumed to be competent and sincere in their desire to improve. The most important rewards were often intrinsic, i.e. internal, as the result of participation to define and achieve goals for improvement.

Both approaches were pursued simultaneously, and by the end of the decade, the strategies began to pay dividends. Classroom teachers and principals were attending much more to the academic purpose of schooling in many Thai primary schools. For example, as *Table 1* shows, except for 1987 (the most recent available score), the percentage of satisfactory achievement on the national grade VI examination increased substantially.

Table 1. Percentage of satisfactory achievement on the national sixth grade examination, 1984-87, by subject area

| Subject area | Percentage satisfactory achievement | | | |
	1984	1985	1986	1987
Thai	47	69	76	64
Math	11	18	41	40
Life experience	30	37	65	52
Work-oriented	55	60	81	67
Character development				
Attitude/feeling	88	89	92	92
Habits	90	92	96	94
Strength	54	52	86	96
Weight	92	93	94	98
Height	93	93	95	98

Note: From *National evaluation results for sixth grade students* (pp. 8-9) by the Office of the National Primary Education Commission, 1987. Bangkok: ONPEC, Research and Development Section. The Thai government has determined 'satisfactory achievement' to be above 50 per cent.

In terms of increasing principal attention to the academic tasks of schooling, test results coupled with a national in-service training programme for principals also resulted in the resignation or voluntary reassignment to teaching of 2,000 principals. ONPEC officials viewed this result favourably, as an indication that such principals got the message: administration required leadership, hard work and attention to academics (Interviews).

While both approaches were pursued simultaneously, they still occurred, however, within a context of top-down decision-making. The inspiration for almost every initiative during this period was the Deputy Secretary-General for Academic Affairs. Using staff from within the agency and professors from different universities, he had more than 24 different projects going at one time (Interviews).

This top-down approach to improving primary education had a certain irony to it, since one of ONPEC's major stated goals was to decentralize decision-making to lower levels. In this regard, as noted above, it created a series of committees at every level of administration in the hopes of involving local opinion more effectively. So, on the one hand,

by the fact that all new (and important) initiatives continued to come out of Bangkok for implementation at lower levels.

Not only did this dynamic have the effect of weakening the force of the capacity-building initiatives underway, but also the ever increasing emphasis on improving test scores, especially during the middle years of the decade (which, in turn, had its greatest effect on local practice towards the end of the decade as it trickled down), had the effect of focusing particular attention at each administrative level on accountability measures, regardless of any encouragement to promote capacity-building initiatives (Wheeler, Raudenbush and Pasigna 1989 and Wheeler et al in press).

V.   School clusters: 1980-1990

National policy-makers viewed clusters as a major tool to improve the quality of primary education during these years. While clusters existed in all provinces before 1980, they did not exist in all school districts. In 1980, ONPEC mandated that all districts create clusters which was accomplished during the next several years. In 1986 a major change in the regulations governing cluster activity led to an expansion of responsibilities for the cluster chairperson, the creation of a cluster office (staffed by two to three officials) and the creation of a resource centre (funded initially by the World Bank, then the Japanese Government and finally the Thai Government) to promote teacher use of new and more innovative materials in their teaching. Between 1985-88 an extensive training programme for cluster office staff was implemented throughout Thailand to teach them how to make resource centre material available to classroom teachers (although the effects of this initiative were reduced by some of the changes in the regulations, discussed below).   At the same time that the capacity-building role of clusters was expanded, so too was its accountability role.

As described above, one major set of policies to improve primary school quality focused on accountability measures, principally testing, publicity surrounding achievement scores and rewards, such as double promotions. They were designed, in part, to push provincial, district and local administrators and teachers into devoting more attention to the academic purpose of schooling. They were also partly designed to provide some measure for evaluating progress in improving schools. Finally, they were partly designed to create a context within which capacity-building policies could provide the assistance needed to make necessary improvements. Their effects, however, were to nearly overwhelm cluster attention to capacity-building efforts.

In 1984, ONPEC's secretary-general asked the Research and Development Division to develop a test for a national sample of grade VI students. The first year of the programme began with a pilot in 15 per cent of the districts in every province; in 1985 it was expanded to a sample of students in every district and has continued that way until 1989, when the tests were suspended, pending implementation of a revised curriculum.

During 1984 and 1985, ONPEC hosted a meeting of all provincial education directors where mean scores, standard deviations and a ranking of provinces from highest to lowest were announced. Beginning in 1985 and continuing to 1988, ONPEC introduced a new ranking based on rate of improvement. Regardless of which method was used, special attention at each meeting was given to the very best and the very worst provinces. Provinces

with outstanding scores and those which achieved dramatic gains made presentations on the strategies they used. During the former deputy secretary-general's tenure at ONPEC, each director from a low-ranking province had a private meeting with the Deputy Secretary-General for Academic Affairs at that time and key staff from two divisions (Research and Development and Policy and Planning) during the conference to discuss the provincial director's specific problems and his plans for improving test scores. At that time the agency could learn of special needs that might justify additional resources.

At the time, the deputy secretary-general claimed he made "some mental notes about which provinces needed a personal visit" from him to better focus their attention on academic matters. (Interview, June 1988). According to other ONPEC officials, these private meetings made provincial directors 'very nervous' (Interviews). Those with low scores or those who had made little or no progress since the previous year were embarrassed and left the conference ready to improve academic achievement.

Provinces then began to rank districts and to meet with the heads of the district offices on a regular basis to discuss progress. Districts in turn began their own testing systems and began to rank school clusters, who in turn began their own testing systems and began to rank schools and individual classroom teachers according to the performance of their students on tests. By the latter part of the decade, it was not uncommon to find districts allocating additional merit promotions ('double' promotions) to school clusters at the top of the rankings and school principals using test results as one criterion (of many) for recommending merit promotions for specific teachers.

The effect of this emphasis on raising test scores achieved its goal: principals and teachers began to spend more time in schools and classrooms attending to academics. The unintended effects were:

1.   to reduce interest in and incentive for contributing to activities outside the classroom or school, such as the school cluster, unless the rewards were substantial;

2.   to create considerable pressure on clusters from district offices to focus particular attention on developing and implementing a cluster testing system that would contribute to raising achievement; and

3.   to encourage teachers to teach to the test.

By the late 1980s a clear picture had emerged: clusters existed throughout the country; while some were quite active, most still operated at a level below that expected by the government and, where activity did increase, it tended to be in the direction of accountability through tests rather than capacity-building through helping teachers improve their practice (Wheeler et al 1989, and in press. See also a literature review of Thai research on school clusters by Chuaratanaphong 1991).

Part II: Cluster influence

With this background to cluster activity in Thailand, we can turn to examining the question: what are the determinants of cluster influence? In other words, in what ways and under what conditions can clusters influence what schools do? Given the goal of promoting academic improvement by encouraging collaboration among and across schools, and stimulating stronger school-community relations by helping schools perform this important responsibility better, how well did clusters do?

Answering these questions requires several steps. First, a model is presented of how clusters influence schools. Second, six case studies from the field research are presented to show the factors that contribute to school quality. Third, it is shown how the school clusters influenced each school, focusing specifically on the factors that contribute to school quality.

I.   A model of cluster influence

Understanding the scope and limits of school cluster influence on what gets learned in classrooms represents a formidable challenge. Within schools, teaching and learning in classrooms is the result of relationships which exist between teachers and students. Such interactions are affected by: (a) teacher background, training and knowledge; (b) the repertoire of instructional strategies used in teaching; (c) the availability, quality and use of curriculum materials; (d) student perceptions of the importance of schooling (often the result of parental support or lack of support for schooling); and (e) student engagement in the learning process (the result of all the above as well as characteristics of the individual student). But this complicated web of relationships within the classroom exists within a nested setting, since classrooms are part of the school as an organization. As an organization, the school can enhance or detract in significant ways from the teaching-learning process within schools. Thus the management process consisting of principal action (or inaction) and the relationships between the principal and teachers and among the teachers themselves can affect what happens in classrooms. Finally, as in any organization, the school must negotiate a set of relationships with its environment, specifically its local community, the school cluster and higher administrative agencies. The school, therefore, also exists within a nested set of relationships. Depending on the arrangement of internal factors which characterize a particular school, it may respond in different ways to stimuli from its environment. As schools seek to manage their environment, they may respond in proactive ways to stimuli which are congruent with directions they wish to pursue and in reactive ways to pressures to change directions. Each school sets its own level of acceptable performance, consciously or unconsciously. What is called here a 'school's degree of receptivity' refers to each school's responses to external pressures to improve. *Figure 2* modifies Figure 1 (on the organization placement of clusters in the administrative chain of command in Thailand) to show these relationships.

Figure 2.   Organization placement of clusters in the administrative chain of command (modified), Thailand
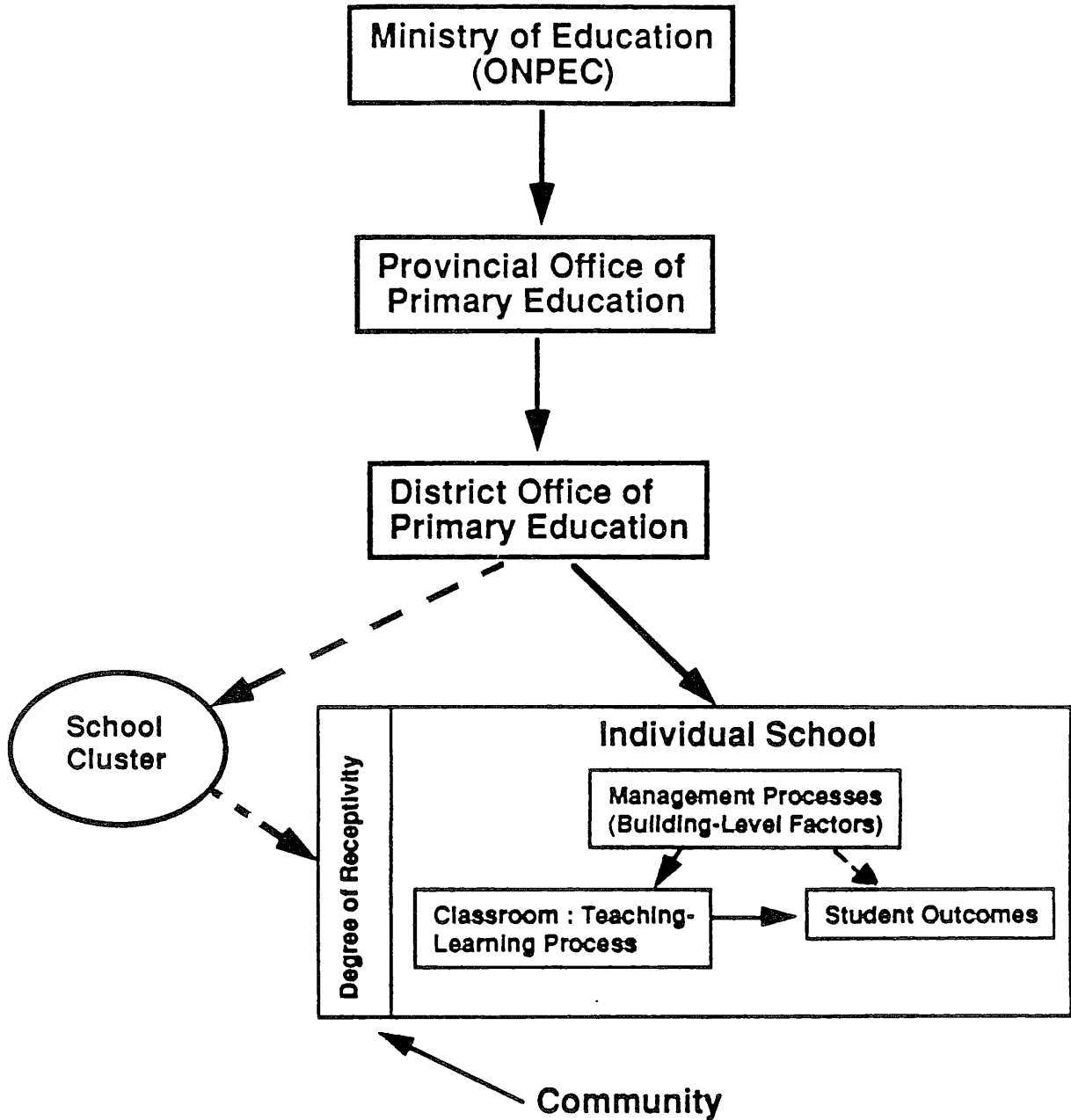
_____   = direct authority

- - - - - - - -   = indirect authority

What this means is that if a school cluster is to affect what happens to students, it has to supplement or modify the relationships the school has created with its teachers and the relationships the teachers have created with their students. Schools are like test tubes: inside there is a reaction going on between teachers and students in classrooms, and a reaction between the teachers and the management processes of the school. School cluster policy is like adding a few drops of a new solution to the test tube and watching what happens to the relationships.

This notion of a nested organizational setting suggests any assumption between cluster activity and direct influence is likely to be misleading. While cluster activity is a necessary condition for cluster influence, it is not sufficient. Influence also depends on school response (and especially the principal's response) to cluster initiative. In summary form, the Thailand/BRIDGES research found three determinants of cluster influence:

1.   cluster office staff and academic cluster teachers actively pursue their responsibilities in the areas of accountability and capacity-building initiatives;

2.   the district office supports cluster activity in both areas; and

3.   principals are receptive to cluster initiatives.

When these conditions were met, the Thailand/BRIDGES research showed that school clusters did make a difference; they influenced both the management processes within schools and the teaching-learning processes within classrooms, regardless of which approach (accountability and/or capacity-building) was pursued (although they had greater influence when both approaches were used). They contributed to improving the capacity of teachers and principals to perform their jobs well and to holding both accountable for the results of their efforts.

This research showed, however, that school clusters are not a panacea for educational ills; they simply represent one strategy for possible incremental improvement in school performance. Their potential influence is limited, not only by the difficulties inherent in meeting the first two conditions, but also by the reality that cluster influence over what happens in classrooms is much less than that of each individual school as an organization over these same outcomes. To understand this requires an understanding of the nested organizational relationship that clusters have with schools and higher administrative levels of government, an understanding best gained by case examples.

The process whereby clusters influence schools can be summarized as follows. There is a threshold effect for school cluster influence, i.e. if all the internal organizational factors of the cluster are working well as staff pursue accountability and/or capacity-building strategies, and the district office supports cluster activity, then maximum influence is possible. How much influence occurs, however, is dependent on the degree of receptivity of each individual school, i.e. there is variation in response, by school, to each cluster initiative. Schools vary by accepting initiatives, modifying them or even ignoring them.

II. Determinants of school quality: six cases

The following are taken from field studies of school performance and school clusters carried out between 1987-1990 as a part of the Thailand/BRIDGES research project on primary education in Thailand. The first was an in-depth study of a single school cluster (with seven schools) located in the north-eastern part of Thailand (as a prelude to that study, a pilot study was carried out of a different school cluster, with six schools, in a neighbouring province). This region was chosen because of its reputation for school cluster activity. The reasoning was that if clusters have an effect anywhere, it ought to be here. For some time, the Thai Government has been trying to improve schools and other aspects of the quality of life in the North-east because economically it is the poorest region in Thailand and politically it lies in a vulnerable area, bordering on Cambodia and Laos. ONPEC, for example, targeted this area as one of the first to receive resource centres in its efforts during the 1980s to upgrade the capacity of clusters to perform their responsibilities more effectively. The other major field study was a component of a larger study of school performance. In February 1988 the Thailand/BRIDGES project conducted a nationally representative survey of students, teachers, principals and parents to learn what factors contributed to more or less effective primary schooling in Thailand. Following survey analysis, a multi-site case study using a matched pair design of eight small rural primary schools from economically disadvantaged areas in each of the four regions of Thailand was designed and carried out to learn how certain variables identified as contributing to quality interacted at the school level. In addition to studying each school intensively, the cluster to which each school belonged was analyzed to understand the contributions clusters made to school quality (Chuaratanaphong et al 1990). In all the studies, test scores were used to identify schools as more or less effective.

Regarding the issue of generalizability, how is it known that these findings are representative of most clusters in Thailand? First, there are a number of MA theses written by Thai scholars which examine specific aspects of cluster activity (see the literature review carried out by Chuaratanaphong 1991). None used the multi-level approach to studying cluster influence used in the present studies; rather they focused on single aspects of cluster activity, such as resource centres, or they surveyed staff and school opinions about cluster activity and influence. Even so, these studies are generally critical of cluster activity and suggest that cluster influence is less than what the government expects. The overall impression from their work strengthens the finding that while clusters can make a difference, their influence is limited in important respects. This conclusion is further supported by the feedback the present work has received from numerous Thai scholars familiar with cluster activity during this period, as well as ONPEC officials responsible for direct contact with clusters. They consistently report that these findings are accurate for the range of clusters in Thailand during the period 1986-1990.

Descriptions of school life which follow are drawn from field studies. The first four provide contrasting examples of school quality; the next two introduce important questions about the contributions clusters can make to school quality.

Schools studied ranged from 'very small' (up to 60) to 'large' (over 300), using ONPEC's criteria for school size (ONPEC 1989). All were located in economically

disadvantaged areas. Five components will emerge as crucial for understanding school quality:

(1)   overall time on task (not just attention to academics within a class, but also overall building attention to academics);

2   teacher-teacher collaboration and an ethos within a building on improving teacher practice;

(3)   principal leadership within the school through modelling, emphasizing the academic purpose of schooling and supporting teacher collaboration;

(4)   school-community-temple relations which reflect meaningful parental involvement in school life, and a close connection between the school and the temple.

(5)   the use by the school, and particularly the principal, of the resources of higher administrative agencies to support efforts for school improvement.

After these six cases are described and analyzed, the role school clusters play in fostering, encouraging and sustaining such components will be examined. In this way both the role school clusters play in improving school quality and their limitations will be seen.

School One: participation, cattle and chickens

In this high-achieving school, there was a clear focus on academics during the day. Teachers came on time and taught academics throughout the day, both morning and afternoon. Seldom did they leave their classrooms to take breaks and when they did, they avoided the temptation to engage in social conversation with colleagues, returning to their classroom to continue instruction. Their concern for student learning was evident in the remedial instruction they provided, carried out almost daily during and after lunch and on weekends. When not providing remedial instruction during lunch, teachers also grouped students across grades and sat with them while they ate, discussing the nutritional value of different vegetables, fish and meat as well as proper eating manners and asking older students to model polite behaviour, for example, by giving a formal thank you to the staff or the housewives organization that prepared the lunch. Students then washed the dishes, cleaned the tables and swept the floor before going out to play. In their classrooms teachers also supplemented their own instruction by also using students from grades V and VI to peer teach children in the lower grades. While their style of teaching was predominantly teacher-centred with a focus on memorization, there was evidence in classrooms of some group work and problem-solving activities.

Teachers consistently used materials in their instruction, including some supplementary materials. They benefited considerably from the assistance given them by the 'academic' teacher, a colleague chosen by the principal to help other teachers improve their pedagogy and use of materials. In addition to locating materials for teachers, this teacher also observed colleagues and provided feedback on ways to improve instruction. These activities supplemented the principal's observations and feedback which comprised a key part of his administrative management of this school.

The principal is a story unto himself, major parts of which will emerge later under the section on the role the school cluster played in helping this school improve. Besides supervision, his major contributions were in promoting collaboration within the building and in building strong links to the community. For example, he changed the decision-making structure used by a previous principal which relied on a top-down model of administration to one where teachers participated in the major decisions of the school, which served to increase both their commitment to the school and the range of activities the school could undertake effectively. The newly created role of 'academic' teacher served to stimulate staff to discuss academic issues as a regular part of school life.

Regarding the community, the principal's conscious efforts to improve relations by his own involvement in community projects led to two joint projects which further linked the school to the community. As a result of a large donation to the temple, the school received a portion, some 25,000 Baht (about $1,000). The principal recommended that the entire amount be devoted to raising cattle and chickens: the first to provide on-going income to the school and to some of the poorest members of the community (who would raise, breed and sell the cattle); the second to reduce the costs of the lunch programme.

School Two: the active principal

Time on task, teaching practices that actively engage students in the learning process and principal leadership characterized the major aspects of school life in this high achieving primary school. Throughout the day, both morning and afternoon, students were involved in academic instruction. This is because teachers were seldom absent, came on time and taught content during each of the six periods of the day. They did not leave their classrooms to socialize. Lunch was used as a time to discuss academic issues, although some non-academic issues were also occasionally topics for conversation. This focus was deliberate: the principal saw ongoing conversation about the academic purpose of schooling as central to school improvement. On days he had to be away from the school for cluster or district business, for example, he made it a point to always be back to the school by noon in order to 'talk shop' with the teachers. His style of supervision stimulated teacher collaboration, where they observed one another's teaching. In so doing, he argued that, "I wanted to make the teachers more intelligent, so I got them to observe each other and share ideas." As a result of this and other practices discussed in greater detail below, staff morale was high and their willingness to contribute to the school was considerable. For example, while it was not required, all staff reported one week before school opened to prepare the building and to get their lessons and materials ready, even though they were not paid for these days. The result was a fast start for the students who attend this school.

Teachers used a combination of instructional strategies ranging from teacher-centred to group work. They prepared lesson plans, used materials and tested student understanding, re-teaching individual students or the entire class if they did not understand. For grades I-IV there was one teacher per class; for grades V-VI three teachers shared instruction, specializing in different subjects where their expertise was strongest. The principal also taught two hours a week in moral ethics (one of the subjects under 'character development') to grades V-VI (and substituted for teachers when they are sick).

Respect for the Buddhist religion was evident in times set aside for meditation before class began and again after lunch before the start of the afternoon session. The abbot came to school to participate in various celebrations and students went to the temple for others. Community participation in the curriculum was evident in the vocational area.

School Three: bitter dissension

This primary school is also located in the same school cluster as School One but its performance is radically different. Each year this school continually ranked lowest in the cluster on tests. It also had the highest daily absenteeism rates for teachers and students of any school in the cluster (38 and 21 per cent respectively). It was torn by internal factionalism between a small group of teachers concerned about academic content and a larger faction who did not share this concern but nevertheless enjoyed the support of the principal. Members of the smaller faction did not accept the leadership of the principal as legitimate, so they ignored any suggestions he made. Meanwhile, since his authority with the larger faction rested on personal friendship, they too ignored any suggestions he might make about the academic programme. The principal did not supervise or provide assistance to teachers. There was no building level effort to make materials or to discuss their use, except by a few individuals in the academic faction. Teachers generally lectured and used the blackboard; only a few provided remedial instruction and then only at irregular intervals. The community provided some support for the school, which meant it was willing to donate some resources (financial and in-kind) to the school, but not to the principal, which meant there was little effective communication between the two and little involvement by teachers in community activities.

School Four: school as a social event

In this school life in classrooms was characterized by extreme variation: in grades II and VI, students were actively engaged in instruction by teachers who used multiple teaching methods and knew their content. Both were new to the school within the past two years. Teachers in grades I, III and IV simply lectured ('chalk and talk') to students who sat passively and talked quietly to their neighbours when the teachers' backs were turned. The pre-primary and grade V teachers gave almost no instruction, letting students play with each other or sit and fill out answers to ditto sheets. Such teaching practices corresponded to district rankings on tests given each year to all students. Out of 50 classrooms at each grade level across the district grade I ranked 50th; grade II ranked 2nd; grade III, 50th; grade IV, 47th; grade V, 39th, and grade VI, 25th (the grade VI teacher had only come to the school midway through the year).

The rhythm of the school day, or overall time on task differed considerably from the first two schools. Academic subjects were taught only in the morning in most classes; only in grades II and VI were academic subjects regularly taught in the afternoon. In the other classes, students did homework, played games or were sent outside for sport activity or vocational education. During the morning and afternoon, while students filled out worksheets, teachers were seen leaving their classrooms to join colleagues for conversation. Conversation and friendly banter characterized the major portion of school life in this primary school. All the teachers and the principal clearly enjoyed one another's company. Conversations from lunch were full of laughter and jokes and often continued past 1 p.m., the

time when afternoon instruction was supposed to begin. This harmony, however, masked frustration by the grade II and VI teachers over the lack of attention to academics.

The principal in this school is a man in his mid-40s. In his interactions with teachers, he sought to avoid confrontation and to promote a congenial environment. One major project, which enjoys widespread support throughout the building, is a loan programme he initiated to help teachers through temporary cash shortfalls. Through a complex set of relationships, he is related to two of the teachers in the building: he is married to the sister of the grade III teacher who has been at the school for nearly 30 years; the pre-primary teacher is married to the son of this same teacher.

The principal was often away from the building attending to district and school cluster activities. When he was at the building, he worked hard, devoting the majority of his time to paperwork. He did no internal supervision of teachers. He used a 'rotation' method for allocating double promotions, which meant that each year a different staff person was recommended for this award, regardless of performance. Staff meetings were held at least once a month, at which time new policies from the cluster and district office were presented and discussed. He tried to institute a system for dividing work along the six work areas of school life among the teachers but the system did not work well because of a lack of follow up and a general feeling among the staff that when he said, "OK, you have to do that," he really meant, "OK, you should do that," a feeling that lead people to wait and see if something actually needs to be done. His policy in the academic area that all teachers must do lesson plans provides an example. Only two teachers did this on a regular basis; the grade IV teacher never turns in any plans. A second example, in this same area, relates to the use of instructional materials made available from the school cluster. The cluster notified the school that it would have the slide projector first (it is rotated throughout the schools in the cluster during the term). The principal asked the teacher in charge of the academic area to go and pick it up. This was never done, with the result that it went to the next school on the list. The principal never followed up his directive and no action was taken against the teacher who failed to carry out his responsibilities. The result of this style of leadership is that this principal is seen by his staff as 'one among equals', rather than someone who also has the responsibility for running the school. In contrast to the grade II and VI teachers, other teachers in the building support his style of administration, since it gives them maximum freedom to do what they want. For example, regarding internal supervision, the grade IV teacher noted that it would be difficult to do, "because people who stay close to each other cannot do supervision on each other."

Analysis

These four cases illustrate contrasting internal dynamics characteristic of most of the high and low-achieving schools studied (a major exception is discussed shortly). In higher achieving schools, there is consistently more time devoted to academics than in lower-achieving schools: not just time on task during a particular lesson, which certainly was the case, but also overall building time on task, in the sense that academics were taught throughout the day, not just the morning, that teachers came regularly, came on time, and stayed until the end of school, that teachers did not leave their classrooms for extended periods to chat with colleagues, that they took each others' classrooms when a colleague was sick or absent for other reasons and provided instruction in one form or another, that they

provided remedial instruction on a regular basis for students who needed it, that they discussed academic issues along with personal issues when they were together, such as during lunch, and that they were willing to make extra sacrifices, such as coming early to prepare for the opening of school. In other words, more effective schools devoted more overall time to academics.

But it was found that greater overall time on task was simply a reflection of four important dynamics within schools, between schools and their communities, and between schools and higher administrative organizations. Teacher-teacher collaboration and an ethos of constant improvement was the first of these. Teachers shared information about content and instructional strategies with each other in the higher achieving schools. As noted above, in some cases, they actually observed one another teach, providing feedback on how to teach a lesson better or how to use instructional materials more effectively. Together with the principal, their interactions reflected a set of attitudes that emphasized constant, on-going improvement of academics. For example, the principal in School Two, when asked why he decided to institute staff specialization for grades V and VI (where the teachers taught both grades in specific content areas of strength), he replied, almost incredulously, "Why because I wanted the teachers who were best in those subjects to teach the children." This change made sense to the teachers and they supported his decision. Such specialization was not typical for lower achieving schools but, when it occurred, it was done not for academic reasons, but rather for teacher convenience (e.g. to reduce the number of preparations).

The second was principal leadership. It was found that four components distinguished more active principals from less active principals (and more active principals were characteristic of schools with higher test scores and schools with lower scores but in the process of improvement). First, more active principals sought to create an academic focus in their buildings. They carried out regular classroom supervision, both formal and informal, and provided feedback to improve the quality of instruction. They actively sought to increase overall time on task within the school and within classrooms by expecting teachers to come to work (i.e. not be absent); return to their classes after lunch to begin instruction; teach content in both the morning and the afternoon, and not leave before the end of the school day. They sought to improve the quality of academic instruction by providing opportunities for teachers to attend staff development sessions away from the building and selected the right teachers to attend. These teachers were then encouraged to share what they learned with other staff in the building upon their return. Such principals also used test results to stimulate instructional improvement. They also used the lunch period as an opportunity for staff discussions of school issues in addition to regular staff meetings. They emphasized remedial instruction and the use of materials.

Second, more active principals used a management system in their schools. This system included: assigning staff to the six work areas defined by ONPEC as comprising the responsibility of the school (academic affairs, school management, personnel, buildings and grounds, clerical work and student activities) according to interest and expertise, and regularly following up to see that assignments were carried out and helping to solve problems that emerged; developing an evaluation and reward system with teacher input and involvement which was based to some degree on merit (a modified rotation system which emphasized student and teacher performance and improvement); using their authority to assign teachers to different grade levels to maximize student learning (with teacher

involvement in such decisions); implementing a system of staff specialization for at least grades V and VI in areas of teacher strength (subject to certain local conditions); creating a system to cover classes when teachers were sick or otherwise absent; and creating an accurate and up-to-date information system of school records.

Third, it was found that more active principals created a role model for teachers by working hard and demonstrating commitment. As a result, teachers felt embarrassed if they did not work as hard as the principal: they felt it was their duty to live up to the expectations for hard work set by the principal. They also created a role model for teachers by giving demonstration lessons or by teaching a subject. This earned the respect of the teachers who saw the principal as an effective teacher. Such principals would also teach classes when a teacher was away or was sick, if other teachers were not available.

Fourth, more active principals used interpersonal skills which enabled teachers to benefit from feedback rather than feeling defensive or worthless. This supportive style of interaction is characterized in Thailand as 'being kind', which means taking a sincere interest in the welfare of the teacher, not only in the classroom but for their personal problems as well. Such interactions also encouraged teachers to use good interpersonal skills with students.

The third major dynamic which created more overall time on task was the strong relationship higher achieving schools had created with their surrounding communities, including the temple. Parents were more involved in school decisions, the curriculum of the school and, probably as a result of such involvement, contributed more to the school, both financially and in-kind services. School was a part of the community, not a separate government institution imposed on the community. Parents felt comfortable visiting the school whenever they wished. They came to expect the school to educate their children and were willing to support the school in this endeavour. Similarly, the school developed close relationships with the abbot at the local temple. Children participated in religious ceremonies, often with teachers and parents. They would help clean temple grounds. The temple and the school would loan each other materials needed for various ceremonies, such as weddings and receptions, held on their respective grounds. The abbot would often officiate at school ceremonies and sometimes provide religious instruction in morals and ethics to students either in the school or in regular classes at the temple. The temple would contribute financially to the school. Finally both the principal and the teaching staff participated in local community activities, including religious ceremonies.

Again the role of the principal proved important for creating such a link between the school and the community (temple). Four key components were found which separated more active principals from less active ones: 1. more active principals involved parents in school decisions of all kinds; 2. such principals were more involved themselves in community activities on a regular basis (e.g. attending local ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, helping villagers plan and implement local projects, and working with parents and the local headman to improve attendance and performance); 3. more active principals developed good relations with the local temple (for example, through regular discussions with the abbot about school matters, by involving the abbot in school ceremonies, and by involving students in helping the temple with routine chores as well as various ceremonies); and 4. more active principals encouraged teacher activity in local community projects, with the

result that teachers contributed to community development and were known in a personal way by the parents of the children they taught.

The final dynamic underlying more overall time on task was the relationship the school developed with higher administrative organizations. Higher achieving schools typically used the resources of higher administrative agencies such as clusters, district offices or provincial offices to maintain their excellence or to enhance their improvement efforts (for a discussion of how high achieving schools use cluster initiatives to maintain their excellence, see Wheeler et al 1989 and in press). Here again the role of the principal proved critical. The current studies showed that more active principals skilfully used such resources to further their own programmes of improvement.

This summary analysis of the internal dynamics of higher and lower achieving small rural primary schools in Thailand shows the importance of collaboration and co-operation within schools and between schools and their local communities and higher administrative organizations. It will be shown how clusters contributed to or detracted from creating such relationships. But first two cases are described which do not fit the patterns described here of high achievement and active collaboration/co-operation, because each introduces important questions about the contributions clusters can make to school improvement.

School Five: problem solving approach to school learning

This school is also located in the same cluster as *schools one and three*, but has a very different view of its mission. Flowers, trees, shrubs, an immaculate school building, parents painting the water storage tanks, a well-stocked fish pond -- it is little wonder this school won first prize in the province for small schools, principally because of its beautiful environment. Much like Schools One and Two, this school's relationships within the school and between the community and the temple are like a family. For example, a housewives' organization provides lunch three days a week for the students to free teachers for more academic instruction. Instruction in this school is heavily student-oriented with group projects, team learning-games and discussions occupying approximately 30 per cent of the teaching-learning process of any class. The principal enthusiastically supports this and models it in his own teaching (mathematics and music). Teachers share information with each other and participate in school decisions. The principal provides supervision in a helpful way. The principal moved away from the traditional rotation method for awarding double promotions, used by the previous principal who was not very interested in academic performance, to a modified rotation system based on performance. While four teachers are strong, two are weak. In the year of the fieldwork, the principal moved two of the strong teachers to grades I and II arguing that it was important to give the students a strong initial base of instruction. Meanwhile he continues to work with the weaker teachers who now teach grades III and IV.

The basic problem facing this school is its level of achievement. While there has been some improvement under this principal (he was in his second year during the fieldwork), overall test scores remain about average in the cluster. In part, this reflects the problems of compensating for the instruction of two weak teachers. But more importantly, it reflects a conflict between the school's goals of involving students in groupwork and problem-solving activities and the cluster-district-provincial-national emphasis on improving

test scores. The principal and most of the teachers in the building feel the tests as currently constructed do not reflect the kind of knowledge students need to learn. They are critical of the factual nature of the questions and the rote learning it implies as a method for teaching. Parents, however, are concerned that the school's scores do not compare favourably with other schools in the cluster and have begun to exert pressure on the principal to focus more on improving test results.

School Six: teaching to the test

School Six represents the major deviation from the patterns found in high achieving versus low achieving schools described above. By all accounts, except one (teacher-teacher collaboration in one area), this school conforms exactly to the patterns found in low achieving schools that had no interest in improvement, such as Schools Three and Four. Much lower overall time on task, little teacher-teacher collaboration, weak principal leadership and almost no connection with the community or the temple. However, its test scores were remarkably high.

This was the result of the extensive coaching system teachers use to prepare students for external examinations for all grades, a system which goes far beyond the *ad hoc*, informal preparation that occurred in some of the other schools studied.

In the spring term, teachers at each grade level completed the curriculum two weeks before the testing period started. Every day thereafter was devoted to preparing for examinations. For grade VI students this entailed taking old provincial examinations in each subject area for the previous three years as practice tests, discussing every question (with explanations as to which answer was right and why), and completing exercises written in test question format from six supplementary textbooks purchased by the teachers involved with teaching grade VI students. In addition teachers spent time explaining what distractors were, how to spot them and ways to avoid them. Such coaching formed the content in every class for these two weeks. In addition, grade VI students came to school for two hours of additional drill and practised on both Saturday and Sunday of the two weekends preceding the grade VI provincial examination. (This same process was used to prepare students for the grade VI national examination the year this school was studied in this research.)

Such training, teachers argued, was merely an extension of general pedagogical practice used throughout the year, but on a more intense scale. In describing such practice, they emphasized their constant use of exercises, either developed by themselves or taken from supplementary materials. In the words of one teacher, "We continually prepare the children for these exams by the exercises we use. They are very similar in form and content to the tests." Interviews with former grade VI students confirmed this observation, as they pointed out the similarity between what they had practised and the questions on both the grade VI provincial and the grade VI national examinations.

Academic learning in this school has come to be defined as rote learning culminating in cram sessions to get high test scores. Such a focus allows considerable latitude for teachers to use their time in ways other than teaching -- except near the end of the third term when a massive push is made to prepare students for district and provincial tests. It also allows them to stay out of each other's way, given the factional conflicts that prevail, and to

co-exist with a principal who remains secluded in his office, pouring over paperwork. It also allows each person to keep his or her own schedule, whether it is dictated by the bus timetable (three teachers leave school early every day to catch a bus home to the provincial capital where they live), determined by a lack of commitment to student welfare or created by a desire for a social break from classroom routine.

III. School cluster influence

What role, if any, did school clusters play in influencing the policies and practice of these six schools? Specifically, in what ways did cluster activities affect factors such as collaboration and school-community relations identified as being critical to effective schooling? After these questions are answered, some implications for training will be discussed.

As previously described, the model of cluster influence drawn from the field studies posited the following conditions:

* cluster office staff and academic cluster teachers had to actively pursue their responsibilities in the areas of accountability and capacity-building initiatives;

* the district office had to support cluster activity in both areas; and

* principals had to be receptive to cluster initiatives.

This process can be summarized as follows. There is a threshold effect for school cluster influence. That is, if all the internal organizational factors of the cluster are working well as staff pursue accountability and/or capacity-building strategies, and the district office supports cluster activity, then maximum influence is possible. How much influence occurs, however, is dependent on the degree of receptivity of each individual school, i.e. there is variation in response, by school, to each cluster initiative. Schools vary by accepting initiatives, modifying them or even ignoring them.

Returning to the examples to see how this model works, Schools One, Three and Five belong to the same cluster, Cluster A, which will be examined first. School Two belongs to Cluster B; School Four to Cluster C and School Six to Cluster D.

Cluster A's influence: Schools One, Three and Five

1. The activities of School Cluster A

Testing formed the corner-stone of this cluster's major focus on accountability, which dominated its more limited efforts at capacity-building (e.g. staff development). In response to the national focus on improving test scores, begun in 1985 with the first national grade VI examination, the province required districts to begin testing students; districts began requiring school clusters to do the same. In this cluster a working group (consisting of cluster office staff and six academic cluster teachers) developed cluster tests and assisted the district in preparing district tests. To promote competition among teachers to improve, the cluster office tabulated results and published them by school and by grade so every teacher

knew where he or she stood, compared with other teachers in the cluster. Principals were encouraged to use test results as one criterion for teacher evaluation purposes in recommending merit or double promotions. Classroom teachers were not involved in the construction of any tests; the working group developed all the items for the cluster tests and submitted suggested items to the district office for its tests. In the area of testing, the school cluster as an organization operated at maximum efficiency: the working group often spent up to two days a week prior to a testing period developing items and then two days a week for several weeks after the test, tabulating results and preparing the report. This considerable effort, however, consumed most of the time cluster staff and academic cluster teachers felt they could devote to cluster activity, with the result that few initiatives were carried out in the area of capacity-building. The cluster, for example, did not carry out any of its own initiatives in the area of staff development, acting instead as a channel for initiatives from the national or district office by allowing such sessions to be carried out at the cluster office and helping with arrangements. Few materials were developed. For example, during 1987 (the year of the fieldwork), only one product was developed (a learning package consisting of slides, a teacher's manual, exercises and practice tests) in the area of life experience as a part of the cluster's efforts to improve test scores in this area. While cluster office staff have primary responsibility for stimulating teachers to use materials at the resource centre and the library, in practice they did not perform this role actively. For example, instead of taking materials or equipment to schools, they simply responded to teacher requests and developed a schedule for rotating heavy equipment, such as slide projectors, among schools in the cluster. In line with government expectations, the cluster did arrange for several school-community celebrations and activities: children's day, national primary education day, and several sport competition days.

The effects of these activities varied according to each school's degree of receptivity, and especially to the principal's willingness to use cluster activities to promote internal change.

All schools, including all three principals and all the teachers in the buildings, had to respond to the testing emphasis -- at least to the extent of giving the tests. But what they did with those results varied considerably. In two cases (Schools One and Five), responses were affected to some degree by concern about community (and especially parental perceptions) of the school's performance, suggesting that where principals are concerned about improving relations with the community, cluster emphasis on testing can provide a lever for community influence and involvement in school life. In School Three, however, where the principal had no interest in what the community felt, cluster policies made no difference. In each case, however, the critical determinant of influence was not the cluster *per se*, but rather the principal and his agenda for the school. Cluster initiatives either fit with the general stream of policies already underway or they did not. Where they did, they were transformed to fit internal goals for improvement; where they did not, they were simply ignored.

2. School One: participation, cattle and chickens

This high-achieving school is actually an improving school in which cluster goals for improved test scores and principal goals for school improvement are congruent. In 1986 this school ranked next to last in composite cluster test results. After a discussion about the

importance of improving test scores, the cluster chairperson suggested that the principal consider purchasing some supplementary texts. The principal sought and won parental support for this idea. The next year the school dramatically improved its ranking in the cluster, moving up from sixth (out of seven) to second place. The principal and teachers attributed the improved scores to the supplementary texts for three reasons: cluster-developed tests often use a question format similar to the exercises in the supplementary texts (although not the identical questions); the material in the supplementary texts increased student engagement since these texts are much more interesting than the material in government-supplied textbooks; and the building-level commitment to use the new materials led to an interest in how to use other existing materials more effectively, including those from the cluster's resource centre.

The principal and the teachers in this school argued, however, that a simple one-to-one relationship between improved scores and the introduction of supplementary texts suggested by the cluster chairperson vastly over-simplified a complex process of change. They argued that materials (and therefore the cluster influence represented by the suggestion that they purchase such materials) proved to be an important resource which enabled them to demonstrate to the public (parents and the school cluster, district and province) the results of a change process that had been underway since 1983. That process evolved as follows.

In 1983 the school experienced considerable turmoil as two teachers actively sought the principalship in the wake of a retirement. The current principal's opponent sought to mobilize community support and in the process waged a negative campaign, spreading numerous rumours that turned a sizeable segment of the populace against the teacher eventually appointed by the district office. The new principal began a long-term effort to improve relations within the school and with the community. He held a series of meetings with his opponent and the rest of the teaching staff to smooth relations, during which time he reorganized the decision-making structure of the school, involving teachers in the decision-making process through a series of committees. He asked for and was granted a formal meeting with the community where an official ceremony took place to 'bury the hatchet' and start anew. (Such ceremonies are rarely held but represent an important dispute-settling mechanism in Thai culture.) The principal spent many long hours consulting with community leaders and the temple about school affairs and participating in community-temple projects. By 1985 relations had improved to the point where the temple was willing to donate 25,000 Baht ($1,000) to the school. As mentioned earlier, the principal seized on this opportunity to launch two innovative projects that served to link the community and the temple closer to the school. He proposed to the school committee that the money be used to buy some cattle and chickens. The cattle would be cared for by the poorest members of the community. The offspring would be raised and sold with one half the profits going to the school and one half to the family that raised the calf. The chicken project was also designed as an investment for the school: offspring were to be sold to the community (for profit) and to be used in the school lunch programme (thereby cutting costs). The cattle project developed as planned; the chicken project suffered an initial setback but ultimately turned out to be effective. It is in this context that the school cluster chairperson met with the principal about this school's test scores and made the suggestion that he consider purchasing supplementary textbooks. The principal decided such a request represented a considerable risk given his relations with the community, which were still in

the process of improving. Thus, he requested parental support for supplementary texts in only one academic area, which was approved. If there were no appreciable benefits, he reasoned, then the investment would not have been great. If it succeeded, he could request additional funds for other subject areas. (As it turned out, once the community saw the results, they enthusiastically supported additional purchases.) The principal then created the new position inside the school ('academic' teacher) referred to earlier. Instead of relying on the academic cluster teacher in his school for staff development and assistance in instruction (because most of this teacher's time was devoted to developing, administering and reporting on cluster and district tests), the principal appointed another teacher to be the building academic teacher with specific responsibilities to assist teachers to improve their pedagogy and to increase their use of materials, not only the new supplementary materials but also existing materials. She did this by going to classrooms, observing lessons, providing feedback, modelling how to use materials and finding other materials that teachers wanted from the resource centre. The principal also continued his practice of observing teachers, providing feedback and making suggestions on different teaching strategies.

Meanwhile, staff morale in the school had continued to improve as the result of the principal's participatory style of decision making. As mentioned earlier, he established committees for different areas of school responsibility and put a teacher in charge of each committee; he held regular meetings for the staff to discuss school and classroom issues. Teachers began talking to each other about pedagogical issues and began to share information. When the supplementary materials were purchased, an infrastructure for collaboration thus already existed so it seemed only natural that teachers would turn to discussing how to use these materials. This in turn complemented the work of the academic teacher as she sought to get existing materials used more effectively.

So one level of the organization, the school, purchased supplementary textbooks which created the conditions for improved learning at a second level, the classroom. But principal leadership (including risk-taking), school-community-temple relations and teacher collaboration all led to materials (new and existing) being used in a more effective way. While the addition of supplementary materials provided a means to improve student achievement, it really represented only one piece of a complicated puzzle. Scores improved because of the new materials but they improved across the subjects because existing materials were used more effectively, and the more effective use of all materials was the result of cumulative effects of principal leadership, school-community-temple relations and teacher collaboration. Principal leadership was important in creating a positive response to the cluster chairperson's suggestion, but it occurred within a context of change within the building which involved teachers, the principal, students and the community. The principal's role in responding to the cluster was congruent with the leadership he provided in a number of areas within the school. In short, in terms of the stream of policies within the school at that time, the chairperson's suggestion fit nicely with the dominant direction (see Kingdon 1984 for a theoretical discussion of how issues become a part of a policy agenda).

3.   School Three: bitter dissension

It will be remembered that this school was bitterly divided internally and those in control showed no interest in improvement. As an outside lever for school improvement, cluster, district and national tests have had no effect on this school. The principal and the

faction to which he belongs simply ignored test results, even when comparisons were made to other schools in the reporting by the cluster office. Internally, the principal continued to use the rotation method for awarding double promotions, a practice that effectively disconnected performance from rewards. A special task force appointed by the cluster committee met with the principal and staff to discuss its level of performance and to try to smooth over internal dissension, but met with no success. Meanwhile, the district office has decided not to intervene, preferring instead to wait until the principal retires before doing anything. As a result this school has succeeded in buffering itself from any outside influence over its internal affairs, to the detriment of the education of the children and the desire by a minority of teachers to stress academics. This case dramatically illustrates the limits of cluster influence when the school is not receptive to cluster initiatives.

4. School Five: problem solving approach to school learning

This school is also located in the same cluster as Schools One and Three, but it has a very different view of its mission. Instruction is heavily student-oriented with group projects, team learning-games and discussions occupying nearly 30 per cent of the teaching-learning process of any class. The principal enthusiastically supports this and models it in his own teaching (mathematics and music). This focus has led to a conflict between the cluster/national emphasis on improving test scores as an indicator of quality and this school's consensus that factual learning is limited in its utility; understanding promoted through student participation in learning is more important. In a very real sense, the one-dimensional approach of the cluster serves to compound the principal's problems as he tries to improve the quality of this school. Because he is interested in promoting good relations with the community, he is concerned that average test results may undermine community confidence in his leadership. Hence, he is in the (extremely difficult) process of juggling two conflicting goals: improving test scores (which requires changes in management practices within the school which affect teacher morale) and maintaining a focus on teaching for understanding. As discussed later, the implications for training cluster staff may lie less in whether tests are needed and more in the kind of tests that are developed and how they are used.

5. Summary

These three schools neatly illustrate the model described earlier: cluster activity is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for cluster influence. High activity simply creates the pre-conditions for influence; such influence varies depending on the school's (and especially the principal's) degree of receptivity, which is directly related to the internal dynamics of the school. In the case of these three schools, cluster policy did not serve to promote collaboration among teachers unless that was already a policy of the principal (as in School One) and could actually frustrate, even undermine, attempts to maintain such activity (as in School Five). Where no such collaboration existed, the cluster might intervene (as in School Three) but the outcome of such intervention was determined by the balance of forces within the school. This latter point, it will be seen, is important: it suggests that clusters alone may not be a sufficient lever to initiate change in schools with inactive principals; other levels of the organizational bureaucracy may need to become more involved with such schools.

The cluster did have an indirect effect, however, regarding the communities in which these schools existed. The single-minded focus on accountability through tests did create a concern in the minds of principals in Schools One and Five that they should respond in some way to test results because of potential community concern. Both principals, however, had already begun the process of involving the community more in the life of their schools. The connection they made to community concern and test results reflected the fact that they were already engaging in efforts to improve school-community relations. If anything, cluster policies in the area of testing and community reaction simply created a reason for trying something new, within the context of their on-going efforts to improve their schools. In School Three, the principal simply assumed (correctly, it appears) that any community concern could be ignored. Policies such as hosting sports days and various celebrations at the cluster level were not connected at all to simulating community involvement in schools; that was determined by the individual school's day-to-day relationships and especially by the policies of the respective principals.

Cluster B's influence on School Two: the active principal

1.   The activity of school cluster B

The case of School Two (the active principal) and the role the cluster played represents a radical departure from the previous cluster. Not only does the cluster respond to the accountability pressure from higher levels of the administration, but also it actively pursues a wide range of capacity-building initiatives as well. In part, this is the result of district office support, which encourages clusters in the district to perform both roles actively. In part, it is the result of a creative and active cluster office chairperson, as discussed below.

In any event, as a result of this cluster's greater scope of activity and the overall balance of its initiatives, it had greater potential for having influence on schools, i.e. given principal support within a particular school (e.g. high degree of receptivity), there were more opportunities for a principal bent on a programme of internal reform to use cluster resources to further such goals.

In addition, this represents the most active cluster studied. It is the exception, not the rule. Based on the findings from the field studies, the feedback from those knowledgeable about cluster activity in Thailand, and a literature review of cluster activity by Chuaratanaphong (1991), this cluster represents a minority in Thailand. It does, however, illustrate the role clusters were intended to play, according to government expectations.

As with the previous cluster, this cluster was very active in the area of testing, developing cluster tests and other kinds of measures of student achievement. In so doing, however, it took a particular approach, one that also emphasized a collaborative and diagnostic role than simply a punitive role. Certainly principals, as in the other cluster, were encouraged to use test results for promotion considerations and test results were publicized for comparative purposes (e.g. school results were reported by grade level and subject area), but teachers were involved in the development of the tests to promote ownership and results were also used to promote improvement across the cluster. For example, after the cluster office got the test scores, and the cluster working committee analyzed which grade level and

subject needed specific attention, cluster staff would call a meeting of teachers at different grade levels in various subject areas to discuss ideas for improvement. On the basis of these discussions, the cluster working group proposed initiatives to the cluster committee.

Regarding materials development and the delivery of various services, this cluster stood out. After surveying teachers to learn of their needs, the working group in this cluster developed new materials at least once a month, with a goal of producing at least five new sets of materials per term (the academic year in Thailand consists of three terms). To meet such high goals, the working group organized day-long meetings by grade level for teachers to work with them to develop materials. Then the cluster staff reproduced the materials so every teacher at that grade level got a set to use in his or her own classroom. One set was also kept at the resource centre. This cluster was also very active in getting materials from the resource centre out to teachers so they could actually use them. (One major problem inhibiting the use of materials or equipment in Thailand is teacher fear that they will be held financially responsible for any loss or damage, in spite of ONPEC regulations to the contrary. Since, in practice, most school clusters do hold teachers responsible, the concern is real). Cluster office staff devised ways of using cluster funds to pay for petrol so they could use a van (their own) to deliver materials and equipment and to demonstrate how to use them. They also had an active policy of seeing that principals and teachers, when they visited the cluster office, returned with pre-arranged bags filled with books for various subjects at different grade levels.

But this cluster did even more. Under the active leadership of its chairperson, it had developed three programmes which proved to be of considerable benefit to classroom teachers and principals. The first was the Quality Control (QC) system. The cluster chair saw a variation of this activity in another cluster and proposed it to his cluster committee with some modifications. Essentially, it was a programme to draw on the local knowledge of good practice already present in the schools in the cluster. Teachers at each grade level meet as a group on a regular basis to discuss problems of practice: how to teach a particular unit more effectively, what teaching strategies might work with a certain student, etc. It is this group the cluster used to help make materials tailored to the specific needs of the teachers.   Second, this chairperson developed a programme called 'systematic teaching-learning' which emphasized how to do lesson plans and ways to prepare lessons effectively. The cluster's working group developed a number of forms for both and then trained the teaching staff in the cluster how to use the forms. This helped explain the finding at the school studied, that every teacher had an excellent set of lesson plans and ideas for how to implement them. To help teachers become more systematic in their teaching, the cluster also sponsored trips each year to visit schools in other districts with reputations for excellence, so staff could share ideas about ways to organize instruction.

Third, the cluster chair developed a programme to help school principals improve their own internal supervision. The key to the programme, and to its success, based on interviews with teachers in the building studied, was its collaborative focus. Teachers and administrators developed the instrument the principal was to use. After supervision, time would be allocated for the two to discuss the principal's observations. This proved so useful that the chairperson took it another step, suggesting that teachers begin to use the form and observe each other. In the school studied, this proved to be the predominate form of

supervision, which teachers found helpful for both improving their practice as well as for contributing to the collaborative problem-solving spirit which prevailed in that building.

2. School Two: The active principal

As described earlier, time on task, teaching practices that actively engaged students in the learning process and principal leadership characterized the major aspects of school life in this high-achieving primary school. Teacher-teacher collaboration had been fostered by the principal's encouragement that teachers observe each other and provide feedback, in addition to his own supervision. This idea, only one of several implemented in this school, came from the school cluster. Before looking at the cluster's influence, however, we need more context on this school, for it, too, typifies how an improving school can profitably use the resources of the school cluster.

This school became a high achieving school with collaborative relations among the staff only during this principal's tenure (the last eight years). Social disorganization in the community (characterized by gambling and drinking), an alcoholic teacher who constantly disrupted the educational process and a legacy of non-intervention by the former principal were some of the conditions that greeted this principal when he came to this school.

Upon his arrival, the principal immediately became involved in community discussions about making a dirt road through the village. He lent his support in favour of the project and joined the villagers in the construction, an act that impressed the community deeply. Once the road was built, the more conservative members of the community experienced the advantages and came to be strong supporters of new principal, along with the rest of the village.

The village committee (with principal support) worked with the local police to stop the gambling (the police came and arrested several villagers). Then the village committee developed a policy that those who wanted to gamble would have to go at least one kilometre from the village. Meanwhile, the principal took on the alcoholic teacher. After several years of failed efforts at rehabilitation, he succeeded in having the district office release this teacher from his responsibilities. His dismissal three years ago contributed significantly to improving school morale.

Morale also improved because of the principal's style of leadership, and it is here that the resources of the school cluster became important.

As noted above, this cluster is the most active one studied, pursuing both accountability and capacity-building policies, but with a clear emphasis on capacity-building initiatives. Three innovative programmes (the programme to improve internal management practices, the QC system, and the programme to stimulate teachers to develop and use lesson plans) fit with the principal's approach to school administration and he used every initiative in his efforts to improve the school. For example, his style of supervision fitted nicely with the management practices encouraged by the cluster where principals and teachers jointly were to develop the criteria for observation and to discuss the results. He also implemented the component whereby teachers would observe each other. He encouraged teachers to use programmes offered by the school cluster to improve their pedagogical and content

knowledge, such as the QC system, where teachers at each grade level across the cluster would meet on a regular basis to discuss teaching practices and problems with specific children. He also encouraged his teachers to take advantage of cluster-sponsored sessions on how to develop lesson plans, which all teachers in this school now do as a matter of course. He encouraged teachers to take cluster tests seriously, reflecting his interest in using accountability as a tool for reform. In this regard, he used a modified rotation system by including student test scores as one criterion in his recommendations for double promotions. This meant that while all teachers in the building eventually would get a double promotion, those whose students consistently scored better on cluster and district tests would get such a promotion more often. In short, he used cluster initiatives as a resource to further his own reform agenda. As a result, staff morale was high and their willingness to contribute to the school was considerable.

3.   Summary

Cluster activity, high in both areas of accountability and capacity building, created the possibility for cluster influence. Because of the overall greater range of activity, the potential for cluster influence was greater than in the cluster for Schools One, Three and Five. This is true in two senses: first, in terms of number of initiatives, there was simply more to choose from; but second, because of the overall emphasis on capacity building, a principal intent on improving could create his own richer blend of policies (accountability and capacity-building) to promote internal improvement than was available to any of the principals in Schools One, Three or Five. This is not to say that such blends cannot be created without cluster help; they certainly were in School One. But external resources are particularly scarce in communities such as the ones studied. It could be argued that in most economically disadvantaged rural areas school cluster activity represents one of few resources available to those concerned about improving schools beyond what can be mustered from the local community. Thus the additional resources represented by clusters who pursue both strategies have the potential for considerable impact in such communities, provided the school (and especially the principal) is receptive to such initiatives, the second major part of the model.

Two very different clusters have been described at work and their corresponding influence on school practice. Both clusters, however, share one characteristic in common: they are at least active in one area. The next two clusters and their relationships with Schools Four and Six provide some additional insights into the scope and limits of cluster influence.

Influence of Clusters C and D on Schools Four and Six

As described earlier, schooling was a social event for School Four. Teachers laughed and joked and enjoyed each others company. This easy-going attitude carried over to instruction. While two teachers took academic instruction seriously, the others, including the principal, did not. Overall time on task was quite low in this building, compared with higher-achieving schools and instructional strategies reflected a 'chalk and talk' approach. On district and cluster tests, most grades ranked at or near the bottom compared with other grades. The principal proved to be an ineffective leader; no supervision and no respect for the few demands he made on the teachers. When the cluster notified him that the school's turn for the slide projector had come, he asked a teacher to pick it up. He was ignored, the

school lost its turn to use the projector, and no action was taken against the teacher. The principal used the rotation method for awarding double promotions. In so doing he successfully buffered the school from any effects of the various testing programmes at the cluster, district or national levels. The school generally ignored the community. As with School Three, this school succeeded in creating a great deal of autonomy for itself in spite of the centralized nature of the Thai educational system.

What role did the cluster play in influencing this school? Not much, in part because the cluster was not very active. (This, in turn, was partly the result of district policy towards clusters which sees them more as appendages for carrying out paperwork assigned to the district office than as agents for local change). This cluster's greatest area of activity was in testing, but recently even activity in that area has receded. Regarding cluster activity, principals were reluctant to concede this organization any real authority. Academic cluster teachers were appointed on the basis of interest and the willingness of principals to allow teachers to assume such positions, instead of background competency and cluster need. The result was wide variation in quality, with some cluster teachers highly qualified in areas other than the one in which they were appointed (such as the grade VI teacher from this school, who is the academic cluster teacher in Thai but her specialization is mathematics), and others unqualified and just fulfilling their duty. Principals had limited the amount of funds the cluster could use for developing materials by allowing only 10-20 per cent of ONPEC funds for such items to be retained by the cluster, in contrast to many other school clusters in Thailand which allow the cluster to keep 50 per cent of such funds. The chairperson of the school cluster had been unable to convince individual principals to allow academic cluster teachers to spend time on materials development. According to him, he had to "talk and talk, almost beg, every principal to get permission for the academic cluster teachers to come and do any job at the cluster." This district office, like the cluster, was not very active. It supported the testing initiatives of clusters but did nothing to support activity in the capacity-building area. It also used clusters to help with numerous reporting requirements to the provincial office.

For School Six, the test preparation school, cluster activity was similarly affected by negative principal attitudes and the district's definition of the role it should play. Principals refused to allow academic cluster teachers to go to the cluster office to help develop materials. Since tests are mandated by every level, they reluctantly allowed them to help with this task. Since both the district and the province were very active in testing, cluster staff provided considerable assistance in administering these tests and in carrying out a number of paperwork assignments handed down from above. During the year of fieldwork, this cluster just got its resource centre, which partly explains its low level of activity in the capacity-building area. The school, specifically a group of teachers in the building, responded more to district pressure than to cluster pressure. In fact, it was during a district meeting about testing that they reportedly were encouraged by district officials to specifically prepare the students for the tests.

The pattern characterizing cluster influence in these schools again shows that while schools have to allow practices, such as testing, mandated from above, to take place in their schools, what they do with the results is up to them. When improvement is not on the internal agenda, outside influence is negligible. Where cluster activity is generally low, even the pre-conditions for influence are absent.

IV. Summary

Cluster influence is a two-step process: first clusters have to be active, then the school has to use the cluster initiative to further its improvement efforts. (Activity, in turn, is partially dependent on district office support, especially for the capacity-building role). Where schools, and especially principals, are not interested in improvement, cluster influence remains quite limited. Where principals are pursuing change, they can use cluster initiatives to further their own efforts. Where clusters are active in both the capacity-building and accountability areas, reform-minded principals have more outside resources on which to draw to support their efforts. Where clusters are active in only the accountability area, principals must rely on their own resources to promote internal collaboration and participation. A major focus on accountability, moreover, can create special problems for principals interested in improvement but whose views of knowledge run counter to the kind that is generally tested by the cluster, district, province and national levels of government. Cluster activities do not play a meaningful role in helping principals promote better school-community relations, given the kind of activities sponsored by the cluster. It is the day-to-day interaction (or lack of it) between the principal, the staff and the community which have the greatest effect on these relationships. Test results, however, to the degree parents are aware of them, represent a potential lever for communities to use in their dealings with schools. Their major influence, however, seems to come when principals perceive that the community might be unhappy about the scores. Such principals, at least in these studies, were precisely the ones already engaged in efforts to improve their schools, including improving relations with their respective communities. Principals and schools uninterested (or unable) to improve just ignored their respective communities, except to ask for periodic donations which were always forthcoming at a level acceptable to the schools.

Part III: Implications for training

This section examines the implications of the findings about school clusters for training. It focuses on the following questions: who should be trained and why? what areas are in need of particular attention? how should such training be delivered? While the goal is to improve the performance of cluster officials, other levels of the administrative hierarchy might also benefit from additional training, so this section deals with those needs as well.

I. Cluster officials

The findings suggest that additional training would benefit all those associated with cluster activity, including: cluster office staff, academic cluster teachers and representatives of the cluster committee. This need is especially great since a number of important changes are in the process of being approved which would alter in significant ways the operation of the cluster office.

In November 1990, ONPEC held a conference on school clusters in Nakhon Pathom province, just outside Bangkok. This produced a set of proposed changes in the regulations governing school clusters to improve their performance. The proposals represent an important departure from current practice in several areas (material in this section comes from the Concept Paper and Interviews, March 1991 and April 1991).

First, there would be a clear shift away from accountability towards encouraging school clusters to emphasize capacity-building initiatives. While both functions would continue, i.e. clusters would still have, for example, the responsibility for developing and administering tests and for recommending double promotions for teachers to the district office, supervisory responsibilities for cluster office staff and academic cluster teachers would be eliminated, so they could focus more attention on developing materials and staff development activities. This function would be shifted upward to district offices and downward to the principals in every building. To support this shift, ONPEC, in a separate initiative, has requested two to four additional staff for each district office and plans another initiative to train principals in how to carry out internal supervision more effectively.

The role of the cluster chairperson would be fundamentally altered to bring it more in line with what really happens in most clusters. Basically, the cluster chair would become no more than a figurehead, responsible for convening and chairing cluster committee meetings. Real responsibility for cluster office activity would go to the head of the office.

Here, too, there would be a major change. Instead of competing this position among all the teachers in the cluster, the principal of the core school (generally the largest school in the cluster where the cluster office, resource centre and library are housed) would have responsibility for that position, in addition to his or her regular duties. It is hoped that this would lead to greater cluster office activity, since performance in this area would be a part of the annual evaluation of the core school principal. Moreover, since promotion for principals leads to movement away from small schools to larger schools, it is hoped that the principals of core schools would already be more active, and, thereby, more able to energize cluster offices.

The positions of cluster office staff would also change fundamentally. First, only teachers from the core school could serve as cluster office staff (previously the positions were open to all teachers and assistant principals in the cluster, but the most qualified did not usually apply; see Wheeler et al 1991 for a discussion of why this happened). Such a decision represents a permanent increase (by two positions) in every core school in the country (approximately 8,000 new positions) (ONPEC 1989). While on assignment in the cluster office, these staff would be evaluated by their principal, who would also be the head of the cluster office. Thus, these staff would be able to compete with others in their building for double promotions, which should increase morale and stimulate greater office activity. (The issue of incentives for cluster office staff is treated in Wheeler et al 1991).

Assuming this proposal is approved in its current form, a considerable turnover of cluster office staff is likely to occur. Especially important will be training for the principal of the core school, who, as office head, will set the tone for most of the cluster's activity, and for the two cluster staff persons. Even though clusters have been around for more than 40 years and have received special attention during the 1980s, it cannot be assumed that those who will enter positions in the cluster office will know what their responsibilities are or how best to carry them out.

In addition to changes in cluster staff responsibilities and focus, recently approved modifications in the 1978 curriculum will soon be implemented on a national scale. Since a major aspect of this reform is to increase teacher responsibility for developing specific units and lessons, there will be a need for cluster office staff to know more about curriculum development and ways to encourage teachers to participate in this process.

Finally, this set of proposals occurs in a context of ONPEC re-thinking its emphasis on improving test scores. By the late 1980s, ONPEC senior staff began to de-emphasize the national testing programme. In fact, the national grade VI examination is currently being revised and has not been given for the past year. This has had the effect of encouraging provinces, districts and clusters to begin to reduce their emphasis on test results as a measure of performance. This underscores the need for additional training in capacity-building initiatives as well as suggesting that training in different ways to think about testing might be an issue whose time has come.

If the capacity-building role of clusters is to receive additional attention in practice, if the revisions to the 1978 curriculum are to be implemented as intended, and if the accountability role is to be used in a way that supports capacity building initiatives, then major attention should be devoted the training needs of the two cluster office staff persons (the head of the office, the principal at the core school, should also participate in such sessions, so he or she would be aware of the kinds of initiatives that the staff should implementing and could support such efforts). They need training in:

(1)   ways to think about curriculum development and strategies for involving teachers in the process;

(2)   strategies to get materials and equipment from the resource centre to teachers (instead of waiting for them to come to the centre);

(3)   follow-up classroom assistance strategies (such as coaching) to help teachers use materials and equipment in their classroom teaching;

(4)   ways to organize staff development sessions to better meet teacher needs; and

(5)   ways to plan and implement new programmes to meet teacher needs.

Examples from the three most active clusters we studied (of which only one, Cluster B for School Two, is reported here) could help in developing components of training programmes to meet these needs because they show what is actually happening in various parts of Thailand (albeit in only a few clusters). These clusters were active in both accountability and capacity-building initiatives. Office staff in these clusters:

•   consciously involved teachers in every phase of their work;

•   developed creative ways to get materials and equipment to teachers;

•   developed their own forms of staff development, without waiting for programmes to trickle down from Bangkok; such programmes were based on a concept of staff development that relied primarily on local knowledge of best practice; and

•   supported innovation.

1.   Involving teachers

In the most active clusters, the working group, consisting of cluster office staff and academic cluster teachers, did not try to do everything. They recognized that competing demands affected the time they could devote to any particular activity; but they knew that at least one activity, testing, had to be done. Reflecting their belief that meaningful teacher involvement would produce better results, they involved teachers in constructing tests. They also surveyed teachers about their needs for materials, instead of assuming what they wanted, as happened in a number of other clusters. They involved teachers in the development of materials. It has already been discussed how the cluster for School Two organized regular meetings for teachers by grade level to develop materials; a similar activity was carried out in a second cluster studied, while in a third, a number of teachers gave up their Saturdays to come to the cluster office to help with this activity. Not only were more materials developed in these clusters, teachers reported that such materials were more relevant to their needs and were used more in their teaching. The idea, used in the cluster for School Two, of having each group produce enough copies so each teacher could take back a set, while one went to the resource centre, is an idea worthy of particular consideration, given the difficulties in getting materials to teachers in many parts of rural Thailand.

There is, perhaps, an even more important contribution to improving primary education by involving teachers more in the process of developing materials than the specific contributions described above. Where such participation becomes general practice, the possibility exists that the experience will carry over and affect the internal norms of each school as well. As shown, the policies of the cluster for School Two were congruent with and supportive of the principal's efforts to build a new culture in that school.

2. Getting materials to teachers

It was discouraging to visit a cluster office on several occasions only to see staff sitting around watching videos of boxing matches on the TV monitor. In most of the clusters studied, teachers in schools held the same opinions as those arrived at through observation: except during testing periods, cluster office staff generally do not work hard. Part of this goes back to the selection process, which does not encourage outstanding teachers to apply (see Wheeler et al 1991). This is partly due to the difficulty of getting materials and equipment to teachers, given the conditions of many roads in rural Thailand, and also to the issue of who is responsible should materials or equipment be lost or damaged. The end result is that in most clusters, office staff wait for teachers to come to the resource centre to get materials or equipment. In some cases, cluster office staff set up rotation schedules for different sets of books or certain equipment, such as slide projectors, but these schedules are usually drawn up without consulting teachers in the various schools, with the result that materials often sit in unopened bags until returned or equipment is simply not used.

In the three clusters that actively pursued capacity-building policies, a much greater effort was devoted to visiting schools to determine teacher needs, to demonstrate how to use materials and equipment, and to co-ordinate delivery of materials and equipment with what was being taught. Most importantly, however, cluster office staff did not wait for teachers to come to the resource centre; they found ways to get materials and equipment to the teachers. In the cluster for School Two, for example, one office person had a van. The staff convinced the cluster committee to pay for the petrol and then used the van as a delivery and pick-up vehicle for schools. ONPEC needs to encourage a range of different ways to get materials and equipment out to teachers so they will be used.

3. Staff development

In these more active clusters, where capacity-building played a major role in their activities, cluster office staff supplemented national, provincial and district staff development initiatives with a wide array of programmes developed at the local level. In a very real sense a paradigm shift had occurred. Instead of 'in-service' or 'training', which connotes imparting knowledge from those who have more to those who need it, staff in these clusters viewed staff development more as 'on-the-job-learning', reflecting a belief that knowledge about good teaching could be learned through collaboration at the local level using knowledge of good practice that already existed. For example, teachers in School Two provided numerous examples during interviews of how regular meetings with other teachers at their respective grade levels had helped them think about different ways of presenting content and alternative strategies for dealing with problem students. In another cluster, not reported here, teachers commented favourably about the contributions the cluster made to improving their teaching through a programme with a nearby teachers college. Professors regularly visited the cluster office to meet with teachers to discuss strategies for content and pedagogy.

There are several advantages to this approach to staff development over the traditional top-down model of training that prevails in Thailand. First, it can happen immediately. Instead of waiting for Bangkok to develop a national programme, secure Budget Bureau funding (or funding from an international agency), design a curriculum, train

provincial staff (who then train district staff) and then deliver the programme, local people, meeting on a regular basis, can simply get on with discussions of the problems they face. Second, it is less expensive. Such sharing of information does not require a lot of resources. Third, by recognizing the kind of local expertise that exists, cluster staff are, in effect, raising the professional status of teachers from implementors of a curriculum to colleagues who can teach one another how to improve their teaching. Fourth, this kind of staff development is longer lasting. Instead of responding to a single national training initiative, regular meetings institutionalize the idea that change is on-going, that teaching requires life-long learning. While ONPEC has begun to move in the direction of supporting more locally-generated initiatives at staff development, the kind of programmes described here were locally grown, without any ONPEC support and without any ONPEC knowledge of what was happening.

4.   Support for innovation

Across these three active clusters was a spirit that supported change and innovation. New ideas, whether from the cluster chairperson or the head of the office, were supported, even expected. Programmes to help principals improve supervision and evaluation, arranging visits to effective schools in other clusters, thinking through ways to help teachers develop lesson plans, these were all examples of specific initiatives which promoted the capacity-building emphasis of these clusters. The importance of a spirit of support for change and innovation shows the importance of recruiting the right people for cluster positions and the need for training to show staff how to approach their jobs.

Given the impending change in the regulations governing cluster activity, training for the principal of the core school who will also assume the role of the head of the cluster office will be especially important. Since responsibility for activity now shifts from the cluster chairperson to the head of the office and cluster staff come from the core school and thus are dependent on this principal for their double promotion opportunities, both the activity level of the cluster and the overall balance between accountability and capacity-building policies will now lie with this person.

The goal of such training should be to create a new attitude among these principals. Training programmes (perhaps through the use of case studies similar to those used in this report, videotaped lectures and discussions by cluster officials in active clusters or site visits to active clusters) could show the potential of clusters to promote locally-generated forms of staff development, materials development and other programmes to improve classroom teaching. By teaching those who will become office heads how clusters actually influence schools (i.e. the important role of school, especially principal, receptivity), new ways of supporting teachers who care about academics in buildings where reform is not on the agenda might increase their power position in the schools. Programmes to inform communities about school performance might serve to create pressure on recalcitrant principals to consider moving towards change.

Perhaps most important for any training programme, however, is for those who will become heads of their respective cluster offices to understand that the new emphasis on capacity-building requires not only more activity of the kind described above, but also knowledge of how this strategy could affect accountability policies in a way to reduce the

tension between them. Take testing, for example. If test scores were publicly reported only by school, instead of by individual teachers, were reported only at the end of the year, and were linked to rewards for schools, instead of individual teachers (for example, by allocating extra double promotions to schools that improved the most as well to those with the top scores), incentives to participate more in school-wide improvement might increase. If test scores were used more as diagnostic tools, as occurred in the cluster for School Two (as well as in another cluster studied), to uncover problem areas suitable for additional staff development and materials development, teachers might respond more positively to the testing programme.

Cluster committee members could benefit from training to create both an understanding of what the range of cluster activities can be when a cluster is active and what the beneficial results for the learning process can be from such activity. While elected teachers comprise the voting members of the committee, principals from all schools in the cluster participate as *ex officio* committee members. Such training could be of particular importance to principals who currently do not support cluster activities strongly.

II.   Principals

As part of a separate initiative to improve primary school quality, ONPEC, as noted earlier, is proposing a new programme to train principals in more effective ways of carrying out their responsibilities for internal supervision. Two implications of our findings about clusters are relevant for this proposed programme. First, internal supervision is only one of numerous components of active principal leadership. To the degree this training programme can incorporate other attributes of effective principal leadership in rural primary schools described earlier, the greater the likelihood a principal will be equipped to embark on his or her programme of improvement. Once such a programme is underway, principal receptivity to cluster activity will increase. Moreover, to the degree these components can also be built into the existing training programme for prospective principals at the Institute for the Development of Educational Administrators (IDEA), the more prepared a graduate of the programme will be to undertake improvement. The second implication concerns support for cluster activity. Principals may not be aware of the variety of activities supportive of classroom teaching that are possible for a cluster to carry out. Such information, conveyed through regular ONPEC training programmes and IDEA's programme for prospective school administrators, might lead to principal support for increased cluster activity.

III.   District office

Training programmes for cluster office staff are important, but without district office support for cluster activities, specifically in the area of capacity-building initiatives, little real change may take place in spite of the new regulations. Such training might profitably go beyond why this is important and the range of activities a cluster might carry out to a rethinking of the role relationships between clusters and their respective district offices. This point is elaborated in greater detail in Part IV.

IV. Summary

Clusters have been in existence for more than 40 years in Thailand. During the 1980s, they received considerable attention as part of a more comprehensive strategy to improve primary school quality. While a national training programme for cluster office staff was implemented between 1985-1988, a series of bureaucratic mistakes considerably weakened the impact of this programme as large turnovers of office staff took place during the latter part of this initiative. This resulted in many clusters staffed by officials with little or no training. Since then, additional training has been of limited duration. With the impending changes in the regulations, the need for systematic, comprehensive training will become even greater. Perhaps the most important contribution of such training could be the creation of local capacity to generate and carry out sustained capacity-building programmes using local knowledge of good practice.

Part IV: Multiple roles for the state and the implications for school clusters

Under certain conditions, clusters which enjoy strong government support contribute to primary school quality by supporting components within schools that lead to improvement. Training programmes for cluster officials, principals and district officers can enhance the potential for clusters to play their capacity-building role more effectively. To date, however, the promise of school clusters has yet to be realized. New and different forms of training must be seen as part of an overall strategy aimed at energizing schools, such as Schools Three and Four, where the balance of forces within the school oppose change and choose not to focus on the academic purpose of schooling, and School Six which mindlessly pursues a policy of teaching to the test. At the same time, such a strategy must continue to support schools in the process of improvement without hampering the activities of those already performing well. Such a strategy may require a fundamental shift in thinking, especially about the respective roles different administrative agencies play in working with schools, including school clusters.

I.   Enduring tensions

Lack of principal support for cluster activity has plagued their existence from inception to the present. While it can be reduced through new training initiatives, and certainly has over the years, the tension over authority between principals and school clusters is unlikely to go away for several reasons. Ineffective principals do not want outside organizations meddling in their school, whether it be clusters, the district office, the provincial office or members of the local community. Moreover, all principals, active and inactive, seek to control double promotions and resist efforts by teachers to spend time at the cluster office or to work at the cluster office, unless they can use the opportunity to get rid of an ineffective person by 'dumping' them into the cluster office.

But these reactions, rational as they are from an individual school perspective, have probably been intensified because of an inherent role conflict embedded in cluster responsibilities. Clusters are officially portrayed as helping agencies. Their missions are to improve student achievement across the cluster and to give special assistance to the weakest schools. Resource centres, academic cluster teachers, projects to develop materials and staff development activities are ways clusters are supposed to assist classroom teachers.

From their very inception, however, clusters have also had a monitoring role. In addition to helping schools, clusters were to monitor teacher conduct and to review and evaluate teacher performance. The position of academic cluster teacher, for example, was created in large part as a way for the Ministry of Interior (which had responsibility for administering primary schools from 1962-1980 at which time authority was transferred back to the Ministry of Education (MOE) and ONPEC was created) to develop a cadre of supervisors independent of MOE. These monitoring and evaluation roles stimulated considerable negative feedback then and contributed to raising principal as well as teacher suspicion about cluster activities (Interview, March 1991). In a very real sense, the national government was using clusters as a means to exercise more control over schools (See Wheeler et al 1991 for a greater discussion of these issues).

The notion of exercising greater control over primary schools was certainly on the minds of ONPEC officials as they launched their wave of reforms during the 1980s, for good reason, given the mediocre quality of primary schools throughout Thailand at that time. While cluster capacity for assistance was substantially improved with the creation of resource centres and office staff in the mid-80s, cluster staff and academic cluster teachers continued to monitor schools and observe teachers nominated for double promotions. Cluster committees continued to spend excessive time arguing over how to allocate double promotions. As the national emphasis on improving test scores reached the cluster level, activity picked up as clusters started developing their own tests, publicizing the results, and encouraging principals to use such results as they considered recommendations for double promotions. As the balance between the helping role of clusters and its accountability role tilted towards the latter, is it any wonder why principals and many teachers would withhold support? Not only did teachers feel they needed to give their undivided attention to their own classrooms, but also they saw what clusters actually did, namely a lot of testing and other accountability policies and not much of what cluster ideology said they would be doing. Principals saw that clusters could indeed interfere in their domains.

So, one enduring issue plaguing clusters is whether they can, and therefore ought to, perform two roles at once. This is not to say that the accountability role is unimportant, nor that clusters should perform only a capacity-building role. Both have shown their worth in improving school quality. The question is which should predominate at the cluster level.

This raises the issue of the role of district offices. The Thailand/BRIDGES field studies suggest that if district offices use clusters as a tool to exercise more control over schools, clusters will respond by focusing more on accountability measures. Where district offices also encourage clusters to play an active capacity-building role, clusters will likewise respond (Chuaranataphong et al 1990).

II.   New directions

The central problem facing policy-makers in Thailand during the 1990s is how to deal effectively with school variation. In contrast to the early 1980s, primary schools now vary considerably in terms of quality: some are excellent; others are in various stages of improvement; still others remain stuck in mediocrity. The state, therefore, is faced with the difficult task of trying to increase the overall level of school performance while reducing the differences between first rate schools and third-rate schools.

The emerging trend at the national level to de-emphasize the focus on accountability through testing and to encourage more capacity-building initiatives, if carried out, represents a potential change of significant proportions. It creates the conditions for a thorough review of the roles of both the district and the cluster levels in the effort to improve primary school quality. What might these roles look like? (See Schwille and Wheeler in press for a more detailed discussion of this point).

The state's response during the 1990s may need to vary by organizational level to address the different stages of particular schools. For example, it may be one thing for a district or a school cluster to support schools where principals are trying to improve their

schools or are actively maintaining excellence and another to stimulate greater activity by principals who seem unwilling or unable to improve the quality of their school.

Thus, it is encouraging to see that proposed regulations for school clusters emphasize capacity-building responsibilities. In addition, as suggested earlier, testing by the cluster could be shifted from a summative emphasis, involving ranking and publicity, to a formative emphasis to help teachers improve their instruction. Clusters could also expand their staff development activities, for example, by drawing on the local knowledge of teachers by organizing workshops for specific grades or specific subjects to work on content knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy (as happens in the cluster for School Two). Such policies would provide a wider array of resources for use by principals who seek internal change but lack resources to begin this process.

At the district level, with its direct administrative line of authority over principals and teachers, its distance from schools and its limited staffing, more emphasis could be given to accountability activities, without excluding initiatives which support capacity-building both at the district and the cluster levels. Although it is unlikely that a district office would actually transfer or dismiss an incompetent principal or a 'sleeping' teacher, district offices could perform the accountability function by confronting schools with the need for change as, for example, in one-on-one meetings between the principal and the head of the district office. This confrontation stands a good chance of having an impact, given the prevailing Thai sense of duty and respect for higher authority, especially since such authority is coupled with the final say over double promotions.

The role of the district office in the area of accountability could become one of trying to create a context or disposition for change within the school, by prodding the principal and by showing support for those teachers in the school who are already concerned about academics. In addition to private meetings between a principal and the head of the district office, districts could organize site visits by prominent officials in clusters across the district to low-achieving schools in the district. Visitors could examine school and classroom practices to bring to the surface problems which the team and school personnel could then process. District officials in attendance during the discussion could contribute by helping these schools locate resources needed to begin changes to improve school quality. Such resources might range from equipment and materials to staff development sessions for principals and teachers, provided, perhaps, by the local school cluster, the district office (in the case of principals) or neighbouring colleges of education. Periodic re-visits by district staff could help to monitor the progress of such schools. (Components of each of these ideas come from the portion of the eight-school study devoted to school clusters).

Finally, such a redefinition will be dependent on the implementation of the new direction at the national level of administration in which capacity-building programmes are given more prominence.

In short, the state's response to individual schools needs to be tailored in some degree to the particular conditions existing within the school. For example, it may be one thing to support those schools where principals seek change or seek to maintain excellence and another to stimulate greater activity by principals who seem uninterested or unwilling to improve the quality of their schools. This study suggests that the response of the state

through its provincial and local agencies does in fact vary, but not sufficiently to produce the many changes that are needed. It is within a multilevel context of change that clusters may ultimately make their biggest contribution to improving primary school quality.

III.   Summary and conclusion

School clusters represent an international movement to implement organizational strategies for school improvement close to the building level. Thailand's experience with clusters suggests that, under certain conditions, they can play a useful role in this effort. Specifically, their mission of promoting collaboration and co-operation within and across schools can be used by a principal intent on improving school performance to enhance his or her own efforts; cluster responsibilities in accountability, such as testing, can be used in similar ways. The capacity-building role is especially important, since it contributes to building and supporting the very components of collaboration and co-operation which are important determinants of quality within an individual school. (The cases of Schools One through Four described the components of more versus less effective schools). The accountability role, especially testing, unless carefully thought through, can actually undermine efforts within a school to promote the various components needed for school improvement (as in School Five) or can lead to internal practices which stress teaching to the test over conceptual understanding (as in School Six).

Cluster activity, however, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for cluster influence. Actual influence depends on the receptivity of the school. In this context the principal plays a pivotal role. Three cases (Schools One, Three and Five) illustrate how school response to the same cluster policy (testing) varied by school depending on the internal dynamics of each school. Another case (School Two) provided an apolar example of how influential a cluster can be when it actively pursues both accountability and capacity-building policies and the principal is intent on improving his or her own school. Two other cases (Schools Four and Six) illustrated what can happen when clusters are relatively inactive, because of weak principal and district office support. These principals either ignored cluster policies or created programmes, like test preparation, to isolate themselves from pressure by outside organizations to engage in meaningful reform.

To improve clusters requires a serious training initiative, partly because impending changes in the regulations will probably lead to a large turnover in cluster staff, and partly because previous in-service programmes were not as effective as they could have been. The lessons from the most active clusters studied suggest the need for new ways of thinking about cluster initiatives. New forms of staff development emphasizing the use of local knowledge of good practice, more effective methods for getting materials and equipment to teachers so they actually benefit from the cluster's resource centre, assistance in developing new materials and new curricular lessons and units, and support for innovative programmes to help teachers are some of the most important training needs. Specific attention should be devoted to the two new office staff, since it will be their responsibility to carry out the cluster's programme. But the principal of the core school, who will become the head of the cluster office, will need to participate in this training to understand what will be expected of his or her staff. In addition, cluster committee members (including principals of all the schools in their *ex officio* role) need training in how to perform their roles more effectively, specifically on the importance of principal support for cluster activity. District office staff,

similarly, need training in how to help clusters become more active, especially in the area of capacity-building initiatives.

But training alone will not lead to clusters performing their roles as intended. Clusters operate within a set of organizational and political constraints. Unless national policy supports both capacity-building and capacity-building strategies for school improvement, it is unlikely that district offices will do much more in the way of support for capacity-building programmes by cluster offices. Unless there is a greater focus on prodding inactive principals at low-achieving schools through the co-ordinated efforts of district offices and school clusters, school receptivity, and, thereby, cluster influence, will remain limited in such schools. It is time to rethink the multiple roles of the state. In so doing, training for collaboration and co-operation through cluster activities may have its biggest impact on schools.

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Community participation in primary education in Indonesia
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Chapter 3

Community participation in primary education in Indonesia

I.   Introduction

1.   Background and rationale

The 1945 Indonesian Constitution states that: (i) every citizen shall have the right to obtain an education; and (ii) the Government shall establish and conduct a national educational system regulated by statute. However, in the process of the Government providing a national education system, many limitations were found, both financial and non-financial. It was realized that the participation of all parties was needed: education is the responsibility of the family, the community and government.

Community participation within education is clearly seen in the many private schools which are financially supported by parents. In 1987/88, seven per cent of the 144,561 primary, 64 per cent of the 19,708 junior secondary and 76 per cent of the 10,119 senior secondary schools were private. Community involvement is much needed in the public school sector especially in providing school fees (a financial contribution from parents), and in improving community participation through the implementation of parent associations, Badan Pembantu Penyelenggaraan Pendidikan (BP3).

The BP3 organization aims: (i) to encourage and improve organizational and personal relationships among the family, community, school and government; (ii) to ensure success in educational activities by not interfering with technical teaching matters; (iii) to arrange for the community's material and financial support and services by not putting additional burdens on the parents; and (iv) to provide the head of the district, town mayor or the representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture with recommendations regarding relief or exemption of school fees.

Since 1977 the compulsory parental contribution (Sumbangan Pembinaan Pendidikan or SPP) has gradually been discontinued and abolished at all public primary schools. This has meant that the BP3 has had even more demands placed upon it to raise funds and other assistance from the community, as government support to organize and maintain educational facilities is far from sufficient. In view of criticisms that the BP3 did not give teachers a potential role in drawing upon community assistance, the Ministry of Education and Culture in conjunction with the Ministry of Home Affairs have established parent-teacher associations, Persatuan Orang Tua Murid dan Guru (POMG), in Jakarta.

2.   Community participation in primary education

Previous studies have shown that community participation in educational implementation in Indonesia is still very low, especially at the primary school level. Suparman's study (1988) on some primary schools (Sekolah Dasar or SDs) in Central Java

parents and community, although this was not sufficient to cover school and maintenance expenses. The same findings were mentioned by a similar study in several provinces by Sana Kencana and Cegir (1988). Suparman's research also indicated that only a small part of the community acknowledged that BP3 had successfully raised community funds, increased school funds and channelled parents' suggestions. Community participation in BP3 was low and few parents attended meetings.

The findings of the Indonesian Study Team (1990) revealed differences between good, average and poor schools. In a good school in Solo, the parents and community made large contributions -- not limited to money, but also to facilities and infrastructure. In an average primary school in Wonosari-Klaten, parents' participation through the BP3 was limited to the provision of teacher handbooks, school magazines, simple sports equipment and some teacher supplements. The same condition was found in a poor SD in Tirtomoyo-Wonogiri where parents and community participation was very low; the BP3 contribution was enough to buy little more than chalk and teacher handbooks.

While the above studies showed the level of community participation in public primary schools, they could not reveal the mechanism and form of community involvement. Other areas needing investigation were community involvement in private schools, small/remote schools and in developing local content curriculum.

3.   Research objective

This study aims to determine how far community participation could be used to support and improve educational implementation at primary schools. The research objectives are:

1.   to determine the kinds and sizes of community participation for supporting education at the primary school level, where the assistance could include provision of funds or materials, or assistance in improving teacher quality or school policies;

2. to determine which constraining and supporting factors affect the process of obtaining community participation, including teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes, the parents, the community leaders, local socio-economic and cultural status, the regulations in force, status of school facilities, infrastructure, etc.;

3. to give recommendations on policies to improve community participation to support education, especially at the primary level, such as improved allocation of government resources, and the provision of training and related skills to obtain community resources.

II.   The Surakarta (Solo) case study

This study examined parent and community participation in educational implementation at two public primary schools, one a 'good' urban school -- SD Kota (SDK) -- and the other a 'good' rural school -- SD Desa (SDD).

1.   The local environment and school

(i)   *The environment and community*

SDK is in the city of Surakarta, an urban area. The community has a high socio-economic status; most of the parents are civil servants, members of the Army or retired. Both the parents and the community are aware of the importance of education and provide supporting facilities to enable children to study well.

SDD lies in a sub-district, in the suburbs outside Surakarta. Most of the parents are either civil servants or employed as labourers in textile, cigarette and timber factories. The parents' educational level is relatively low and their income barely covers daily needs. Both the formal village leaders and the informal religious leaders do not believe that education is their concern, and special attention to primary education is not high on their priority list.

(ii)   *School status*

(a)   General

The SDK owns a permanent building consisting of six classrooms, an office, a clinic and a room for arts. No special room is used for a library; the books are in the principal's or teachers' room. The general policy of the school is to improve academic achievement, to support the 'clean-healthy-neat-beautiful' programme and to improve the school health unit. In improving school achievement the prioritized programmes are to provide audio-visual equipment, to improve the learning and teaching process, and to give remedial classes to students of grade 4 and above. The reading books are provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. There are sufficient tables and chairs, in addition to science, social studies, mathematical and sports equipment. In 1990/91 there were 219 students, not a large number as there is another school nearby. There are 10 teachers including the principal; other employees are teachers not yet employed by the government and a watchman.

The SDD school building is in good condition within a spacious compound. There are six classrooms, a principal's office and a house for the watchman. In 1990/91 there were 263 students, ten teachers including the principal and a watchman.

(b)   The teaching learning process

In terms of the average final examination score, the SDK is ranked eighth among the 66 public schools within the Surakarta sub-district. There are no drop-outs and only a small number of repeating students in grades 1 to 5. The teaching-learning process is well run. There are no empty school hours and an absent teacher is always replaced. Remedial classes for grades 4 and above are held twice a week, and additional intensive lessons are provided for grade 6 students in preparation for the final school examinations.

Again, in terms of the average final examination score, the SDD is among the top five schools in the district of Karanganyar. There are also no drop-outs and only a small number of repeating students for grades 1 to 5. The teaching-learning process is well run and teachers are rarely absent. Additional lessons in the main subjects are provided for grade 6 students in advance of the final examinations, and remedial classes also provided for low achievers in grades 1 to 5.

(c)   Financial status

SDK funds are provided by: Rp 602,500 (according to the number of students and teachers), salaries of Rp 17,883,000 plus Rp 600,000 annual operation and maintenance) from the Government; Rp 5,692,500 from parents' contribution through BP3 at Rp 1,500 per student per month; voluntary contributions from parents through BP3 at a minimum of Rp 500 per student per quarter, plus voluntary donations of Rp 1,500,000 through BP3 to build a gate and fence; and a community donation of Rp 150,000 to build a bicycle shed. SDK's 1990/91 expenditure is Rp 24,455,500 and the unit cost per student is Rp 111,669.

SDD funds are provided by: Rp 140,500 per quarter from central government, Rp 600,000 per annum from local government plus Rp 40,000 per month from the village government; BP3 contributions of Rp 500 per student per month, plus parents' contributions for additional grade 6 lessons at Rp 500 per student per month for four months. SDD's 1990/91 expenditure is Rp 21,194,650 and the unit cost per student is Rp 80,588.

2.   Participation of parents and community

(i)   The BP3 in general

The BP3 committees (chairman, secretary, treasurer and general assistant) at both SDK and SDD are elected for a three-year period during a meeting of parents and teachers, with the principals and teachers playing important roles in the election. The eligibility of committee members is based on their background (education, occupation and dedication); the success of the BP3 is highly dependent upon the ability and activity of the committee.

BP3 workplans at both schools are made by the school and presented to the BP3 for approval (BP3 activities are allocated as extra-curricular activities in the school budget). The BP3 plans are generally made to support the school to improve the teaching-learning process; parent contributions are needed to provide school facilities, infrastructure and incentives to provide the additional lessons for the students.

(ii)   Assistance to the school

Beyond the routine and incidental financial contributions, some parents at SDK also donated items such as a tape recorder, radio, loudspeaker or building material. In addition to the donation to build a bicycle shed, the community gave plants for the

school garden, a private foundation in Solo gave posters, and an expatriate gave books. There are no problems in the receipt of regular financial contributions from parents. One or two late payments are covered by the BP3 or school. The late payers are usually called and requested to comply.

The overall level of assistance received by the SDD is far less, and some parents do not pay their BP3 fees -- the collected sum is often only 80 per cent of the budgeted figure. In some cases, such as lack of money or more than one child in school, the BP3 will waive payment or allow time to pay less. Apart from the parents' contributions the SDD receives Rp 480,000 a year from the local village government; other community donations are non-existent. Neither the BP3 nor the school have plans to raise funds from other sources except the parents. Most of the industries are located outside the area and it is assumed that school problems are beyond their interest.

Summarizing the financial contributions from the three parties, SDK receives 22.8 per cent from parents, 0.6 per cent from the community and 76.6 per cent from the government; SDD receives 7.3 per cent from parents, 2.1 per cent from the community (village government) and 90.6 per cent from the government. Although there is a large difference in funds received by the two schools, the assistance from the community in various forms and the active role of the BP3 committee has affected both schools positively, as shown in the graduate achievements in the final examination. The schools and the parents both acknowledge that one of the reasons for this success is the additional lessons provided, from funds provided by the community and budgeted by the government.

(iii)   Constraining and supporting factors

There is evidence in both these SDs of an awareness from the parents to assist in the implementation of school education especially through BP3 contributions. Income is regularly received as the sum contributed by the parents is fixed according to their financial capacities. Economic and social conditions of the parents have a great influence on the assistance given to the school. The BP3 of SDK, with students coming from a high socio-economic background, is able to collect a large sum of money which covers 23 per cent of the school's operational costs. Other donations include supporting equipment needed by the school. The BP3 of SDD only manages to cover about 9 per cent of operational costs.

The supporting factors of success in developing community (parents') participation are good management of financial administration and positive activities from the school. Other important factors which influence the collection and utilization of community resources are the capacity and dedication of the BP3 committee, the school personnel, and their co-operation and co-ordination.

Assistance from private industry and the general community was not apparent. Although there are many industries located around the schools, no attempt has been made to contact them; many individual and organizations may be willing to participate. The BP3 committee should not limit itself to sourcing just material and

funds: any potential available in the community, even moral support, should be included.

The other constraining factor is the indifference of the local village government, the institutions nearby and the community leaders to help with improving primary education.

III.   The DKI Jakarta case study

This study examined community participation in four primary schools in Jakarta representing urban conditions of a large city. Two public and two private schools were chosen, and within each type were 'good quality' (public school A and private school B) and 'low quality' (public school C and private school D) in terms of economic status.

Only in schools A and B are the POMGs (parent-teacher associations) active, with meetings at least twice a year and with most activities planned to support funding for school operations, facilities or infrastructure. As well as these matters, the POMG also has a say in the monthly contribution, the donations of new students, fund management (how much a teacher should be paid by the POMG), teaching-learning expenditures, etc. These schools also hold regular end-of-term meetings with the parents. The POMG organizations do not function well in schools C and D. School C conducts periodic meetings with the parents but the attendance is usually low. School D holds no parent meetings.

Funds received by public schools consist mainly of salaries paid by central government with only a small amount provided by parents. POMG contributions are determined at Rp 1,500 per month for each student, although parents can still expect to make voluntary donations. By contrast, the main source of income for private schools are the fees borne by the students' parents. POMG contributions are generally determined by the respective schools and are not bound by government regulations; the size of the contribution is in accordance with the parents' financial capacities.

As with other regions in Indonesia, economic and social conditions of the parents have great influence on the assistance given to the school. The POMG in public school A and the institution in private school B are able to collect a large sum of money from the parents. In school A, 44 per cent of the operational cost is supported from parents' contribution. In private school B, in which all the operational cost is borne by the parents, the school not only pays adequate salaries to the staff and provides students with all necessary educational facilities, but is able to put aside a large amount for school development activities and contribute large regular financial support to its founding institution.

However, public school C and private school D can only collect a relatively small amount of money from parents. For example, although parents' contribution in school C gives important support for teachers' welfare, this forms only 18 per cent of the total operational cost -- much smaller compared with public school A. Furthermore, in private school D, parents' financial support in the form of monthly school fees does not yet cover the operational cost, let alone other development costs, which means the founding institution has to pay the deficit by taking money from the budget of other schools it manages.

None of the schools, with the exception of school B, have been able get support from the community other than from the parents. It is not clear whether private or individual sectors are willing to give support to primary schools in Jakarta. It is widely believed that people in a big metropolitan city are busy struggling with their own lives and thus tend to become less co-operative compared with people in small towns and villages who have more spare time and are more willing to give voluntary assistance to others without receiving direct benefits in return.

IV.   The Central Kalimantan case study

This was a study regarding community participation in a small school -- SD Kecil (SDK) -- and in a school where the visiting teacher model (SD MGK) is practiced. Both schools are located in the province of Central Kalimantan and were established to serve the children of communities living in remote areas.

The SDK functions as a regular SD except that a multi-grade teaching method is employed as there are usually less than 15 students in a class, too small a number to be taught by one teacher. Most of the population live from fishing and collecting forestry products; they are not permanent landowners but move from place to place, thus their incomes are irregular. The people have a positive view towards the education of their children. The standard of facilities and infrastructure of the school is good, with five classrooms, a principal's house and housing for the five teachers, who teach a total of 94 students.

The SD MGK lies in a remote area, 10 km away from the nearest village. A primary school in such an area would be inefficient as the number of primary school children is very small. The size of the population constantly changes; there were 19 families consisting of 103 people in February 1991. Their socio-economic environment and view on education are similar to the people of the SDK mentioned above. The school has a 45 square metre learning place with desks, blackboards and a cupboard. The nine students are taught by one of two visiting teachers from the nearest SDK twice a week, assisted by three local tutors on the other days.

The main problem in encouraging community participation in both these small schools is the low socio-economic status of the community: many parents are unable to comply with the agreed sum to be paid to the BP3 and most pay a smaller amount of the regular monthly contribution. The level of parent awareness in these remote areas is limited to the stage of putting their children in school, not on the importance of education quality.

V.   The West Java case study

1.   Introduction

Parent and community interest to participate in the development and application of local content in curriculum at the primary school level is an important aspect of educational implementation. Such a programme is the result of delegation of authority from the central government to the regions to help preserve local culture. The policy on placing local content

in curriculum has commenced with the setting up of pilot projects in East Java, South Sumatra and West Java.

The West Java pilot project is located in the district of Tasikmalaya (sub-districts of Singaparna and Rajapolah) and the district of Sumedang (sub-district of Rancakalong). Almost all local issues are included in the school curriculum in Tasikmalaya, such as the natural environment (farming), social environment (pesantren -- non-formal Islamic education), way of life (e.g. gotong royong -- close voluntary co-operation among community members), the village organization, local needs and potential culture (customs, arts, etc.). The pilot project in Sumedang focuses only on cultural aspects.

2. The local environment

Both districts lie in the south-eastern part of Bandung, the capital of West Java. Tasikmalaya is 100 km from Bandung and Sumedang is 46 km from Bandung. The areas are mountainous and 700-800 metres above sea level. Most of the land is used for farming and the large supply of water coming from mountain springs is used to make fish ponds (balong-balong), a traditional fish cultivation method.

The majority of the population are farmers, although others work in the private sector, the Army, as civil servants, traders or labourers. Most are literate -- they read, write, have basic knowledge and know Bahasa Indonesia. Although the majority of people are Moslems, they still follow traditional ceremonies and belief in animism. Traditional customs are centred around their life, the building of a house, rice planting and harvesting, and thanksgiving rituals to avoid dangers or crises.

3. Community participation

(i) General status

Parent participation in the SDs in Tasikmalaya and Sumedang is formally channelled through the BP3. However, the support given is generally in terms of 'BP3 contribution' only -- other forms of support are seldom given and direct participation is low, although parents are always willing to provide additional funds or materials if required.

(ii) Participation in developing local content in curriculum

Up to 75 per cent of the SDs in both districts have developed the local content in the school curriculum. The type of content chosen depends upon the natural environment and potential, local needs, and the social and cultural conditions of the community. The sub-districts of Singaparna and Rajapolah (Tasikmalaya) have placed farming, land fishery and home industries like handcrafts and food into their curriculum. The sub-district of Rancakalong (Sumedang) focuses on cultural aspects such as customs and traditions, religious ceremonies, ethics and folklore.

The process of developing the local content requires co-operation among the teachers and their working group (KKG), between the principal and the working group of principals (KKKS), and among the kindergarten/primary (TK/SD) inspectors in the sub-district.

Resource personnel from the community should also be involved, such as parents, handcraft workers, and religious and cultural leaders.

The involvement of parents and the community in developing local content aims as follows:

a. The community assists the school staff (teacher and headmaster) by providing information and suggestions during the identification stage.

b. The BP3 and community leaders (culture, religion, business) make consultative judgements, and have formal and informal discussions to show that content of the local curriculum is in accordance with certain criteria.

c. The teachers as well as the KKG often request the BP3 and other leaders to provide information on the specification and interpretation of the local content and their problems as the teachers may not know how to teach them.

d. Some schools employ resource persons/community leaders to help teach in the schools or show certain aspects of local content.

e. In an effort to seek financial resources, some SDs within the region have taken the initiative to submit their expenditures to the educational office of the local government through the BP3.

4.   Constraints

Parent and community participation in developing local content in curriculum in the districts of Tasikmalaya and Sumedang is quite active. However, the constraining problems are:

1. There is no permanent pattern of co-operation between the school and the resource persons to perform continuous activities.

2. As it is not customary for the school to involve the community in the teaching-learning process, there are problems in the interaction of teachers and resource persons, and among resource persons and students. There are schools which do not involve such people as this may damage the credibility of the teachers in front of their students if it is seen that these people know more than the teacher.

3. Some schools have difficulty in getting the community leaders and other resource persons to the school, especially if they are requested to come often. Such people are busy and cannot always attend the school if this interferes with their work.

VI.   Analysis of community participation in education

1.   Organization for mobilizing community participation

Government regulations and guidelines state that education is the responsibility not only of the government, but also of the community including the family or parents of students. The community is given ample opportunity by the government to participate in educational implementation through the establishment and management of private schools, especially in secondary schools and higher education institutions, in which almost all educational costs are borne by the students' parents.

Most primary level education in Indonesia is provided by public schools. However, in terms of student achievements the general quality of primary school education is not satisfactory, owing to factors such as lack of school facilities, and teachers with inadequate training and welfare; this is partly caused by scarce resources available to the government. To address this problem, the Government has set up BP3 organizations in each school to mobilize parent and community resources to support educational implementation. It should be noted that public primary school education is formally free, although the BP3 is not forbidden to collect voluntary contributions from parents and the community.

Although the BP3 is open to the community in general, membership in practice is usually confined to the parents of current students and school personnel. The BP3 committee consists of at least a chairman, secretary and treasurer selected from the parents. Formally, the school personnel should not become a main part of the committee, and the principal functions as an adviser only: the implication is that the school should not interfere with the BP3 function. In practice, however, school personnel are usually involved in everyday activities of the BP3, such as collecting regular contributions from parents. The exclusion of school personnel is considered a weakness rather than a disadvantage. Thus, in the region of Jakarta, the BP3 was changed to POMG (parent-teacher association), and teachers became an integral part of the organization. The main objective of the POMG remains the same, and the position of secretary or treasurer is usually held by a teacher.

The effectiveness of the BP3/POMG depends in part on the committee members: their competency and dedication will determine its success in mobilizing resources for school support. However, the committee selection procedure does not always ensure that the most able persons are found; the candidates are usually put forward for election at a BP3/POMG meeting by the principal and often limited to those parents he/she is familiar with. There is no systematic procedure for selecting the best candidates.

Formally, the committee is elected for one year, but many schools violate the rule by electing it for longer as they believe a one-year period is too short to implement its programmes. The BP3 should hold a general meeting at least twice a year, but this does not always occur owing to the large number of absentees. In practice, only a small percentage of parents attend these general meetings; most are too busy or have no interest in the function of such meetings. This is especially the case in schools of low socio-economic status. In urban areas, attendance is higher but limited to mothers or parents' representatives. Efforts should be made to encourage greater attendance at these meetings as many important

decisions concerning school support are discussed here. Unfortunately, in some schools the BP3/POMG committee is not active, and its main task is usually assumed by the principal or other school personnel.

2. Assistance to the school

In general, most of the resources or contributions for school support are collected from the parents. Rarely do the BP3/POMG have a systematic plan to mobilize resources from the community in general such as potential individuals, social or professional organizations, the private sector, etc. If serious efforts are made, and the socio-economic conditions of the community allow, the community is often willing to contribute to schools.

The largest contribution from parents is financial support in the form of routine monthly contributions, admission fees and other voluntary donations. The size of the contribution in public schools is decided by the BP3/POMG and is usually based on the proposal made by the school which considers the parents' financial capacities. In practice, the routine contributions in most schools is the same for everybody, but some students can be exempt from payment if their parents can not afford it.

The financial contribution collected by BP3/POMG varies greatly between schools and is dependent on the socio-economic level of the parent. In public schools with students coming from economically middle class levels, this amount is quite large and can comprise a substantial percentage of the total educational cost of the school. On the other hand, the schools with students from low socio-economic areas (except Jakarta) usually receive only a small contribution from parents. In private schools, most if not all educational cost is borne by parents. Sometimes they are subsidized by the government in the form of paid teaching staff, and often provided with free equipment such as laboratory apparatus and books.

Apart from financial contributions, parents and the community in general often contribute material such as educational equipment, books, building supplies, etc. Parents in remote areas often give assistance such as maintaining the school, and the community helps in providing buildings for schools and teachers.

In general, most financial contribution is used to pay operational and maintenance costs and to improve the welfare of the teaching personnel, in the form of honorarium, incentives or transportation costs. Without such additional financial support, it is often impossible for teachers in big cities like Jakarta to survive as their salary from the government does not cover minimum needs. However, funds collected by BP3 in schools such as in Solo were mainly used as incentives to teachers for doing extra work, such as additional lessons; in this case parents can see the benefit of their support.

In most cases, there is no clear evidence of significant involvement of the parents (BP3/POMG) or the community in general educational matters within the school. This has been mainly the result of:

1.   government regulations concerning BP3/POMG which state that parents and the community can give support to the school but should not interfere with

'technical teaching' matters which are the responsibility of principals, teachers and related government institutions;

2. the common belief that the school personnel know better about educational matters than parents or the community, so educational responsibility rests solely with them;

3. the belief that education is the responsibility of the school rather than the community.

Exceptions were seen in the Visiting Teacher Module (a pilot project in Central Kalimantan) where three people from the community worked as tutors, and in the project concerning the development and application of local content in curriculum in West Java.

3. Constraining and supporting factors

The existence of community/parent-school organizations based on government regulations (such as BP3 and POMG) is an advantage in mobilizing community resources to support primary schools. However, the limitation of community participation by not interfering in 'technical education' matters prevents the community from giving important educational support to the school. This limitation contradicts the essence of the new Educational Law which requires the development and application of local content in curriculum -- this needs significant assistance from the local community, and not just in terms of financial and material contributions. No detailed guidelines have been issued concerning community involvement in educational matters and the teaching-learning process. So far, the success of the BP3 organization depends on the role of the principal/teachers, although the BP3 explicitly excludes teaching staff from sitting on the committee.

The success of the BP3 in obtaining resources for school support depends partly on the competence and dedication of the committee members. However, there has been no detailed procedure of recruiting and selecting the best candidates from all the parents.

The awareness of parents/community of the importance of educational quality and evidence that the resources are used effectively are key factors in obtaining increased participation. However, serious efforts to ensure this awareness exists have not always been made by the school personnel.

The parents' financial capacities and the community's socio-economic status determine the success of community support to education. In communities of low socio-economic status, school support in the form of material and services may be more easily collected than financial contributions.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

The legal basis for the formation of the Parents Association for School Support (popularly called the BP3 in most parts of Indonesia) of the primary school is the same in every school. As a result, the organization's structure, the qualifications of personnel

required and expected roles are basically similar. There are minor variations in the details of these aspects owing to different conditions of the school, parents and community. Teachers can not become members of the BP3 committee, which is considered a weakness. Thus, in the Special Region of Jakarta a similar association -- the POMG (Parents-Teachers Association) -- has been established to accommodate the role of teachers in such an organization. Although the formal inclusion of teachers in the POMG should theoretically strengthen the role of the association, it is hard to find differences in effectiveness between it and the BP3, as in practice the everyday involvement of teachers in the latter is also very strong.

To encourage teachers to participate more actively in the association to support educational implementation in schools, they, together with the principal, should be legally included as members of the association. The POMG associations which are being tried out in Jakarta should also be tried in a limited number of schools in other provinces. This new form of organization should then been evaluated to determine its effectiveness in promoting education compared with the old system.

The main objective of the parents' associations (BP3/POMG) in all primary schools is the same: to give support to the school in its educational implementation by mobilizing financial as well as non-financial resources. Funds from parents and the community are generally used to pay the operational and maintenance costs of the school and to give additional honoraria to the teachers and principal, as government budgets are usually inadequate. The amount of this support varies for two main reasons: the economic condition of the parents/community and the level of appreciation of the parents towards education. The schools in rural and isolated areas also get the least support from the association.

To maintain educational equality and equity it is suggested that the provincial office of education (KANWIL) should be allowed to reallocate the educational budget so that schools which are likely to receive minimum support from the parents' associations (i.e. schools in rural, isolated or poor areas) receive more routine as well as development funding from the central and provincial or local government.

Parent/community support also depends on the competence and dedication of the committee members, in co-operation with the principal and teachers, in mobilizing resources from the community. Evidence of effective use of such resources is also believed to have effects on parents' participation.

To maximize the role of the association, procedures should be devised to ensure that the best candidates are found as committee members. Detailed guidelines should also be produced and used by school personnel in the utilization of financial contributions for effective schooling and in their accountability to the parents' association.

There are still some parents who cannot afford to pay the financial contribution, even though this has been decided upon by the association considering the parents' economic status. To overcome this problem these parents should be encouraged to contribute in non-monetary forms equivalent to the amount of money they are expected to pay; this would give them a choice in the type of participation they could offer. Parents who are very poor should be exempt from paying anything, as education at public primary schools is free in

Indonesia. Non-financial support from parents' associations is generally minimal, probably owing to the guidelines which prevent them from interfering in the academic affairs or educational process at school. However, this policy promotes the misunderstanding that the parents' main role through the association is only paying developmental and operational fees. A clearer role should be defined and detailed in official guidelines. For example, parents/community should be allowed and encouraged to participate in identifying, selecting and teaching local content.

To facilitate implementation of strategies for obtaining full participation from parents and the community, specialized training should be arranged for school principals, teachers and supervisors. In addition, guidelines and manuals for obtaining community involvement through the parent-teacher association should be provided by the government.

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The Parent Learning Support System (PLSS): school and community collaboration for raising pupil achievement in the Philippines
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We recognize with gratitude the help of our NETRC Staff, specifically Dr. Catalino P. Rivera, Chief education programme specialist for research and evaluation, who served as anchor person for this undertaking, for data collection and organization, analyses and preparation of this report.

Chapter 4

The Parent Learning Support System (PLSS): school and community collaboration for raising pupil achievement in the Philippines

I.   The content of the Parent Learning Support System

1.   A brief summary description

Schools are not the only places which provide conditions or situations for teaching and learning to occur; homes and communities help equally in this process. Regardless of the particular setting, however, 'teachers' play particular roles in effecting the learning process. Professionally trained teachers in schools, and parents and community members outside schools (either consciously or unconsciously) influence the learning process. While differences in the levels of attainment are evident, all three settings have a common purpose in making the learners acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that help them develop into productive members of the family, community and society.

This commonalty characterizes the teaching-learning situation in the Philippines, particularly with regard to the teaching of children. The recognition of parents and community members as teachers of children has cleared the way for them to gradually assume roles in the teaching-learning processes that take place in formal school settings. As a result, an innovative mechanism has been devised at the school and community level to facilitate parent and community participation in collaboration with teachers: the Parent Learning Support System (PLSS).

Currently, the PLSS has developed into a viable programme which aids in the raising of achievement levels of school children pursuing elementary education in the Philippines. It features a collective effort of pupils' parents, guardians and concerned community members who are systematically organized into groups that collaborate with teachers and administrators in the teaching-learning activities in schools. This collective effort, which is given focus by both the administrators and teachers, is practiced at home and in the community, and is extended into the classroom and school settings. Operationally, parents and community members, with guidance from teachers, monitor the performances of their own children, in schools and at home or in the community. They assist the children in their assigned learning tasks or projects. They discuss with teachers, administrators and with the children themselves the gathered information on teaching-learning activities, children's performances, problems and constraints which they perceive as critical to boosting children's achievement. Under this collaborative programme, parents and community members actively assume the role of partners of teachers and administrators in the once exclusive domain of professionally trained teachers.

2.   The national context

The involvement of the home and community in the teaching-learning process pre-dates formal schools. Traditionally, parents have played significant roles in the formation and establishment of societies and their institutions, including schools. In the Philippines, this is particularly true. Even prior to the colonization of the country by the Hispanics during the sixteenth century, Filipinos had been introduced into learning the roles and responsibilities necessary for making the families capable of day-to-day living.

The role of parents and community elders still continues as it has been recognized by parents themselves that they are pivotal to children developing their full potential. The persistence of this role has become a characteristic feature of Filipino life. In community settings, for example, the teaching-learning process generally occurs informally, i.e. unplanned, undirected, spontaneously and without the structures as found in schools. Community settings also provide opportunities for teaching-learning to occur formally, i.e. with specific plans and definite agenda being followed, such as those which take place during seminars, orientation meetings, and other community campaigns and exchanges.

In home settings, the teaching-learning process occurs explicitly or consciously, though in the main, informally. Parents introduce and teach children early in their lives the fundamental skills, attitudes and values necessary for day-to-day living, and to a certain extent, depending on the perceived capability of children to comprehend, living in the wider setting of the community. The knowledge being imparted by parents to their children, though unwritten, is specific and to a certain degree, specialized, i.e. that which would enable the children to cope successfully with the requirements of the immediate confines of homes and the community.

This general cultural orientation of the Filipinos toward the welfare of their families, and specifically towards education, is extended to the establishment and continuing development of the formal education system in the country. Above all, the education system cultivates children's potential to make them contribute productively to the social, economic and cultural processes of their families and the wider society. Operationally, schools are regarded as extensions of the homes and the community; teachers and administrators are thus considered 'surrogate' parents.

The initial effect of the establishment of formal schools was to draw parents and community members away from the children's learning experiences, and to render insignificant the traditional and historical roles of parents and community members in rearing and educating the children, reducing them to performing tasks peripherally related to education (e.g. contributing monetary support for improving school grounds, building fences, attending meetings which focus on fund solicitation and/or sustaining parental involvement in fund campaigns) and doing nothing of substance in regard to their children's performances in school, except in instances where the pupils have progressed to join the ranks of what the school regards as 'delinquents'.

However, this situation has now changed and schools have started to open up. The roles of parents and community members in the education of children have been revived.

Their involvement in the teaching-learning process has been recognized as essential together with those of professionally trained teachers.

This transformation has been brought about by a number of developments occurring in almost all areas of social and cultural life in the country. For instance, community organizations have proved to be viable partners of government in the delivery of basic social services; activities sponsored and/or operated by civic and non-government organizations (NGOs) are not only successful but thriving; community-based development programmes fare better than those which are centrally developed and initiated. The positive results brought about by this collaboration between government and the community have further led to the extension of government recognition and encouragement of community and non-government sectors to actively participate in the development processes taking place in society.

This is also occurring in the education sector, particularly in the provision of basic education whereby community groups, families and other institutions are encouraged to participate. Teaching-learning is now officially recognized as a process which takes place not only in schools but significantly in the local community.

The participation and increasing involvement of non-school personnel in teaching-learning have enhanced the collaboration of teachers, administrators, and parents and community members toward instituting change and continuing development of the education process at the lower level. Indeed, it has given basic education more leverage in the delivery of its functions.

3.   The basic education system in the Philippines

The basic education system, as currently defined, includes pre-school education, six years of elementary education, and four years of secondary education. The entry age at pre-school level varies from five to six years of age; seven years of age for grade I, and 13 years of age for the first year of secondary schooling. Pre-school education is not compulsory and is not generally free, unlike elementary education which has long been provided free to all children aged 7-12 years. Secondary education has been provided free during the last three years.

Basic education constitutes around 84 per cent of the total annual education budget for all three levels (including tertiary education) which amounted to about 17.5 billion pesos in 1988. The amount which is centrally allocated for basic education represents expenditures for facilities and infrastructures, and recurrent expenses for maintenance and personnel services.

The major support to basic education programmes, particularly the curricular agenda, comes from the central department. This includes planning, decision-making, administration and management.   However, regional and divisional offices are given flexibility in the implementation and execution of various programmes and projects, and, to a certain extent, flexibility in adapting the curriculum to the needs of the local community. Specific planning, development and decision-making required in making education relevant to the needs of the environment are similarly encouraged. Generally, however, the basic education system is

operated centrally, including the provision of textbooks, and the development of curriculum, facilities and infrastructure.

While these structural relationships serve as limiting factors in effecting innovative changes in the delivery of basic education, they do not necessarily impose constraints that impede development at the school level. In each of the levels involved in basic education (i.e. region, division, district), co-ordination of vital activities such as planning, decision-making, implementation, management and evaluation is visibly occurring.

4.   The 'typical' elementary school prior to the PLSS

The public elementary school, staffed by qualified professional teachers, is directly supervised by the district level. Its requirements in terms of facilities and financial resources are approved by the district supervisor who endorses such to the division level, who in turn sends them to the regional director.

The school administrator or principal manages the operations and the teaching-learning activities on a day-to-day basis. The teachers are directly in charge of the classroom activities, planning and implementing them according to the requisites of a learning task as defined in centrally issued textbooks. Teachers also monitor the progress of their pupils on a regular basis. The results of these evaluations are submitted to the school administrator and are discussed during staff/faculty meetings where any corrective measures are considered and then submitted to the district supervisor for further study and/or endorsement to the relevant authorities. During the school year, the district conducts an assessment of pupil performances; based on the results of these evaluations, district-wide measures are implemented immediately if no additional resources are required.

The teaching-learning processes are confined to classes of 40 to 60 pupils of differing ability levels; the teachers are the only immediately available source of information. Learning tasks are done individually or collectively in small groups. Assigned tasks to be performed at home are usually given to pupils. Similarly, 'seatwork' is given as an opportunity for pupil practice, and for teachers to attend to those pupils who need close supervision. The general conduct of the teaching-learning processes depends heavily on the capability of the classroom teachers; the pupils remain as passive receivers of teacher instruction.

Parents or community members are not involved in the teaching-learning activities in school. They are only expected to provide the financial and other material support for the children's schooling. The parent-teacher association serves as a source for financial support and other assistance such as beautification, keeping the school grounds in order, and school-initiated civic and social activities through fund raising for special cultural or social projects. NGOs and private enterprises are asked for donations such as books and reference materials, and other instructional equipment or facilities. Generally, prior to the institution of the PLSS, the parents, community members and community organizations were only asked to enact roles peripheral to the teaching-learning processes that were taking place in schools.

5.   The problem of low and under-achievement

The provision of free elementary education, including the provision of basic facilities and infrastructures, does not guarantee the attainment of high pupil performances. This has been found to be true in the Philippines.

Indeed, in general, pupil performances in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas have been discouragingly low. While this in itself poses a serious problem for school administrators and teachers, it is further exacerbated by the persistence of absenteeism among children.   In some cases this deteriorates into a problem of keeping potential drop-outs in school and making them stay until the end of a school year. Health and medical problems also contribute to low pupil performance. While these factors occur in almost every elementary school in the country, the degree and magnitude vary between locations, school types and grades. The emerging pattern confirms that educational wastage has persisted in elementary education, and that its magnitude is more apparent in remote and rural areas than in highly accessible urban areas.

Around 35 pupils out of every 100 who start grade I are unable to complete elementary education after six years. Educational wastage is also indicated by both under-achievement and lack of achievement among school children. Government records show that for every 100 pupils enrolled in grade I in 1979-1980 across the country, only 75 reached grade IV in 1982-1983, 65 stayed to grade VI in 1984-1985, and about 41 survived to fourth year of high school in 1988-1989.

Research on pupil achievement provides real causes for alarm. The findings show that: (i) school children completing grade IV have learned only two-thirds of what should be learned after four years in school; (ii) on average, those completing grade VI could answer only 55 per cent of the achievement tests administered nationally; and (iii) the average elementary school graduate across the country has obtained the lowest scores in reading, mathematics and English. This low and under-achievement is coupled with a relatively high rate of grade repetition and a high incidence of drop-outs across grade levels.

This situation is far from improving. This does not mean, however, that there have been no concrete attempts at correcting the declining performance of pupils in elementary schools: an initiative to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of elementary education in the country has been launched. This programme, known as the Program for Decentralized Education Development (PRODED), includes as one of its prime goals the raising of achievement levels of school children in all subject areas through the provision of textbooks, physical facilities, and administrator and teacher training on a large scale. In addition to this programme, other measures and 'action packages' have been introduced into the school setting to boost academic achievement of pupils particularly in regions which have long been deprived, depressed and under-served. Intervention programmes, such as regular medical and dental care for pupils, have also been instituted.

In spite of these programmes, however, the envisaged improvement in achievement has yet to be realized. For example, the general achievement level at the end of grade VI represented about a three per cent improvement (in three years) over the 1986 achievement level (52 per cent) of what should be learned under the new elementary school curriculum.

The low and under-achievement of pupils in the Philippines is a result of a number of factors, such as poverty or the economic difficulties of students' families: pupils may have to miss classes to help their families earn a living. It has been shown that good preparation for school, a positive parental attitude and support to educational progress, and positive attitudes of the wider community towards schooling contribute favourably to children's performances in schools.

II.   The development of the Parent Learning Support System

1.   Initiation of the PLSS: proponents and sources

The downward trend in the achievement levels of school children in elementary schools, not only in the Philippines but also in countries comprising Asia and the Pacific led to a variety of innovative approaches sponsored by the UNESCO-APEID that aimed at: (i) effectively preparing young children for primary education and introducing them to primary schooling (elementary education in the Philippines includes both primary and intermediate levels, i.e. grades I to VI); (ii) providing competent teachers with attitudes necessary to enhance pupil's achievement and able to enlist out-of-school resources; (iii) implementing more effective strategies and methods of instruction in schools in the light of recent studies of young children's achievement in their early education; (iv) involving parents more effectively in the primary education of their children; (v) encouraging community involvement in primary education; and (vi) effecting educational administration and supervision conducive to the enhancement of achievement among primary level children.

This regional effort, the Joint Innovative Project (JIP), was viewed in the Philippines as complementary to PRODED, designed to boost pupils' achievement in depressed, disadvantaged and under-served areas. Among other objectives, the Joint Innovative Project on Raising the Achievement Level of Primary Education in the Philippines (JIPRAL) was intended to design a model for installing PLSS in primary schools which targets the acceptance of the parents' responsibility of educating the child, and to test its effectiveness along several dimensions. The planned programme of parent intervention in the teaching-learning processes was specifically explored in Leyte.

2.   Design of the PLSS

Fundamentally, the PLSS is a school-based initiative which aims at organizing parents, guardians and community members to assist meaningfully in the upgrading of the quality of elementary education generally, and in the raising of achievement levels of pupils specifically. Operationally, the PLSS is a grass-roots strategy which represents the collective effort in co-ordination with the principal and teachers.

The goals of the PLSS can only be realized through such a collective effort. Moreover, the guidance, assistance and support that are required by school children may not be effective if given at a single time as a 'one-shot' affair. Teaching important attitudinal and behavioural patterns is a continuous process which can only be facilitated by a favourable learning climate supplemented by varied activities.

The PLSS programme that can be organized and implemented in elementary schools is based on the size of the school. The smaller the PLSS, the more closely knit the members are and the easier for the teacher to follow-up and monitor parental assistance in the children's studies. Hence, it is advisable to organize only two types:

1. class PLSS -- this type is for parents for a class of at least 40 pupils; and

2. grade PLSS -- this type is for parents of a grade, i.e. from grades I to VI.

In either of these two types, the following objectives of the PLSS are sought:

1. general: to support and co-operate with the school staff in improving the pupils' learning capacities and in developing desirable values, attitudinal and behavioural change;

2. specific:

(a) to identify home factors that affect cognitive and affective development of the pupils; and
(b) to conduct regular fora for discussion and group decision in providing assistance and support to pupils' learning experiences.

The attainment of these objectives depends on the organization of the PLSS, and its cohesiveness and dynamism will determine the effectiveness of implementation of its strategies.

3.   Implementation of the PLSS

(a)   Implementation strategy

The implementation of the PLSS follows a simple and direct flow of activities, including: (i) organizing a parent-teacher group that will undertake to carry out the programme; (ii) organizing and planning the school PLSS programme; (iii) strengthening the capability of the parent-teacher group; (iv) programme implementation and management; and (v) monitoring and evaluation.

The organizational phase starts with the convening of parents of pupils from all grades to set up the parent-teacher groups in each of the six grade-levels. Then the broad concept of the PLSS programme and its ultimate aims are discussed by the assembly of teachers and parents.

A second meeting is convened to plan and discuss the various activities of the programme that will be carried out in the school year. During this meeting, parents fill in questionnaires about their particular socio-economic circumstances and support for their children's learning. These surveys aim to determine the study habits, socio-economic status of parents, and pupils' activities after class hours or during non-school days.

The information collected from parents is supplemented by the pupils' academic profile data generated from two tests (Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test [Philippine Adaptation] and Year-end Achievement Test) administered by school guidance counsellors with the assistance of teachers. The pupils' academic profiles are used for deciding and selecting which class or grade level will implement the PLSS programme.

The results of the analyses are then presented during the launch of the PLSS programme which is attended by parents, community members, teachers, pupils and other invited persons. An open forum focuses on the specific rationale and objectives of the PLSS, followed by small group discussions of specific roles of parents and teachers in their respective PLSS class or grade.

After the programme is launched, implementation of planned activities in each of the PLSS class or grade starts. During this phase the parent-teacher group's capability is strengthened. The participating teachers are given the necessary orientation in handling the programme, particularly in dealing with parents and community members. The upgrading of parents is achieved through a series of parent education seminars where resource speakers are invited to discuss specific topics on parents' roles and on how they can effectively perform these in the total development and education of their children.

Also included is a parent guidance seminar which involves both parents and pupils. This allows for in-depth reflection, particularly of parents on their experiences with their children, and of children on their experiences with their parents. This seminar is designed for parents to share their own insights into the learning problems and to make them aware of their child's feelings, attitudes, expectations and hopes.

The insights drawn from this seminar series are expected to be applied by both parents and teachers in implementing PLSS activities, e.g. parents' tutorial work, helping children with their assignments at home or in school, helping them read or practice mathematics, assisting teachers manage class conduct and monitoring the performances of their children. The seminars not only strengthen the capability of parents and teachers in performing their respective roles, but more significantly also make them highly sensitive to each others' needs and especially to pupils' problems.

During the implementation, parents are drawn into the teaching-learning processes inside the classrooms as observers or teacher aides. Parents are also allowed to observe their children's behaviour at work or play. After these observations, parents write down their comments on their children's behaviour, teaching methods and styles. Teachers then schedule meetings with parents to discuss the comments and suggestions, and collectively agree on specific measures. This activity, the teacher-parent conference, occurs regularly after parent observation and during the periodic evaluation of pupil's performance (i.e. after each grading period, and after each semester or end-of-year evaluation). The finale of the programme is the awarding of certificates at the year end in recognition to participating parents.

Another important activity during the programme implementation is the teacher's home visit. This is regularly conducted by teachers to familiarize themselves with the pupil's family situation. This visit also allows teachers to discuss more fully means by

which the parent can assist their children, especially in subjects where pupils exhibit low performance.

Throughout the implementation period, the school administrator acts as overall co-ordinator and manager of the PLSS programme. The implementation of activities in each of the PLSS classes or grades is the responsibility of the teachers and parents. Regular consultations, however, occur between the teachers and the administrator on matters of critical importance (e.g. disciplinary measures against delinquent or erring children, conduct of field trips or studies outside the school, etc.).

In all these activities of the PLSS, teachers play a lead role in helping direct parents' and community members' participation in key activities. The administrator plays an overseer role.

(b)   Resources of the PLSS

The PLSS programme depends principally on the existing resources of the school (i.e. financial, facilities and materials, human resources). However, when available, financial support is provided by the school district office to defray expenses of seminars and other PLSS activities. The parent-teacher group shares in this financial burden, though minimally and purely on a voluntary basis. As the PLSS requires no special facilities, activities are carried out inside and outside the classrooms. Other activities make use of facilities in the community, such as assembly halls for meetings. Technical assistance is provided by the district or division offices and other concerned persons assist in the seminars, conferences or workshops. Officials of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) central office and the regional offices also provide technical assistance. The materials for training and seminars are provided by the DECS central office and through its Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE) and National Educational Testing and Research Centre (NETRC).

(c)   Implementation structures and procedures

The management of the PLSS rests with the different offices of the DECS concerned with the provision of elementary education in the country. The BEE co-ordinates with the DECS' regional offices which provide general direction for the division offices in implementing the programme at the district and school levels, which are the pivotal centres for the day-to-day management of PLSS activities.

At the school level, the administrator serves as the overall PLSS programme director, assisted by the school's guidance counsellor. The grade PLSS is managed by an assigned grade level teacher while a PLSS class is managed by the respective classroom teacher. All school PLSS programmes in the district are co-ordinated and managed by the district supervisor.

The PLSS places the ultimate onus of monitoring and evaluating the results onto the school and the district. The regular collection of information indicates the progress of the programme towards attaining its objectives, how well the activities are being carried out, how well the learners and participants are performing, and information such as pupil's achievement levels.

Monitoring and evaluation of the PLSS occurs at the beginning, during and at the end of the programme. The monitoring which forms part of the formative evaluation occurs during the development and implementation of the PLSS programme. Periodic assessment of pupils' performances are carried out during the implementation period. Summative evaluation takes place at the end of the school year, focused on measuring levels of pupil achievement and successes (or failures) of PLSS operational strategies and procedures.

All offices from the central to the school level monitor and evaluate the programme; however, the substantive parts of this process are done at the school and district levels. The higher levels are responsible for the PLSS programme, project integration and periodic reporting of progress. The district and school levels are responsible for the integration of PLSS projects at the district level and monitoring of activities that are implemented in the schools within the district. A district-wide evaluation of the PLSS programme is prepared, as well as a school-based evaluation on both an interim and end-of-year basis.

The results of each year's PLSS programme are communicated to the district office, and the division office integrates the results of all the PLSS programmes and submits this to the regional office. Finally, the DECS central office receives the integrated regional reports. Special news releases and magazine articles are written to communicate to the public the performances achieved by the programme. At the community level, the favourable outcomes of the programme are disseminated through a year-end award ceremony for pupils and parents who have participated in the school's PLSS programme.

(d)   Problems of implementation

The PLSS implementation has not encountered serious difficulties. However, the most common problem is the parents' availability to participate in certain activities. This has been overcome by teachers working out specific schedules with parents and adjusting the roles which they are expected to perform in any PLSS activities. In cases where parents cannot participate in school activities, they are given tasks principally focused on monitoring and helping their children at home in their assignments.

Financial problems do occur.   In these instances, the district office extends assistance. Even the parent-teacher group voluntarily helps keep the school ground orderly, or assists teachers to prepare and improvise teaching materials needed for the lessons. Parents and community members also offer minimal monetary assistance.

The initial reluctance of some teachers to participate in the PLSS programme has been resolved through a continuous dialogue and briefing about the ultimate objective of the programme, and through the active demonstration of commitment particularly by the school administrators.

The few minor problems experienced in the implementation of the PLSS can be attributed to the fact that the programme does not require any additional or new facilities. What it requires is the willingness and commitment of parents, teachers and community members to participate and collaborate in helping children achieve improved performance.

(e)   The PLSS today

In the original and limited experimental area, the PLSS has continuously demonstrated its ability to raise the achievement levels of pupils, cognitively and affectively. The collaboration between teachers, parents, community members, school administrators and pupils has been firmly established. The apparent benefits have attracted a number of schools in the district near to the original area. The improvement registered by the schools which tried out the PLSS programme has convinced the DECS to implement it in all elementary schools in the country.

4.   Development and implementation of collaboration

(a)   Motivations and expectations

The PLSS programme begins with defined roles for each participating teacher, parent, community member and pupil. These do not conflict with the fundamental teaching functions of teachers, nor the parenting roles of parents and community members, but complement the principal motivation of each of the participants (i.e. to help children achieve better in their academic subjects, and in the development of desirable attitudes, values and other behaviour). The acceptance of these roles and functions, and the common awareness of the principal reason on why they should work together in helping the children, explain the relative ease with which collaboration is achieved in the Philippines.

The underlying assumptions of the collaboration demonstrated in the PLSS programme rest on the common belief that education of children is the collective responsibility of the community, and that such a collective effort will result in children's improved learning. In the Philippines, collaboration has not been hard to achieve as this has been consistent with Filipinos' cultural way of life. It is also a way of keeping intact the familistic orientation of Filipinos (i.e. providing and ensuring the education and general welfare of children). Within this cultural context, the collaboration displayed by teachers, parents, school administrators and the pupils de-emphasizes individual differences; instead it capitalizes and uses the strengths of each participant and complements any weaknesses.

(b)   The nature, extent and management of collaboration in the PLSS

The actual collaboration seen in the PLSS programme goes beyond the formal relationship dictated by the bureaucratic structure. Parents are regarded as partners of teachers in teaching-learning processes. While parents and community members assist teachers in 'lesser' tasks compared with those performed by the teachers, they have been treated as equally responsible and accountable contributors in educating and facilitating the learning of children. Teachers and administrators make serious efforts to make them feel wanted and needed in the programme. This can be gleaned from the various activities which form integral parts of the PLSS, such as the parent education seminars, teacher-parent conferences, home visits conducted by teachers, and the opportunities given to comment and suggest ways of improving the teaching-learning situation of their children in general, and of raising the performance levels of their children in particular. The management of the collaboration similarly stresses the critical importance of parents and community members in the school setting. Their individual and collective views on the aspects of PLSS

implementation are sought, and they are involved in decision making and in planning actions to bring positive results.

In general, there have been no constraints or problems which hinder the collaboration. The schools which adopted and implemented the PLSS fully opened their doors in welcoming parents and community members to participate. In fact, they have devised specific programmes that address the needs of parents and community members to be completely informed about their specific function in teaching-learning situations. A form of parents' learning through a series of seminars on roles of parenting and a range of other topics has been initiated by the schools. Similarly, teachers are given the authority to go out of the school premises and visit pupils' families, and conduct meetings with parents and the members of the community regarding approaches to improve pupils' learning.

(c) Conditions and changes which encouraged collaboration

At the wider societal level, there has been an affirmation of the role of families and communities in the total education of children. The new education code stresses such responsibilities, and equally emphasizes the families' accountability for the education of their children. This is further reinforced by the nation-wide campaign for the participation of private entities such as NGOs and civic associations in affairs that aim at promoting community welfare. The launching of 'education-for-all' programmes at all levels and in both formal and non-formal sectors calls heavily on the active involvement of the families, communities, and other civic, religious and non-government institutions in ensuring that every citizen, particularly children, receive education.

These new developments on the national scene influence the adjustments of bureaucratic mechanisms, particularly organizational procedures, to accommodate non-traditional players in providing education and training. The school system has started to open up to allow them to participate in the various facets of educational delivery. Resources have been made available to a number of private organizations which intend to participate in educational development.

All these developments have positively contributed to attaining a generally conducive situation for education and training. The community recognition which accompanies this involvement by non-traditional players has contributed to making available various sources of knowledge, skills and expertise. With these, schools become highly permeable and open. Attitudes of teachers, including administrators, have changed toward welcoming and promoting collaborative undertakings. The school has been transformed into a genuine place of learning that is not detached from the families of pupils and from the community where it is located.

III. Initial results of the PLSS

1. Replication, dissemination and sustainability of the PLSS

The initial results from the experimental and development implementation of the PLSS in Leyte Province and Quezon City showed considerable gains in terms of raising the achievement levels of pupils. In the Leyte experiment, the positive effects of programmed

parental intervention were found with grade I pupils who received parental assistance and guidance. They performed significantly better than those grade I pupils who did not receive any assistance. The implementation of PLSS in Quezon City also raised pupils' scholastic performances as well as considerable positive changes in attitudes and behaviours both in school and at home. In addition, the Quezon City experiment resulted in fostering strong co-operative relationships between parents and teachers.

The initial gains of the PLSS experiments, particularly in Quezon City, caught the attention of school principals in the district where the PLSS was tried out. All schools in the area (Pinyahan District) and other neighbouring districts then launched the programme. The replication of the PLSS in these schools was principally achieved through the officers of the Principals Association and the Parent-Teacher Federation of Quezon City.

Currently, PLSS replication in other schools within the Quezon City area includes the active participation of the Pinyahan district supervisor and the school principals who continuously work with the Parents-Teachers Association. This is being co-ordinated by NETRC in collaboration with BEE, both of the DECS. In the current replication, schools are given flexibility in organizing their class or grade level PLSS. Specific approaches have been emphasized to be highly dependent upon the particular needs of children and parents' availability to extend assistance at home and in school. The class or grade-level teachers play key organizational and management roles for the PLSS.

In all schools where the replication of PLSS was implemented, pupils' performances have been improved in both cognitive and affective areas. Relations between parents and teachers have been strengthened. These positive results served as the fundamental basis for a DECS memorandum requiring all elementary schools throughout the country to implement the PLSS to raise pupils' achievement levels from the beginning of the 1991-1992 school year.

In preparation for this nation-wide implementation of the PLSS, NETRC in collaboration with BEE and the supervisor, teachers and parents in Pinyahan District of Quezon City produced a PLSS implementation handbook which served as guidelines for organizing, managing and sustaining the PLSS at the school level. This activity was supported by UNESCO Bangkok.

2. Educational, institutional and development gains

The most prominent gain the education system derives from the PLSS is the fostering of direct and strong relationships with the community and the families the schools serve. This has brought parents and community members closer to schools, leading to long-term gains such as (i) minimization of discontinuities between schools and communities, and between schools and families; (ii) minimization of conflicts between schools and communities, schools and families, teachers and parents, and what is taught in school and what is taught at home; (iii) easy transition of pupils going from home to school; (iv) good preparation of pupils to engage in learning experiences; and (v) minimized 'cultural shock' of new entrants to schooling.

Another significant benefit is the improvement of the learning environment for children. The entry of parents and community members into formal teaching-learning settings greatly enhances the emerging belief that education is not solely a responsibility that should be borne by the schools, teachers and administrators, but that the burden rests equally on parents and community members. This display of concerted effort transforms schools into friendly, non-alienating, familiar places for children where they can work, play and study without fear. The learning opportunities being generated and planned collaboratively by parents, community members and school personnel, such as field trips, parent-teacher-pupil conferences, summer camps, etc. have greatly enriched the learning resources available to pupils. In fact, the presence of parents and community members in schools provides the pupils with immediate resources where new or additional information can be obtained. The entry of parents and community members transform teachers and administrators into becoming truly sensitive to pupils' needs, thus further making them innovative in planning and implementing approaches in teaching that suit the particular needs of pupils.

Certain institutional changes are noticeable. The school administrators, for example, are becoming sensitive to the needs not only of the pupils, but also of the families and communities where pupils belong; this is also true of the teachers. Similarly, parents and community members are becoming responsive to the demands of rearing and educating children. This has an effect on the kinds of activities the participants perform in the PLSS. Parents, for example, in their desire to be effective in assisting the children in their studies, make efforts to attend conferences, meetings and even school-sponsored sessions for parents' continuing education. The knowledge and skills of parents are being refreshed and in most cases they acquire a new understanding of the education of their children. Teachers are becoming occupied with planning and organizing lessons for children, programming and scheduling activities for parents and the community members, and co-ordinating various activities and projects that enhance and keep the involvement sustained. In general, new roles are emerging for teachers and administrators in addition to their regular duties. Among the participants, it has been clearly observed that the motivating factor for active involvement is the sincere concern for the development of the children's potential, and that such a development can best be realized through a joint effort of the schools and communities.

Another institutional change is the emergence of conferences, meetings, fora and seminars which are fast becoming a new mode for interaction in school settings. This dialogical relationship extends from the school administrator level down to the pupils. Consensus is becoming the new norm in decision making and action taking. While it is true that the administrators and teachers are taking the lead roles in planning, organizing and managing PLSS activities, it is still evident that they are not abusing their position over parents and community members. Instead, the school personnel have been extending various opportunities in school and at home for parents and community members to make their particular contributions count.

In general, the PLSS has injected a particular methodology aimed at drawing the beneficiaries into its activities. With parents, community members and even pupils being involved in the fundamental requisites of development, i.e. planning and implementation, the dominant top-to-bottom process of development is radically reversed. A greater

understanding is evident among the beneficiaries (who are the actors themselves) of the general as well as specific goals and objectives and the required methodologies. Participation in the activities is not superficial; serious and genuine interest among the participants is not only detectable but is highly visible in their enthusiasm and satisfaction with the results being generated by their participation and collaboration.

It is still much too early to detect the PLSS's contribution to certain specific changes in the process of development. What it does prove at this point is that, contrary to the general belief, the intended beneficiaries, particularly the poorer segments of the population, are able to think, plan, act, manage and assess what is good for them given the opportunity to do so. Significantly, it proves that through this collaboration children attending school under difficult socio-economic circumstances can also achieve academic progress similar to their economically better-off counterparts. Critically, PLSS provides a lesson in project development and implementation: plans need not be imposed on them, they need to be evolved with them. Moreover, the development of a project, be it innovative or not, becomes highly feasible and sustainable whenever its various sub-processes are carried out on a participatory, dialogical and collaborative basis. It is only when a project is introduced and conducted in such a manner that true development begins, and the innovation starts to take root and yield favourable results.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

The PLSS generates invaluable lessons in showing specific ways and means by which the problem of low and under-achievement among school children in elementary schools in the Philippines can be effectively raised. Most significantly, it offers feasible approaches and methods through which a collaborative relationship between the schools and the communities can be established and sustained. It demonstrates how parents and community members who have no prior experience or knowledge in the formal requisites of teaching children can assist, guide and participate in the teaching-learning processes occurring in school, and in the home and community. Moreover, it establishes school and community collaboration as a potent force in propelling the delivery of basic education services to attain effectiveness and relevance. Certainly, the collaboration has to be worked out carefully and conditions for it to take place need to be created (if these are not yet existing) or harnessed and further sustained.

In the Philippines, the conditions that allow the collaboration between schools and community to prosper are varied. However, minimum conditions have been identified as essential to establishing an effective and long-lasting collaboration:

1. Openness of the school system

Broadly, this refers to the willingness of the school to welcome change and to utilize inputs from the local community. Specifically, this refers to a democratic school leadership and a liberal orientation which accepts that 'everyone can learn through nurturing'. It also refers to the school personnel's positive orientation and readiness for change and development, but most critically their common belief that true change can best be achieved through participation and collaboration.

This openness fundamentally rests with a new orientation, particularly of the administrators and teachers, which recognizes the idea being brought into the open regardless of its source. The merits of the idea become the focus of the transaction (e.g. dialogues, conferences) rather than the person who expounded the idea. For example, in a teacher-parent dialogue, each must be sensitive to the ideas being expressed by the other. The idea should be evaluated independently of the person (teacher or parent) from whom the idea originated. For example, a discussion of a new approach to improve a pupil's attendance at classes will be pursued by the teacher and parent based on its own merits even if such an idea comes from a parent who is unschooled.

Clearly, this orientation adds a new dimension to the provision of training for school administrators and teachers. This also needs to be incorporated into the training for implementing a collaborative undertaking such as the PLSS. Group dynamics involving administrators, teachers and parents should be used regularly as an integral part of parent-teacher conferences, seminars or dialogues until this sensitivity becomes ingrained.

2. Willingness and strong desire of the community and families to participate and collaborate with the school

In general, this pertains to the positive attitude of the community towards school and a constructive appreciation of the school's mission in educating children. Most importantly, the willingness to participate with the school relates to the acceptance by families and community members that their accountability in the education of children extends beyond the provision of material requirements for schooling; that it includes the main responsibility of assisting, guiding and extending whatever help their children need to harness their potential; and that they equally share the burden of educating children with the teachers. Specifically, this refers to parents' and community members' commitment to engage actively and regularly in the planning and implementing of activities designed to improve children's learning, either in school or at home.

3. Strong association of parents and teachers

Collectively, this refers to the presence of a strong parent-teacher association (PTA) in the school and its readiness to assume a lead role in establishing firm links with the rest of the community and other civic or private organizations. Specifically, this refers to a leadership and general membership that are genuinely committed to advancing the welfare of students in particular, and the community in general. The association can therefore help provide the requisite resources and prepare both the school and the community as conducive arenas for participatory involvement of the various community sectors in the education of children.

In areas where there has been no PTA, the role of advocating such an organization can be assumed by the school district. Orientation sessions among school personnel on the value of a PTA to the learning process can be discussed. Specific roles for the PTA need to be emphasized in these sessions since school personnel might feel threatened by the presence of it inside the school setting. Clear demarcation of roles between teachers and parents need to be specified during the orientation. Since teachers and administrators have traditionally performed their roles in educating children without any intervention from

non-school entities, care must be taken in gradually orienting them toward the need for the PTA as a partner in education. In the Philippines, this has not been a problem since the roles of parents and community members as partners of school personnel in educating the child are embodied in the country's child and welfare code.

4.   Flexible and permeable school organization

This is closely related to the school's openness to change and development which is a pre-condition for the school's flexibility and permeability. The flexibility of the school's organization particularly refers to the degree by which organizational procedures are adapted to allow new ideas, concepts and methodologies suited to the changing needs of the clientele it serves. Permeability of the organization refers to structural flexibility which recognizes the generation and development of ideas from outside the organization. It represents the degree to which the organization is willing to allow a free flow of ideas without being obstructed by rigid bureaucratic procedures.

The flexibility and permeability of the school organization depends heavily on the administrator's attitude toward educational change and his/her capability to respond to the emerging needs in the school setting. A specifically focused training or orientation of administrators is needed, particularly in areas of contemporary school management, organization and supervision. The administrators' attitudinal re-orientation similarly requires training in sensitivity to the ideas of others, as discussed earlier.

5.   Availability of minimum physical and other resources for effective collaboration

This directly relates to the presence of school facilities for holding seminars, conferences, demonstration classes, etc. where parents, teachers, administrators and pupils can be gathered, and where specific workshops can be held regularly. Reference materials such as books, newspapers, magazines and other periodicals on parenting, child rearing and education need to be available. This depends on the resourcefulness, ingenuity and creativity of the participants.

6.   Regularity of participants' interaction

This specifically refers to the regular conduct of meetings and programmed activities for parents and community members who report to the school. It also relates to coherent work flow, functions and responsibilities that are consistently required of the participants, who need to be informed exactly when, what and how they should contribute to the teaching-learning activities taking place in the school. This regularity establishes the patterns of interaction among the participants which in effect defines the conditions for its improvement.

The above conditions are fundamental to establishing and fostering collaboration among school personnel, parents, community members and pupils. Enhancing these conditions for sustaining collaborative participation principally rests on the specific requirements and expectations of all these groups. The formal school as a staging area for genuine collaboration is a new development in the delivery of basic education in the Philippines.

The methods which have been used have yet to be refined and adapted to suit the changing needs of the participants, of the host education sector, or of the ultimate clients the collaborative undertaking is aimed at. There is still much to be accomplished. The Philippine experience with this parent-teacher-community collaboration is just beginning. While the positive results signal the appropriateness of the methods being employed, and further indicate that the conditions prevailing in the school are equally appropriate, it can not yet be claimed that such methods and conditions are those which will ensure the success and continued growth of collaboration in various school settings in the country: specific conditions arising in schools and communities dictate individual methods and approaches.

Promoting primary and elementary education in India
by
Chitra Naik

Chapter 5

Promoting primary and elementary education in India

I.   Contextual perspective of the PROPEL project

1.   The PROPEL project: a brief sketch

Universalization of free and compulsory primary education has an unqualified priority in India's National Education Policy (NEP), 1986. Recognizing that mere abolition of school fees or providing more schools could not meet the needs of a large number of children from the low-income families which are the majority in India, some innovative approaches were considered by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in 1972. Part-time, non-formal education (NFE) was advocated, especially for rural areas where girls and children from the deprived sections of society generally remained without schooling. In the development of the Sixth Five Year Plan (FYP) in 1976-77, experiments and innovations were stressed. As a result, the Indian Institute of Education (IIE) launched in 1979 an action-research project on non-formal primary education in 100 villages. This was the first part, concluded in 1985, of a three-phase project. In six years it generated an inter-related cluster of innovations covering curriculum, materials, pedagogical techniques, selection and training of teachers, monitoring, supervision, evaluation, and collaborative action among various agencies and community members. From this emerged the 'IIE Model of Non-formal Education', recognized by officials of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) of the Government of India and the Maharashtra State Government as useful for bringing 'out-of-school' children of the 9-14 age-group into primary education.

In the second phase, the extent of community involvement was tested in two environmentally difficult areas: 20 villages in a drought-prone region and 15 small habitations situated in the hills. These areas were also educationally deprived because parents would not send girls to school. This phase emphasised establishing and strengthening Village Education Committees (VECs) as local motivators and managers of primary education. It also sought to assess the problems of diffusion of the successful innovations from the first phase. The researchers reduced their presence and assigned increased responsibilities to the VECs after orienting them to the problems of universalization, the approach to non-formal arrangements and new methods of organizing community-level educational activities.

The difficulties which arose in this process of responsibility transfer enabled the project personnel to test the strength of innovations and clarify the nature of training programmes required for VECs. During the second phase, it also became obvious that if the triple target of good enrolment, retention and achievement was to be reached early, several support interventions would be needed. Adult literacy was an obvious necessity, especially for women. Continuous education for all was also essential for creating a learning climate in the community. A demand for pre-school education and further education came from the VECs, primary teachers, youth groups and women's groups.

In the third phase, a comprehensive action-research project for universalizing primary and elementary education (the PROPEL project) was launched in a compact area of 137 villages and habitations in Pune District. Three types of environments (rain-fed, hilly with heavy rainfall and drought-prone) are covered in this sample which contains a population of about 97,000 in 18,000 households.

The name PROPEL (Promoting Primary and Elementary Education) implies moving faster towards the goal of universal primary education (UPE). In the village-level micro-planning approach adopted by the project, the major programmes are: (a) coverage of drop-outs through NFE; and (b) increasing enrolment, retention and achievement in formal schools by concentrating on the improvement of the teaching-learning process in grades I and II. The support programmes organized at the community-level are: (i) Child Recreation Centres (pre-schools); (ii) Women's Development Groups attached to these pre-schools; (iii) Adult Literacy Centres as well as a volunteer-based literacy campaign through home-based instruction; (iv) Jana Shikshan Nilayams (rural library/reading/recreation centres); (v) resource support from nearby secondary schools; (vi) involvement of government officials at the grass-roots level; (vii) utilization of educated community resources, such as doctors, lawyers and other leaders; and (viii) increased participation of women in the total educational effort.

In PROPEL, the role of women in the Panchayat (village council) and VEC is particularly emphasized, with a view to promoting the participation of girls in primary education. In addition, a movement for legal literacy and spread of scientific information on health, agriculture and technology is stimulated in the interest of village development, greater social cohesion in the community and overall change from tradition to modernity.

Collaboration of district and sub-district (development block) level officials and elected representatives is achieved through District and Block Advisory Committees. The project further divides a block (about 100,000 population) into sub-areas or 'circles' of 30,000 to 35,000 people (approximately 6,000 households). An Advisory Committee have been constituted for each circle/sub-area; its major responsibility is community mobilization for education and development. Its members also serve as resource persons for training, conducting community meetings, holding mobilization camps and evaluating activities in the Panchayats. For this sub-area, all educational institutions and professionals form themselves into an Education Complex working closely with the Advisory Committee.

An internal evaluation of the PROPEL project was carried out in November-December 1990, in consultation with the Advisory Committees. In order to gain clear insights into the collaborative process of educational and social change initiated by the project, action may continue for another three years.

2.   The national context of PROPEL

The demand for universal, free and compulsory primary education was expressed by Indian social reformers and political leaders to the Indian Education Commission appointed by the British Government in 1882. Prior to this, educated Indians had already begun to establish primary schools, particularly for girls, in cities like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The first primary school which admitted girls as well as adult women was established in

Pune in 1851. It enabled several widows and destitute women to complete primary education and become teachers. In 1906, the native State of Baroda passed a Primary Education Act; a few other princely states followed suit. Resolutions on universalization of primary education were tabled in the Viceroy's Council in 1910 and 1913, but were rejected.

To grapple with the financial problem involved in taking primary education to the rural areas, Mahatma Gandhi evolved the self-supporting scheme of work-centred basic education. The income earned from the labour of pupils and teachers was expected to pay teachers' salaries and other expenses. Releasing primary education from dependence on government funds was the main aim of this arrangement which also realistically considered the linkage of education with production for overcoming rural poverty. However, opposed by the bureaucracy, the urban elite and the rural leadership, the scheme was given a half-hearted trial and finally rejected in the name of 'equity in education' between the urban and the rural children. In practice, this decision amounted to forcing on rural children a totally irrelevant system of education with its urban curricula, textbooks, school schedules, vacations, teacher training, achievement expectations, etc. which were wholly geared to a middle class life-style.

Between 1918 and 1947, Primary Education Acts were passed by many Indian states. Parents who did not enrol their school-age children or neglected their regular attendance were punished under this legislation. In several poverty-stricken localities, parents often preferred to pay the small fine or accepted a day's police custody instead of sending children to school: addition to the family income through the children's labour was more important than the vague possibilities of education brightening up their future.

As far back as 1931, Gandhiji had pointed out that the pattern of primary education brought to India by industrialized Britain was a transplant which would never be able to serve the rural people. The British model was essentially urban and meant for the custodial care of children whose parents worked outside the home, in industrial establishments, at specified hours year- round. In the Indian countryside, children participated in the family occupation. Their value orientation was derived from adults who cared for them collectively in a traditional way. Large families provided security to the child who also benefited from the company of siblings and cousins. What these children missed was systematic literacy learning, widening of their horizons beyond the limits of the knowledge and cultural concerns of the family, and release from the narrow world of caste. Gandhiji pointed out that the urbanized, full-time, formal school was antithetical to this life-style.

(i)   The post-independence scene

When India adopted a Constitution in 1950 it laid down in Article 45 of its Directive Principles that "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years". This was a rather unrealistic expectation. By 1960-61, the total enrolment had risen to 62.4 per cent of the group concerned. While the percentage for boys was 92.6, that for girls was 41.4. In 1970-71, while the percentage for boys' enrolment had remained the same, girls' enrolment had increased to 59.1. But these figures contained many children below and above the primary school age-group of 6-11

years. The Census of 1981 reported that of the total population in the 6-11 age-group, only 47.2 children were enrolled, with percentages of 54.9 for boys and 38.5 for girls.

It was clear that the concept of the full-time, formal primary school as the only way to obtaining basic learning had proved to be unrealistic, in spite of the support given to it by government and non-government agencies for almost 100 years.

(ii) Changing viewpoints

A new trend began when the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) published its report 'Education and Development', towards the end of the Third FYP. The Commission pointed out that for the bulk of India's population, formal education was not the only answer. Non-formal primary education could help neutralize or even overcome para-educational factors such as gender-discrimination, need for the children to work because of poverty or pressures of tradition, inaccessibility of school because of inclement weather or poor means of communication, and the need for the whole family to work together in agricultural operations. NFE would stress basic skills in language, arithmetic, reasoning and social behaviour, but would adjust the learning-time, materials and learning techniques to suit the convenience and age of the learners. Self-learning and formative testing would be encouraged. Local persons would accept teaching responsibility, community resources would be invested, monitoring and supervision would be done by the community, and lateral entry from non-formal to formal streams, and vice-versa, would be possible.

In 1972, the CABE resolved that flexibility in the organization of education as a whole, and primary education in particular, along with provision for part-time NFE, be accepted as a matter of policy. The need to finance educational transformation was thus acknowledged, and funds of Rs. 9,000 million for non-formal primary education were provided as part of the Sixth FYP (1978-1979 to 1982-83).

However, many educational administrators, legislators and teachers treated NFE as an unwelcome intruder into the time-honoured system of formal education. This was not unexpected as the utility of non-formal, community-based, primary education had still to be proved.

(iii) The current educational situation

Despite recommendations and practical suggestions made by Commissions and Committees, the growth of the educational system during the Sixth and Seventh FYPs has been uneven. Proliferation of private institutions of higher education and a rapid increase in the number of secondary schools has resulted from political demands, but this has led to large-scale graduate unemployment and neglect of primary education. However, primary enrolments (grades I to IV/V) increased rapidly in some of the educationally backward states which created awareness for the adoption of NFE.

In 1985, the country's educational situation was reassessed by the national government's Ministry of HRD. This unearthed the lop-sided growth of the education

system in a document called 'The Challenge of Education'. The 1986 NEP is based on the concerns expressed in this report.

The 1986 policy is noteworthy for the priority accorded to universalization of primary education, eradication of adult illiteracy, women's education and empowerment. Encouraging decentralization of educational planning and localized programming with community participation is another departure from the previous policies of centralized control. A detailed document, 'Programme of Action', published by the Ministry of HRD, gives a broad outline of the proposed strategies and structural changes necessary for operationalizing the policy.

At present, the Eighth FYP proposals are being finalized. The toughest problem to be tackled in the primary education sector is the high drop-out and failure rates, especially of the children of the poorer sections of society. With an average 48 per cent drop-out from grades I-V, and 63 per cent from grades VI-VIII, the prospects of universalization are dim if the conventional system continues.

Given the cultural constraints inevitably present in the process of modernizing a traditional society, it may be hoped that the goal of UPE would be reached in some parts of India by 1995, in others by 2000, and in the most neglected groups and difficult terrains by 2010. Caste and class, gender discrimination, and exploitation of the poor and their children, are problems which call for both legislative action and social reconstruction. The progress of UPE is inextricably mixed up with these para-educational factors which have generally been ignored by the education system. However, NFE holds out the hope that these situational constraints may be overcome sooner than anticipated.

The task of educational reorganization in India is particularly difficult because of the numbers involved. The population of India in 1991 has risen to 840 million. The estimated population of children of primary school-age (6-14 years) is around 160 million; this contains 40 million non-enrolled children in the 9-14 age-group, not entitled to enter grade I of the formal primary school. The gross enrolment ratio for grades I-V is 93.63 per cent, as revealed by the Fifth Educational Survey (1986). But it is 77.06 per cent for the rural areas and 41.16 per cent for girls. The number of working children below 14 years, including girls who do domestic chores and those drop-outs and failures who work for a living, is estimated to be at least 70 million. These are the candidates for part-time NFE. The task which faces planners, administrators and the community is the removal of educational disparities caused by caste, class, gender and inhospitable geographical conditions. It is clear that two specific groups need special attention: girls and working children. Their problems arise from a range of cultural and economic causes. The solution to their predicament can be found in NFE designed for learning convenience as well as for learning equality.

(iv)   Role of government, non-government organizations (NGOs) and others

The current system of education in India stems from the efforts of its colonizers to provide for themselves English-speaking native servants. The colonizers who came to India as traders (the East India Company) were interested in the plentiful raw material available for establishing and developing industries in Britain. Since their aim was wholly commercial, they paid little attention to the culture and traditions of the Indian people. The

management of a vast array of native subordinates, who were indispensable for the consolidation of imperial power but whose loyalty was always suspect, produced an authoritarian and centralized administrative system. Despite a series of reforms, the 'steel-frame' of Indian administration still retains some of the characteristics it acquired 177 years ago when the East India Company became the government of India. In education also, despite substantial changes in viewpoints on its purposes and management, the orthodoxy of administration continues to hamper open-minded collaboration with NGOs and social reformers.

After India acquired independence, the relationship between the administrators and the new leadership remained strained for many years. Previously, thoughtful Indians had established educational institutions which trained young people to fight against foreign domination. They were almost always in disagreement with the rulers and their native administrators. Many political leaders were shaped in such institutions, and when this leadership took over as the government, the administrators who had previously harassed them as 'disloyal subjects' were hard pressed to make status-adjustments. But they ensured that the conventional administrative structures and regulations within which they had been operating comfortably would be safeguarded. Encouraging voluntary effort in education was acknowledged as unavoidable although not desirable in a tightly disciplined system. But it was clear that, by itself, the government would never be in a position to manage such a colossal social enterprise considering the diversity of regional cultures, languages and levels of development. Even so, the relationship founded on distrust between government and non-government sectors still exists, although the younger generation of officials is much less authoritarian and more appreciative of non-governmental interventions for educational change and development. As a result, the atmosphere has become more conducive to collaboration between government and NGOs, particularly in the past 15 years or so.

At present in India, the NGOs with good leadership can attract dedicated workers, but securing adequate funds is a tough task. They have to depend largely on government grants surrounded by antiquated administrative procedures and financial rules based on a total distrust of NGOs. In the past, it was common for wealthy industrialists and commercial companies to give donations for non-government efforts in health and education. In return, they received prestige and were exempt from income tax up to a certain amount. However, the tax rules were modified a few years ago, so that now donations often go directly to government projects which attract tax relief. This has deprived NGOs of local funds, however, the tendency to receive government assistance has increased, although with some government control on the policies and activities of the NGOs concerned.

The experience of contributions from the communities served by the NGOs has been varied. Over the past 40 years, development schemes evolved by the bureaucracy have been propped up by subsidies in order to promote acceptance by the communities. Consequently, a 'subsidy culture' has spread in rural areas, making the people more keen to receive something from outside than to identify and mobilize local resources. In addition, the primary education system, which is tightly controlled by government, has alienated the school from the community to such an extent that rousing the community even to participate in an educational experiment takes much patience and wisdom on the part of NGOs and research institutes.

3. The basic education system

Serious efforts have been made to provide facilities for primary education. However, the holding power of the school is weak partly because of unsuitable curricula and teaching methods, and partly because of socio-economic and cultural factors which cannot be tackled by the school system unless it collaborates with the local community.

(i) Equity

The question of equity has been handled in the states in different ways. Free tuition, free textbooks and slates for girls and tribal children in grades I-III, school meals, sponsorship of girls by the wealthy and cash attendance incentives are some of the most commonly adopted measures. For the children of forest tribes, residential schools are provided in the forest area itself. The retention of the child in school has not been as easy as enrolment. There is awareness that enrolment, retention and achievement need to be treated as a cluster of interactive elements. The causes of wastage and repeating a grade, such as inaccessibility of school, lack of trained teachers, lack of inexpensive textbooks, etc. have been largely removed and this has improved retention considerably. But retention has not necessarily meant the attainment of the minimum levels of learning expected on completion of the primary stage. In addition, factors such as inconvenient school sessions and school organization, poverty and social customs which obstruct the access and retention of girls and tribal children, still need to addressed.

(ii) Resources and facilities

Rapid population growth and a relatively slow growth of the economy have had a detrimental impact on the provision of effective primary education for all. In addition, over the past 35 years the share of primary education in educational expenditure has declined compared with higher education. Immediately after Independence, when the urge for mass education was strongly felt by the planners and political leaders, the share of elementary education in the total educational allocation for the First FYP was 56 per cent, but there has been a continuous decline; at the end of the Seventh FYP it stood at about 29 per cent. The relatively rapid growth of higher education, in which the most vocal and dominant sections of society are interested, has strained the educational budget considerably; the share of elementary education has declined from 48 per cent in 1950-51 to 40 per cent in 1980-81. Within this proportion, the share of primary education (grades I-IV/V) declined from 40 per cent to 24 per cent in the same period due to the growth of the upper primary stage. The broad conclusion of the survey was that the lack of amenities and insufficient supply of teachers have resulted in inefficiency.

(iii) Supervision

The Education Commission of 1964-66 recommended the establishment of VECs. These could be interlinked with the Panchayat as its sub-committees. But their membership could be extended to village leaders, parents' and women's representatives, etc. Such people did not have to be members of the Panchayat. Their capability for helping to plan and manage the educational activities in the village would be the main criterion for their inclusion in the VEC. The NEP of 1986 fully endorsed this idea. In many states, therefore,

the establishment of VECs has taken place through administrative orders. For the supervision of primary schools, the VEC would assist the conventional inspectorate that exists at the district, block and 'beat' levels. The supervisor of primary schools (variously designated as inspector or extension officer or supervisor) is in charge of a 'beat' consisting of about 40 schools in a geographically convenient area, and about 20-25 schools in hilly or sparsely populated areas where travelling on foot is the only way to reach the hamlets.

At practically all levels of the state structure for educational administration, the relationship of officers with teachers, management and members of the public is rather formal, and in general their functions are still regulatory. This conservative system inhibits the initiatives of those few officials who try to make the system development-oriented and open to external ideas. As a result, officials of the Education Departments and NGOs cannot build up collaboration effectively. Theoretically, however, officials agree that collaboration is essential for a dynamic educational system.

(iv) Training of planners and administrators

For converting the old-fashioned 'maintenance administration' into a modern 'development administration', training and orientation programmes have been instituted at the national and state levels. The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) was established almost 25 years ago and has done excellent work in studying the problems of educational planning and administration, and organizing training and orientation courses, workshops and seminars for state-level planners and administrators as well as district-level personnel. As yet, there are no counterpart institutions of educational planning and administration at the state-level, but the need to establish them has been recognized. Some states have established their own institutions for training the officials of all departments in techniques of development administration; these often also cover the education department personnel.

(v) Culture of democratic decentralization

A change of culture has become noticeable in recent years not only in educational administration but in government administrative personnel, particularly at the higher levels of responsibility. Many secretaries of the central ministries, working directly with Ministers, have adopted a 'people-oriented' style. They often move out into the field to observe the implementation of programmes or to search for innovations conducted by NGOs. The heads of government departments now try to make contacts at the state level. But their steps are still hesitant. The lower ranks, however, are inclined to be authoritarian. It is at the district-level or further down at the block and Panchayat-level that the official attitude towards NGOs is distant. The contacts between them, even when favoured by higher administrative levels, are often clumsy. It is at the field-level, therefore, that officers and teachers need to be released from the fear of competition with NGOs, and for this purpose, the whole system of performance assessment needs drastic changes. At present, performance norms are based on achievement of numerical targets and not on action to mobilize people for self-development.

Most of the non-official planners, NGOs and committed government officials support democratic decentralization of administration through the Panchayats, Panchayat

clusters and District Boards of Education. Such a change would also require dilution of financial powers and participation of the non-governmental sector in raising resources for local education activities. The first signs of such changes are already evident in political manifestos and policies supported by Parliament, but this may take some time.

(vi) Climate of educational awareness

The rapid growth in the number and educational activities of NGOs has helped build an awareness of education as a normal activity for all. The credit for creating this new social climate must be given to the adult education (AE) movement and NFE projects that began on a wide scale in 1978. Even though the increase in the literacy percentage is not very high (it has risen from 36 per cent in 1981 to 52 per cent at present) and the drop-out rate is still a cause for concern, there is no doubt that the rural society in India has finally arrived at the take-off point in education. The major hurdle is poverty. But innovations and alternatives may help people cross even this barrier, provided they are enabled to participate fully in the process of universalizing primary education, using their own imaginative ways. The trend towards reducing government control over development programmes would also facilitate educational change and development. However, a regimented education system built over 177 years cannot be made flexible and people-oriented in a short time-span. All partners in the task of achieving education for all will need to strive hard if the goal of universalization is to be reached by 2000.

4.   The typical primary school: general characteristics

(i) The ethos

The typical primary school in India is derived from the model of the primary school in industrialized Britain. While the primary education system has radically changed in the latter, the original outdated model dating from the early nineteenth century has become entrenched in India. It emphasizes the custodial care of children whose parents are earning a living, not expecting any help from the children. The transplantation of the primary school model from an industrialized country into an agrarian society has been the main reason for the restrictive progress of primary education in India. Worse still, it has been responsible for the collapse of India's rural economy, because of the conflict it created between education and work.

(ii) School organization

This differs between states but in general there is one teacher per class at the primary stage and 1.3 teachers are sanctioned for the upper primary classes in some of the states. Teachers are mainly trained according to the courses prescribed by the State Education Department. The British policy of not appointing local persons as teachers for fear of sedition and rebellion still persists; teachers are transferred every three years to prevent any involvement in local politics. Recruitment is centralized at the district level. The appointment and transfer processes are complicated and classes often remain without teachers for a time.

The formal school model has a single-point entry. A pupil enters school in grade I even if nine or ten years old. Everyone must attend full-time, at hours fixed according to the convenience of the teacher or the inspection system set up by the Education Department for all primary schools. Schools must begin their academic year on the same date, have the same working days, the same vacations and holidays. The progress of the child in the formal school must be sequential. It is not easy for a child to leave school to help the parents at some stage, study at home and join school again in a class appropriate to age and attainment.

Over the years, unionized professional teachers have succeeded in impressing upon government that the most important tool for UPE is a liberal salary for teachers. This has been accepted in most states. The starting salary of a rural primary teacher in Maharashtra State is about four times the income of an average Indian; the salary of a principal is even higher. Primary teachers are sometimes the richest persons in small and poor communities. Of the total expenditure on primary education, teachers' salaries consume nearly 95 per cent leaving 5 per cent for buildings, equipment, amenities, etc. In such a situation, the thought of collaboration between the teachers and the community seems fantasy.

(iii) School improvement

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) emphasized the need for 'institutional planning' jointly by the teachers and the community as the best way to improve the infrastructure of the school and its academic performance. Another recommendation advised the formation of 'school-complexes' so that the interaction of teachers from large and small primary schools (and also teachers from a secondary school if it existed in the vicinity) might lead to mutual support and collaboration in institutional planning, community mobilization and raising the standards of teaching-learning.

Inspectors would co-ordinate school-complexes which, in turn, were to co-ordinate institutional plans for collective advancement towards educational goals. A few states tried institutional planning and organization of school-complexes with great enthusiasm and some experimented with them half-heartedly.

This movement continued for a short time during the Sixth FYP but soon petered out. The inertia and conservatism of the formal, inflexible, full-time education system rebounded. The re-established status quo brought much relief to inspectors and supervisors whose traditional authority over teachers was threatened by these innovations. The principal easily resumed their isolation from the teachers and the community. The teachers too were relieved because they could revert to their routine teaching of textbooks and examining pupils.

(iv) Mobilization of community resources

There have been sporadic attempts at mobilizing community resources for improving the infrastructure of primary schools. Collection drives are undertaken by teachers and community leaders for supplying equipment. In some areas, communities have been constructing school-rooms using local materials, contributing free labour and small donations solicited at weddings and festivals. People with jobs in large cities occasionally send money to their native village for repairs to the temple or school building. Rural banks, industries or NGOs sometimes adopt villages for educational projects or overall

development. Such examples are not yet widespread. However, they are increasing in the educationally-advanced states (which are also the economically better-off states).

5. The problems addressed by the Institute's innovative project

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66), the CABE and the Working Group on Elementary Education for the Sixth FYP had considered various measures, including non-formal channels of learning, for universalizing primary education. The CABE's viewpoint that every child must be covered in the primary education programme 'on a full-time basis if possible, and part-time basis, if necessary' was practical, but it was necessary to experiment with different types of: (a) curriculum; (b) teaching-learning materials; (c) teaching-learning techniques; (d) testing procedures; (e) teacher-recruitment procedures; (f) teacher-training programmes; (g) monitoring and supervision of the learning process and its organization; and (h) involvement of the community in planning and developing an efficient, relevant and equitable learning system. The IIE decided to undertake this experimentation.

(i) Attention to para-educational factors

Besides poverty, the factors of class, caste and gender have also been identified as widely prevalent causes of non-enrolment, high drop-out rates and low achievement. The Institute's project recognized that the expansion of primary education, through a full-time or part-time arrangement, would not be possible unless these factors were considered in designing alternative patterns of planning, organizing and assessing educational effort at the grass-roots level. For bringing all children into primary education, these would be best addressed by the community itself through local efforts at social change.

Various analyses of the deficiencies of the primary education system have shown that the distance and location of primary schools often determine the extent of girls' enrolment. In the case of working children, the opportunity costs to parents are a major determinant of their enrolment possibilities. Non-participation of the parents and other members of the community in managing the school and evaluating the children's progress is another crucial factor leading to the neglect of the school by the community. It was obvious that in order to overcome these constraints innovative measures would have to be developed in collaboration with the community.

(ii) Overcoming the isolation of the school

In the prevailing model of primary education, the school is totally isolated from other educational programmes in the community and from many educational aspects of community culture. It was assumed that if primary education could become a part of a comprehensive programme of education for all ages in the community, the pace of universalization would increase.

(iii) Three phases of the project

The basic principles on which the project was planned in 1979 were that education and development are integrally related, and that the local community should be made

responsible for (or at least be closely associated with) programmes on education of its members and local development. This action-research project was planned as three phases over a period of ten years. The first phase consisted of innovative interventions in five types of agro-climatic areas covering 100 villages, and emphasized the creation of a NFE system operating with community involvement. Collaboration between the state government and two research organizations were the main features of the first phase. The second phase tested diffusion of innovations evolved in the first phase, with allotment of greater management responsibility to the community. The current PROPEL project is the third phase which emphasizes comprehensive community education, both formal and non-formal, involving large-scale local collaboration for social change as the stimulator for educational change.

II   Nature and development of the project on UPE

1.   Nature of the project

The preparatory year, 1979-80, gathered together scholars and activists for an exchange of information and debate on the issues involved in educational change and innovation. Research findings on UPE were collected, references were examined and methodologies of evolving and launching innovations were discussed. Action-research concepts were analyzed with reference to social change, from an interdisciplinary standpoint. Since the action-research was to be undertaken in selected areas in rural Maharashtra, geographical and socio-economic features were studied. A critical analysis was made of the academic and administrative aspects of the state primary education system.

(i)   Value orientation

During this year, the value orientation of the UPE project was determined. The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution include the right of the child to education up to the age of 14 years and makes this a state responsibility. A further provision requires special protection and facilities for the 'weaker' sections in the Indian society, i.e. women, tribal people and 'untouchable' castes. In addition, the UPE project emphasized respect for nature, co-operation, non-consumerism, hard work and a scientific attitude.

(ii)   Participatory action-research

The purpose of the project was not restricted merely to offer education to the 6-14 age-group, but to make the project a stimulator of social change by raising community consciousness. The project assumed that breaking the isolation of the school from the community was crucial. Provision of schools even within a distance of one kilometre from the child's home had not succeeded in bringing all eligible children to school.

Obviously, the measures most important for UPE were not simply the availability of a school in the vicinity or a liberal supply of teachers. Social and cultural factors, the power dynamics of the rural communities concerned and the status of the 'weaker' sections within the community had affected the rate of progress of UPE in different states. The interest that the local community takes in the schools and the quality of opportunity that the community offers its children appear to be the most important operative factors in UPE.

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The project, which started in 1979, was a modest intervention, based on these findings. It was not expected to generate any movement for socio-economic transformation but simply to discover the ways and means of involving some rural communities in planning, organizing, supervising and evaluating education at the local level and see if education could be an accepted responsibility of the community.

A further objective was to bring those already operating within the primary education system, such as personnel from the administrative structures of government and the Zilla Parishad (District Council), local teachers and pupils, together with researchers. It was important to demystify the process, not only of education, but of research also. The involvement of political and administrative leadership was essential for future diffusion of innovations and their adjustment with the existing system.

(iii) Mobilization of political support

The purpose and methods of the project were discussed with the Chief Minister and Education Minister of the State. On receiving political assurance of support, a detailed discussion was held with the Director of Education to explain the approaches of the project and the nature of interventions.

The next level approached was the Zilla Parishad of Pune District. The president of the Zilla Parishad and Chairman of the Education Committee of the Parishad took a keen interest in the project design and made several valuable suggestions; they also co-operated in setting up the initial launch.

(iv) Resources

The project obtained most of its funding from a Government of Maharashtra grant for payment of instructors of NFE centres, and from UNICEF for the research component including the salaries of the project personnel. The project also had at its disposal the facilities of the IIE. The Institute entered into a collaboration agreement with the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Bombay, which prepared instructional materials in science. An inexpensive kit was also prepared by HBCSE for enabling the pupils of NFE centres to perform science experiments included in the formal primary school syllabus.

Collaboration between the state government, district-level administration and village communities with HBCSE and IIE was woven into the fabric of the project from the outset. The semi-educated youth from the project villages were trained by project staff to conduct house-to-house surveys to determine the kind of educational plans their village would require. The teaching-learning materials were discussed with community members and modified according to their viewpoints. Plans for organizing, monitoring and supervising the project locally were made a community responsibility. In this way, a cumulative view of the diagnosis of UPE problems by government, researchers, and the community became available to the project and led to agreed interventions.

2. Design of the UPE project

(i) The planning process

Visits were made to sample villages in the five project areas to meet the villagers informally and discuss primary education, along with other aspects of development. Prior to these visits, local social workers and members of the Panchayat had been contacted through the Education Committee of the Zilla Parishad. The discussions stressed the developmental problems of the community. The ideas of the community were also elicited by holding Gram Sabha, i.e. full-scale meetings of all the members of the community.

(ii) Basic issues

The project design was a response to certain basic issues which had emerged during the extensive discussions held on the problems of UPE with special reference to rural areas and underprivileged groups. First, the project concentrated on social and cultural changes that were conducive to education for all. Second, only an informal start was made in the direction of democratic decentralization of administration as this is not a factor manageable by an NGO. The goals were as follows:

(a) The aim of the project could not be compulsory primary education but it had to be voluntarily promoted UPE.

(b) For bringing out-of-school children into primary education, legal provisions would play a minor role since universalization was essentially a matter of cultural, social, economic and political change.

(c) There need be no dichotomy between formal and non-formal education and the two arrangements must be treated as aspects of a functionally integrated system serving the convenience of the learner and the community, and facilitating the learner's lateral passage from one to the other whenever necessary.

(d) As the prevalent curriculum of full-time formal education had been characterized as irrelevant and the pedagogy oppressive, the part-time, non-formal arrangements should be treated as an opportunity to develop innovations in curriculum content and construction, pedagogical techniques and teaching-learning materials.

(e) NFE would emphasize basic values, and stress rationality and the scientific attitude as the foundations of modernization. Co-operation, group work, concern for satisfying group and community needs and acquisition of self-learning skills would be promoted.

(f) The planning and management of all types of education at the community level should be entrusted to local people so that oppression by the traditional power structure of class, caste and gender is gradually reduced.

(g)   Professional teachers should be gradually replaced by local persons, supported by local expertise, so that the primary education system would become child-centred rather than teacher-centred as at present.

(h)   The training of non-professional teachers should be a programme of personality development and further education.

(i)   The innovative interventions of the UPE project would be developed collaboratively.

(j)   Although the project would be funded from external sources, the community would have to participate in providing some resources.

(k)   As an innovative project for universalizing primary education could only be a social-change project, its interventions would have to be evaluated from that aspect.

(l)   In order to evolve the innovations systematically and to stabilize some of them, the project would be organized over a ten to 12 year period and in three phases.

(iii)   The planning process: preparatory action

(a)   Selection of areas

Five agro-climatic areas were selected with populations ranging from 14,000 to 30,000. Compact clusters of 20 to 22 villages in each were chosen on the basis of secondary data such as enrolments, drop-outs, per capita income, occupational pattern, nature of communications, etc.

(b)   Surveys

The project director and three colleagues visited the areas, contacted the status leaders and natural leaders, and called meetings of villagers to explain the purposes and basic assumptions of the project. These meetings were well attended since it was announced that the Institute desired the people's advice on its proposed project. The project team and the leaders stressed the participation of local, educated youths in conducting surveys. However, it was felt necessary to involve primary teachers in household surveys since the project directly concerned them. Meetings with them were held in each project area with the help of education officers, local leaders and others. The response was disappointing. Several teachers ridiculed the idea of NFE, and re-emphasized the conventional incentives for enrolment and attendance, i.e. free textbooks and stationery, uniforms, school meals, attendance payments, sponsorship of children of poor parents, construction of buildings and provision of equipment by government, housing for teachers in difficult rural areas, special allowances for teachers working in remote areas, and inspection and supervision more congenial for teachers. More contingency funds at the disposal of the principal, stopping interference by Panchayat members, and higher pay scales for teachers were demanded. In general, teachers of the formal primary system were hostile to the project. Although a few

agreed to help conduct household surveys, none offered to work as part-time instructors in NFE centres.

(c)   Opponents and supporters

The project team had anticipated such hostility towards change from all vested interests in education: inspectors, teachers, curriculum makers, examiners, publishers, textbook writers, etc. The best response was to seek as much collaboration as possible from the communities by keeping the researchers in the background and giving prominence to the support given by the Chief Minister, Education Minister, the president of the Zilla Parishad and the chairman of the Zilla Parishad Education Committee.

(d)   Involving youth and women

The semi-educated village youth and young women came forward in such large numbers to help conduct the household survey that selection became necessary. By offering a small payment and limiting the number of households to be surveyed by each, a large number of young persons were involved whom the researchers could orient as supporters of NFE. Their participation created interest in education and propagated the feeling that the community must begin to look into its primary education problems. After analyzing the survey data and holding discussions with the Zilla Parishad, 110 villages were selected for launching the NFE project.

(iv)   Project personnel

Under the leadership of the project director, a team of four was put together by the IIE. This contained specialists in curriculum, materials, teacher training and evaluation. The field staff consisted of one research officer for each of the areas; each was given a number of project assistants, the number depending on the size of the area to be covered and the type of terrain. In total there were 17 field staff: five research officers and 12 project assistants.

The project director, along with the project team and field staff, held a one-week seminar on the subject of UPE and NFE. Tentative curricula were prepared for NFE centres. All the research officers and project assistants opened one centre each and conducted it for three months before finalizing the curriculum and the teaching-learning materials. The feedback from the field was discussed at monthly meetings. Finally, the techniques of action-research, its focal points and the teaching-learning materials revised with the help of the Local Advisory Committees of community members were finalized for starting the programme in the selected villages.

(v)   Organization of NFE

A major decision of the project was to organize the establishment and management of NFE centres through VECs constituted by the Panchayats, with a view to evolving a decentralized, grass-roots level model of planning and implementing programmes on UPE. The responsibility of the VEC was in mobilizing resources for the centres, selecting local persons as instructors, providing free accommodation and lighting (if possible) for the evening centres, deciding their location and schedules to suit the convenience of the learners,

ensuring that no out-of-school child in the 9-14 age-group remained without registration at any centre in the village, ensuring attendance, examining cases of poverty or social injustice, supervising the centres, arranging safe conduct for older girls to and from the centre particularly at night, providing physical facilities for the recurrent training of instructors, and helping the project staff to hold half-yearly children's fairs where the achievement of the NFE pupils was evaluated openly with the participation of the community. This list of responsibilities is long, but all its components are inter-related so that they form a recognizable, decentralized pattern of popular management of primary education.

3. Implementation

The main implementation strategy was to create an awareness among the villagers of the realities of primary education and the need to find an alternative channel for universalization by enabling the non-enrolled and drop-outs of the poor, particularly girls, to gain access to it at their own convenience.

As the project progressed and its value became evident, it was visited by observers from government and NGOs. Since it had political support and had never competed with the full-time formal school, the initial opposition from primary teachers gradually disappeared. On the contrary, seeing the faster and better achievement of the NFE-centre pupils in language and arithmetic, the primary schools in some of the villages requested permission to use the Centre's teaching-learning materials. Articles were written on the innovative features of the project. The 'marketing' of the purposes and outcomes of the project was assisted by UNICEF which financed a video film on the processes of NFE. Later, the Ministry of HRD gave recognition to the NFE model evolved by the project which had included nearly 4,500 drop-outs of whom more than 3,000 were girls from 9-14 years of age. A short film on the project was made by the Government of India. Descriptive material was requested from some of the educationally backward states whose officials visited the project and held discussions with the research team with a view to evolving their own adaptations.

Apart from its success in attracting out-of-school children towards basic education and proving that rural communities were capable of planning and managing education at the micro-level, the project had shown the way to build a cost-effective model. This has not only saved the opportunity costs which the parents would normally incur but kept the overall instructional costs low by means such as common sharing of books and other learning materials by the whole class, organizing local supervision and employing local volunteer instructors. As a result, the learners have been able to acquire in about 1,000-1,200 hours the achievement level obtained by the pupils of full-time schools in grades III or IV. The favourable factors were: self-learning in small interactive groups, a climate of warm welcome in the class, relaxation through simple logic exercises, non-authoritarian behaviour of the instructors and an opportunity to demonstrate achievement to the community. It was through emotional satisfaction that the learners could make a fast progress in cognitive achievement.

The project was evaluated by UNICEF through the Education Department of Bombay University. While appreciating most of the innovative measures and their success, the report suggested that VECs be formed in a new area for a 'replication project' to

determine whether this system of primary education could work in a situation with minimal support from researchers.

(i)   Replication project

The first phase of the UPE project finished in 1985, after which it had become clear that in the rural areas, the non-participation of girls in primary education was the biggest hurdle to universalization. In the second phase, therefore, community mobilization for girls' primary education was the major objective.

The main features of the replication project were to: (a) make the innovations widely known to rural primary teachers to enable them to make full-time schools more functional and attractive; (b) orient the district adult education officers, who were also responsible for NFE, to enable them to propagate the concept and evolve ways of involving the Panchayats in the organization of NFE through VECs; (c) prepare and publish information on NFE in Marathi (the state language), Hindi and English for distribution to teachers, teacher-educators and administrators; (d) prepare a slide-show for the training of teachers and administrators; (e) enable non-government agencies and Panchayats to organize NFE centres by guiding them in carrying out household surveys, and training their supervisory and teaching personnel; and (f) give the VECs in some villages the major responsibility to organize NFE.

This second phase of the project, funded by the Ford Foundation, took place in 35 villages in a drought-prone, poor area, from 1985 to 1988. At the same time, the project staff planned the comprehensive third phase (the PROPEL project). While the first two phases emphasized NFE only for devising appropriate organizational and pedagogical methods for reaching working children and girls, the third phase had to organize community-wide education to create the climate essential for UPE and to support it through formal schooling and pre-school education.

By this time it had become obvious that the NFE idea appealed to NGOs and some of the rural leadership, and the Ministry of HRD gave financial assistance to NGOs wanting to conduct NFE projects. This cleared the way for collaboration between NGOs for universalization of primary education, and the trend should increase the possibilities of reaching the goal of universalization sooner. Also, the IIE model has proved that working children and girls can be well served by NFE and good achievement is possible.

The partners for collaboration in PROPEL include: the experimenters, local government officials, local political leaders, secondary teachers and principals, primary teachers, NFE instructors, instructors of pre-schools (Child Recreation Centres), rural women's groups, rural youth organizations, the Panchayats and their VECs.

(ii)   Implementation through resource units

Structures for implementing innovations at the district level have begun to be established with financial assistance from the Ministry of HRD. In Pune District the IIE recently established a District Resource Unit (DRU) for Adult and Non-formal Education for management of the innovations already developed. Similar DRUs have been sanctioned at a

few NGOs in the State which have already been working on projects in collaboration with the NFE cell established at the IIE. At present, owing to the financial assistance provided by central government, the innovations have a chance of stabilizing and showing an impact during the forthcoming Eighth FYP. Research and evaluation will also be supported by central government for the next few years.

Despite the lead given by central government officials, state government officials have remained aloof. The practice of collaboration between administrators and non-government innovators is yet to be established even in educationally advanced states like Maharashtra. Inclusion of the highest education officials in the Advisory Committee has prevented opposition to the innovation, but open acceptance of the solutions it offers is still to emerge. The orthodoxy of educational administration largely persists.

(iii)   The innovation as it now stands: the PROPEL project

During the ten-year period of experimentation and innovation, the basic purpose has remained constant, i.e. UPE. The third phase consists of moving towards comprehensive organization of 'community education' as the main force for providing education to the 6-14 year age-group.

This community-oriented approach is inherently collaborative. But for giving a practical shape to collaboration, education and development concerns need to be combined at the village level through its village council or a similar structure. Collaboration has to be spelt out in action-programmes. For instance, the drinking-water supply in a given village has to be improved if local families are to remain free from health hazards and if children are to benefit from pre-school and primary education. Population control is essential if rural girls are to be released from sibling care to attend school. Literacy and education of women could improve their capacity for income generation, home management, child-care, etc. At the level of a village or small village cluster, interdependence and collaboration do not always require formal structures, rules and regulations. However, some systematization is essential for identifying responsibilities and evaluating the impact of programmes. This is being attempted in the PROPEL project in two ways:

(a)   The Panchayat invites consultants from among development officials to plan activities in health, water supply, agriculture, dairy development, forestry, education, co-operation, etc. and thus builds up collaborative links.

(b)   Village development is considered at the Gram Sabha (village conference) held twice a year. This includes discussion of formal and non-formal educational programmes, as well as identification of the roles of women's groups, youth clubs, professionals, government officials and other members of the community.

The culmination of the PROPEL project, apart from achievement of UPE, has been visualized as systematic micro-planning and efficient action for political, social and economic development of all the constituents of the community. While presenting the PROPEL design to central government for financial assistance, IIE has also visualized collaboration of different educational programmes at the grass-roots level, such as more

experimental action for interlinking efforts towards UPE, NFE for youth and women, and micro-planning for development, with education and training as the core of the programme.

It has generally been observed that children, especially in rural areas, find it difficult to adjust to formal school. If they belong to large families, they have many playmates. In small families, they work with their parents, but this is more play than work. For rural children, school entry is often traumatic; teachers rarely know how to help children adjust. Frightened by discipline, unable to adapt to the authority of the teacher, unable to learn because of many fears, they soon drop out. The PROPEL project seeks to non-formalize the formal school to make it sufficiently attractive to retain the child until he/she also achieves the minimum levels of learning by the end of grade IV. Teachers of grades I and II are now being oriented towards this goal. This is meant not only to refine their pedagogical skills but to enable them to acquire a different and more satisfying self-image. The impact of this orientation will be evaluated in May 1992.

The interconnected programmes conducted in the PROPEL project since its inception in August 1988 are: (a) Child Recreation Centres (CRCs); (b) Women's Development Groups attached to the CRCs; (c) NFE centres; (d) Adult Education Centres as well as a volunteer-based literacy programme; (e) Jana Shikshan Nilayams (People's Education Houses) for providing reading materials to neo-literates and semi-skilled readers (adults and children) and recreational opportunities to the community; (f) women animators' camps for boosting the education and development of women and girls; (g) a child-to-child programme in health education; and (h) training of VECs for micro-planning and development of education at the grass-roots level.

In all these programmes the core is UPE. Several children from NFE centres have completed their studies up to the minimum levels of learning prescribed by government with the help of specially prepared teaching-learning materials. In some villages, adult illiteracy has been totally removed. All the 82 Panchayats have been trained in the techniques of collaborative micro-planning. Conferences of teachers and principals of primary and secondary schools have been held for developing Education Complexes as academic resources for the villages. Based on discussions with officials, non-officials and teachers, the project staff has prepared orientation and training materials for Panchayats, VECs, resource persons and teachers.

A mid-term evaluation of the PROPEL project was completed in December 1990. The impact of the project's interventions seems better and wider than anticipated, especially because the VECs have been successful in obtaining the collaboration of the local government officials for tackling the problems of education.

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4. Development and implementation of collaboration and partnership in the PROPEL project

(i) *Methods of contact and involvement*

(a) Discussions for project planning and programming

Since the inception of the first phase of the UPE project, the principle methods of inviting collaboration were to hold informal meetings for: (a) approaching possible collaborators to discuss ideas on the problems of primary education rather than to present a blueprint prepared in advance by the initiators of change; (b) presenting a suggested sketch of activities along with information on how they would be carried out, sources of funding, etc.; (c) allowing the partners freedom to express doubts and countering negative arguments by illustrations of successful innovations; and (d) working out tentative methods and schedules of collaborative programmes. The next step was to arrive at a consensus for designating small groups and individuals who would work together to plan, implement and review joint effort.

(b) Advisory Committee

This was useful for attracting the attention of officials, social workers and influential leaders, enabling them to feel they belonged to the organization on whose project they were expected to tender advice.

(c) Contacting local leaders for collaboration

In the PROPEL area, the recognized leaders include: principals of secondary schools, medical officers, private medical practitioners, postmasters, bank managers, government officers and the sub-inspector of police. The project invites them to address village meetings, youth groups and women's groups to explain the links among primary education and health, environment protection, economic development, reduction of drunkenness and crime, better status for women, etc.

(d) Surveys

The initial household survey involved the Panchayats and local youth groups; in some villages primary teachers also helped conduct the surveys. Group meetings held by the project staff to explain the survey schedules and the use of the information collected were extended to discuss village problems. The surveys prepared a large number of people for the planning and organizational activities undertaken later for implementing the innovations.

(e) Orientation camps

The PROPEL project included the organization of awareness camps for women and youths. Initially, 300 participants were to be involved in camps of about five days each. But with additional funds becoming available it was possible to hold 20 camps within a year for rural women animators and youth animators; each lasted 21 days with 30 participants per camp.

(f)   Child education

The demand for Balwadis (kindergartens) has grown tremendously in rural areas. As families break up owing to fragmentation of land and with the growing number of small farmers and landless labour necessitating women's employment outside the home, looking after young children becomes a problem for poor parents. In addition, wealthy parents also want to send their children to pre-schools to help prepare them for primary school. Since the PROPEL project includes experimentation with pre-schools, the Panchayats were happy to collaborate. They offered free accommodation and were ready to pay the honorarium of the assistant of the pre-school teacher.

(g)   Collaboration and partnership at the level of funding organizations

At the project's launch, the International Year of the Child (1979) was an appropriate occasion for UNICEF to give financial support to UPE, particularly in the interest of out-of-school rural girls. Funding from the Government of Maharashtra showed that the Planning Department understood the project to be an investment in the future development of the rural economy. Later, the Ford Foundation gave assistance primarily out of its interest in improving the socio-economic status of rural women.

For the third stage of the project, the rising interest of central government in UPE brought assistance for innovative projects supporting primary education for the underprivileged. Also, the new administrative leadership in the Department of Education in the HRD Ministry was committed to mass education and support to NGOs for research and development, especially for examining problems of NFE for working children and rural girls.

(ii)   The nature of collaboration and its motivation

The nature and method of collaboration are complementary and motivations for collaborating were varied. In the case of the principals of the 13 secondary schools with whom the project personnel established close contact, three possible motivations may have operated: (a) improvement of enrolment, retention and achievement in the nearby primary schools might increase the transfer rates from feeder schools to the secondary school and thus facilitate its development; (b) the prestige of the principal within the rural community might increase because of collaboration with a nationally renowned research institute; or (c) the increased contact with supervisory and administrative officials at the district level might prove of practical use in sorting out the school's management problems.

Involvement of government officials working at the Panchayat and Panchayat-cluster level could bring incidental benefits to the officials by improving the reports on their job performance. The mobilization of the community through the activities of the PROPEL project could be used by the officials of various development departments to press for the implementation of their respective schemes. The interventions of PROPEL also contributed to breaking the departmental barriers that had separated them in the rural community. In the meetings and camps organized by PROPEL, they could come together for discussions of development schemes, socialize as an educated group and, as in the case of the principals, become involved with IIE's project.

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The VECs were included in the NFE project launched in 1979. In general, the experience of VECs as initiators of local collaboration has been quite good. In Maharashtra, they have been constituted by an administrative order issued by the Education Department. At least half of the members of VECs must be women. They are expected to promote girls' education and to look after pre-school centres. VECs have helped organize women animators' camps and secured the collaboration of officials from departments of health, agriculture, social forestry, police and revenue, village industries, etc. Co-operation of lawyers and doctors has also been obtained. Teachers from secondary schools have been persuaded to give science lessons in primary schools, NFE centres and AE centres. Local musicians have taught songs to children. The type and extent of collaboration varies but there is not a single village which has remained without it in its educational and developmental activities.

Collaboration in PROPEL seemed to bring personal satisfaction, better professional recognition and increase in social contacts. Even village musicians and performers have found a new avenue of exhibiting their talent. Working together appears to have changed the village social climate. When women and children campers went in processions through the village streets, shouting slogans like "What do we need for a happy society? Togetherness, togetherness!", a change in mood arose. The people were roused to show that they could work together to educate their children and contribute to village development. Thus, while intrinsic motivations operated, the extrinsically induced motivation seemed to act strongly in almost equal measure.

(iii)   Conditions which hindered and encouraged collaboration

Collaboration and mutual understanding presented few problems at the central government level since the 1986 NEP and earlier decisions on innovative measures, such as NFE for attaining UPE, encouraged projects like PROPEL. The approval of the IIE model of NFE by the Government of India in 1985-86 was an assurance that desirable changes had taken place in official attitudes towards the efforts of NGOs. At the state level, support became available from some political leaders and administrators at the policy-making level. However, the executive wing of the Education Department, headed by the Director of Education, was cool towards change efforts by NGOs. The officials probably felt threatened when solutions to difficult educational problems began to emerge from the non-official sector.

Financially, none of the phases of the project had any serious problems. IIE personnel are known for their dedication to educational reform and innovation in the interest of the underprivileged. They are also known for the modest budgetary requirements of the projects they conduct with the full consciousness that they are working in a poor country, for the benefit of the common people and for upholding basic human values. Project personnel are aware that it is important to evolve and install innovations, but it is still more important to carefully manage the system which produces and implements the innovations. Yet, such a systematization of activities does not hamper flexibility because that is the prime mover of beneficial change.

(iv)   The innovators' backgrounds and skills

In this project, the socio-economic backgrounds of the members of the project team, their field experience, theoretical understanding of action-research and the value system they subscribe to, have been equally important in the process of conceiving, planning and implementing the project. All the researchers had first-hand knowledge of the problems of rural life, and some also had extensive experience as planners and administrators of education. The newly recruited research staff and field personnel had rural backgrounds but required intensive training.

All instructors, education co-ordinators and planning facilitators maintain daily diaries and record significant observations. Suggestions for modifying an innovation or approaches to collaborators are derived from these diaries.

III.   Results of the innovation and of its development

1.   Extent and process of replication, dissemination sustainability

The series of innovations which commenced in 1979-80 has extended its scope to gradually ensure that the socio-economic 'neutrality' of the formal school is overcome, and the dichotomy between 'teaching' and 'learning' is removed.

The 'neutrality' or 'foreignness' of the Indian primary school has resulted from its cultural indifference and propensity to serve only those interests and powerful socio-economic segments that have used education as a 'control device' to maintain the status quo, as a tool for retaining power. This has been accomplished through the governmental framework which has been the preserve of the upper castes and classes and through centralized control so that the powerful could continue to enjoy their dominant position. The reduction of centralized control and domination is achieved by opening the primary education system to the common people in rural areas, through micro-planning by the Panchayats, and management of pre-school and primary education by the VECs. Decentralization, collaboration and partnership are seen as processes conducive to: (a) better access to education for children from all social strata; (b) restructuring of the centralized planning and administrative system of primary education; and (c) overcoming the cultural neutrality of the school to make it a part of community life. While recognizing the specificity of the school's cultural context, the project does not overlook the necessity to enable the children to achieve the universally approved levels of knowledge and skills in language, mathematics, science, reasoning, social awareness, health and aesthetics.

The PROPEL project, therefore, takes a constructive approach towards the internal as well as external shortcomings of primary education. It attempts to release the system from the oppression of its colonial history but does not subscribe to narrowly nationalistic standpoints. The project realizes that a colonized people are likely to acquire prejudices arising from the exploitation, injustices and neglect their country had to suffer at the hands of the colonizers. But clinging to prejudices is often a pretext for inaction. What the country now needs is primary education which keeps to a universally accepted standard of learning achievement through a variety of mediators such as schools, centres, groups of voluntary teachers, singly or in desirable combination, in flexible time schedules and pedagogical

approaches, and in a manner which makes people themselves take up responsibility to manage the system, with such help as they need from government. These measures are being developed in the PROPEL project by training the Panchayats and the VECs. The project aims at systematization of primary education despite such flexibility. It seeks to build up a social atmosphere as well as a collaborative effort.

(i)   Replication and dissemination

The strength of the innovations evolved in the UPE and PROPEL projects lies in their participatory approach. When innovations are evolved by an individual, an institution or a small group, they are often dismissed as fads. No innovation has a chance to develop realistically and get accepted for further use unless it is conducted in a climate of participatory change, a setting in which the participants jointly analyze the problems which require innovative responses, determine strategies to install them and ensure that the people involved will be genuinely interested in working together to reach the goal. The best way to evolve and disseminate innovations is through consensus. At the stage of dissemination and replication, the 'newness' of ideas and processes is often a deterrent to their acceptance; collaborators, therefore, have to share the task of explaining the innovation to those whom it is going to affect. The pathway of dissemination has to be cleared by modest publicity, seeking the support of those who wield administrative and political authority, and convincing those who might feel threatened by the innovation that the threat would disappear if they participate in change. Professional primary teachers and school supervisors felt threatened by the NFE programme but eventually realized that it was a response to a situation that could not have been managed by the conventional school system.

The cost factor of innovations is extremely important. The cost of primary education of the 9-14 age-group through NFE was about one-third the cost of full-time primary education. This appealed to educational planners who were concerned about shortage of funds. Primary teachers' unions, however, criticized NFE as 'cheap education for the poor' and would not admit that in the full-time system, the 95 per cent expenditure on teachers' salaries left only 5 per cent for educational facilities for the children, whereas in NFE the ratio of teacher to non-teacher costs was 60:40.

These matters need discussion and examination at the dissemination stage. Consequently, the replication project in 1985-88 emphasized organization of seminars of administrators, teachers' representatives and local citizens. It published reports and induced teacher-educators to try out innovative pedagogy in their training programmes for primary teachers.

The establishment of the NFE cell at IIE considerably increased the adoption of the IIE model of NFE. As many as 65 voluntary agencies have begun to conduct NFE programmes in various parts of the state, covering about 75,000 pupils at present. The cell trains the trainers of NFE instructors and holds biennial conferences of organizers and officials. Teams involved in the work of the cell visit the projects to assess problems and evolve solutions. This stage may continue over the next five years before the innovation becomes incorporated into the district education system on a regular basis.

(ii)   Sustainability

The inclusion of NFE in the Eighth FYP proposals and the recommendation of the IIE model of UPE by the central government guarantee the sustainability of the innovation. At the state level, the government has accepted it for implementation by voluntary agencies. As to its implementation through the Zilla Parishads, provision has been made in the State's Eighth FYP. Thus, NFE at present appears to have reached the stage of sustainability. However, since this has to be a collaborative, culture-related and locally supervised educational effort, attention will have to be paid to ensuring its relevance in different local situations. Training programmes will have to be provided for education-complex leaders, school supervisors, and block-level and district-level education officers, to enable them to manage the innovation successfully. Preparation of guides and training materials for supervisors and teachers has already begun. An experimental project for comparative assessment of the minimum levels of learning attained by pupils in full-time primary classes and NFE centres is being undertaken to examine the 'comparability' and 'equivalence' questions in depth.

A built-in element of sustainability in the PROPEL and earlier projects is the recognition that primary education is as much a macro-level concern for the entire country as a micro-level effort for the local community. The PROPEL project has been designed to evolve innovations of possible use at the macro-level while trying to see that the system responds to micro-level situations. An orientation course prepared for the VECs and Panchayats discusses most such problems and measures. This course, along with training materials, can be adopted by the states or voluntary agencies conducting formal as well as non-formal primary education programmes. The methodology evolved for mobilizing various groups, resource persons and government officials to participate in local planning and implementation of child education, primary education, adult literacy, further education and village development as an integrated process has been documented. It is being compiled for reference in similar projects elsewhere. For the non-formal UPE programme, there is a special curriculum which can establish 'equivalency' in achieving the minimum levels of learning prescribed by the formal curriculum. Teaching-learning materials and the training handbook for local, non-professional instructors of NFE centres are already being used by voluntary agencies in the State and have been supplied to voluntary agencies in a few northern states. Informative booklets about the NFE model of IIE are available in English, Hindi and Marathi. Handbooks have been prepared for the training of instructors of child recreation centres, adult literacy centres, Jana Shikshan Nilayams (JSNs), members of Panchayats and VECs, and education co-ordinators and planning facilitators.

2.   Educational, institutional and development achievements

The macro-level system of education at the national level is ready to welcome such innovations. Micro-level planning and NFE are important strategies for increasing the possibility of universal participation of school-age children in primary and upper primary education. The central government has played a crucial role in funding NFE programmes. For the lower and upper primary stages, both formal and non-formal, minimum levels of learning are being standardized.

(i)   Effect of education on graduates

Pupils who have completed their primary education through the IIE model of NFE make their achievements visible to the family and community. This open demonstration of achievement has increased the prestige of the NFE centres and made them attractive for the pupils. The NFE pupils also seek a chance to speak in village meetings on the problems in their working life. The pedagogical strategies adopted in the project, therefore, have not only helped the NFE graduates acquire the minimum levels of learning specified but also developed their personality and made this development visible to all concerned. This factor has been the real incentive for the community to send girls in particular to the NFE centres. It has also helped many VECs think of non-formalizing the formal school.

(ii)   Changes in skills and activities of partners

The project emphasis on the orientation and training of collaborators has paid substantial dividends. Members of Panchayats and VECs are now fully informed about the nature of the education system and its problems at the state level and in various parts of the country. The rationale behind decentralization of administration and the importance of micro-planning has been grasped, and the techniques of educational organization and management and pedagogical strategies have become clear. Therefore, in general, the community has acquired the information and skills essential for carrying out its educational responsibilities. Similarly, the attitudes and roles of the government personnel operating at the grass-roots level have willingly become a teaching and planning resource which the community has needed. Among all these partners, an enthusiasm is evident in carrying out their tasks in the educational transformation of the community.

The power structure in the communities has not changed entirely. But the increased participation of women and youth has had an effect on candidatures for Panchayat memberships. In a few villages, educated young men and some of the women trained as animators have become 'Sarpanch' (head of the village council). The social atmosphere, created for support to UPE, has had an impact on the political power structure, local administration and the status of women. The evidence of girls in the 9-14 age-group learning faster than their brothers attending full-time school, the change in the bearing of these girls, and their mastery of language and etiquette have surprised the villagers, and their attitude towards girls and women has begun to change. The camps for women animators have given rise to a demand for the establishment of a training centre for women where teachers for pre-schools and non-formal programmes, para-medical workers, agriculturists, rural women entrepreneurs, etc. could be trained. The girl graduates of NFE centres are between the ages of 13-14 years and cannot fit into the formal system nor do they desire to pursue formal education. But they are asking for some kind of useful education up to the age of 18 years because that is the minimum age of marriage prescribed by law. To fill the interim period with useful education is a perceived need, and their desire for education which can make them self-reliant is a good sign of social change.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

(i) Motivation for collaboration: general findings

The PROPEL project has unearthed some interesting facts about rural primary education. It was generally believed that the rural poor do not see any benefit in primary education for their children; usually girls are thought unfit for school education and school education is seen as of no benefit to girls. However, when NFE centres were organized to suit children who had to work the whole day doing domestic chores, girls literally flocked to the centres if these were close by and held in the late evening when siblings were put to bed.

When parents were interviewed to find out why they sent the girls to the part-time NFE centres, they said, "We want the girls to learn reading, writing, accounts, story-telling, games, etc. because they are still young and maybe this will help them when they grow up and have to run their own household. These centres are convenient because they do not interfere with the girls' working life, which is most important. They do not cost anything. The girls seem happy, they behave well at home, and that satisfies us. Also, we are allowed to visit the centres any time and observe what the girls are learning. They report to us what they learn every day. That tells us that the teacher is not wasting their time." The project also exploded the myth of the parents' lack of interest in what the children were taught. The parents liked the rapid progress of the girls in literacy and numeracy because they could understand this simple and observable goal of schooling. As a result, the co-operation of parents and village leaders became easily available.

This education was closer to the problems of the family. It not only opened out the pedagogical process to the gaze of the community but invited scrutiny and suggestions. Besides, NFE enrolment was totally voluntary. If the pupils liked what the centre offered, they attended even on those few occasions when the instructor had to take leave and managed the studies by themselves. The centre was the children's 'own class' as they called it. The success of NFE as an activity of the people led to the mobilization of the community's human and material resources for its support. The rise of NFE through community support was remarkable in comparison with the stagnation of the formal school in the same village.

The NFE programme made it a point to invite local government officials to talk to the pupils about what they did for the village; parents and others frequently attended. This process awakened the officials, and they learnt to communicate with the villagers outside 'office hours'. It also brought appreciation from the villagers together with job satisfaction for the officials. Thus, for these collaborators, the motivations for collaboration were of two types: (a) in the case of villagers and their Panchayats, it was the project's recognition of their life-style and attempt to relate programmes to it with their consent and participation; and (b) in the case of government officials, it was opportunities to get support from the villagers for bringing realism into their jobs, better job satisfaction and possible official rewards for better performance.

In all these activities, the primary teachers could not participate for two main reasons. First, they rarely lived in the village where they worked. When they held school from 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. the villagers were out in the field. Long school vacations

created gaps in their contact with the villagers. Second, their work was also not connected with any community programmes. Sometimes, secondary teachers showed curiosity in the action-research process. Located in 13 large villages, the secondary schools provided them with residential accommodation and they were closer to the communities from where they drew their pupils. The education co-ordinators tried to involve both primary and secondary teachers in project activities but the secondary teachers responded better.

An important group which could have come in for comprehensive collaboration from the start was that of the education (extension) officers and the block education officers. In spite of the orientation conferences held for them and the support they could have received from politicians and officials who were members of Project Advisory Committees, their participation was weak.

Later, when the project director of PROPEL received a national award for developing community-based NFE, the Education Department awoke a little. But in the highest echelons, there was evident hostility towards the project, probably a feeling of competition between the official efforts of the Department and those of a research institute.

In the past four years, the primary teachers in the project area have been witnessing the changes in the community's understanding of education. They have also noted enthusiastic mobilization of the community for education and development. They have seen the partnership which has grown between researchers, officials and the community. NFE has made a strong impact on the formal school. The family sees the NFE pupils learning faster and better. Formal school pupils come to the evening NFE centres and insist on being admitted. The teachers of formal schools are ready to become acquainted with the NFE pedagogy, and they sometimes approach the education co-ordinators for NFE materials. Principals of primary schools have come forward to give facilities for children's fairs, women animators' camps, youth camps and experimental children's camps for pupils from the upper primary classes in order to establish closer relations with the schools. These have also received support from teachers, and some have demanded more such activities. The need to enliven the schools seems to have been accepted. The time is ripe to get closer to the formal schools by helping them to non-formalize grades I and II. The district authorities have agreed to the training of officials and teachers for this purpose, and a programme was launched in April 1991. By the time the PROPEL project ends, the collaboration of the local teachers, local education officers and district-level administrators will probably have been achieved. It is at that stage that an integrated system of rural primary education is expected to emerge. The NFE centres and non-formalized primary schools will then jointly strive to attain the goal of universal UPE by facilitating access, retention and achievement for those who can attend school full-time and also for those who attend part-time. This will be possible because by then all educational activities in the project villages will have received full support from the community and from others whose developmental concerns depend on the rising educational levels of the people, especially girls and women.

(ii)   Creating conditions for collaboration

Certain methods were adopted in the project to develop the conditions necessary for community involvement in analyzing: (a) the nature of the primary education system; (b) possible alternatives manageable by the community with technical support from outside, and

human resource support from government and non-government individuals; and (c) the interlinkages, both short-term and long-term, of UPE with activities for better family and community life.

The methods consisted of: (a) participatory surveys and study of the educational status of each village, leading to preparation of systematic micro-plans by each Panchayat with guidance from project personnel; (b) involvement of secondary schools, the grass-roots personnel of government departments and others in the informal planning activity; (c) Advisory Committees involving officials from the level of the Director of Education to that of the education (extension) officer; (d) political support of the idea of UPE through alternative channels; (e) inviting the Panchayats and other community organizations to actively engage in united action towards UPE; (f) enabling the community to organize youth groups, women's groups, children's squads, etc. to participate in overall village development, including formal and non-formal education; (g) drawing together non-professional educational persons from each village, in consultation with the villagers, and training them not just to teach but to study further for their own development; (h) selecting education co-ordinators (to be substituted at a future date for education inspectors in the education system) from the rural areas, known to the communities as 'their own people'; (i) intensively training education co-ordinators as agents for educational and social change; (j) concretizing the programme of establishing VECs; (k) mounting a support programme for UPE by setting up pre-schools, literacy groups and people's education houses, and holding orientation camps for women, youth and children; (l) preparing and providing well-designed mobilizational and training materials for the partner; (m) designing curricula and teaching-learning materials by inviting the community and other collaborators to check the cultural and developmental relevance of the content and suitability of language; and (n) allowing the formal school teachers and inspectors to gradually come under the impact of these activities to make the primary school more functional.

(iii)   Impact of non-government intervention

All the partners concerned knew that the IIE had undertaken the PROPEL project for preparing the communities to look after educational activities themselves and finding ways and means for achieving this goal. This project was not subject to pressures such as 'targets' of success or justification for a 'delivery system' prescribed by government. None of the approaches and activities of the project could belittle any community member's status or even the young learners' status by branding them as 'ignorant rural masses'. It was firmly believed by the project staff that the people had an inherent drive to get ahead in life and that their creative urges would blossom if the burden of a governmental 'delivery system' could be lifted off them. The PROPEL project sought to release the grass-roots level officials from their bondage to this system by making them partners in action-research approved by government. In this way, they could be persuaded to deviate a little from departmental targets. No higher authority could thus object, provided the administrative routines did not suffer. Working with a NGO that was keen to involve them in research was the chief argument to get the government officials' collaboration.

The project team had decided upon a total community-oriented approach and discarded the 'selective, individual target' approach which has characterized most of the development programmes and which is totally antithetical to the community ethos in the

rural culture. The focus on 'individual' and 'individualism' is a cultural characteristic of the industrialized West. Its transplantation in the development programmes of an agrarian society has been one of the main causes of their failure. The community approach fitted into the traditional ethos and revived the spirit of partnership inherent in the interdependent rural community structures. It has been found in some action projects that the disparities caused by class, caste and gender get minimized when the village has to face an emergency or strive hard to reach a common objective, like digging a well or building an approach road.

(iv)   Training for collaboration

The analysis presented above may give some indication for a training programme for policy-makers, planners, administrators and practitioners. It is obvious that the multi-sectoral approach would be possible through: (a) an overhaul of the hierarchy and centralized planning characterizing the statistically-oriented 'delivery system', or (b) decentralization and democratization of administration, and deconcentration of financial powers to the level of a 'planning circle' covering an appropriate-size population. As a third alternative, or even along with the second, NGOs may be enabled to work as intermediaries between the government and the people so that the community and local officials are released from the direct control of a distant, authoritarian government. Without an organizational transformation in some such manner, community-level collaboration partnership may remain a dream, realizable only in a few pockets where projects like PROPEL are conducted.

However, without waiting for a structural transformation of the entire administrative system, much can be done by transforming the understanding, motivation and skills of the possible partners for evolving community-oriented work styles. The following is suggested as essential components of training: study of literature on (a) social change and economic development in different types of communities; (b) methods of self-analysis and self-actualization through people-related work-performance; (c) problems of the educational system in colonized and non-colonized countries; (d) how children learn and how children fail; (e) relevance of the content and goal of education; (f) democratization of administration, monitoring, supervision and evaluation of the educational system and the educational process with respect to other aspects of development; and (g) the need for life-long learning for all to cope with change and for safeguarding self-esteem.

If the desired goal is to be reached in the near future, collaboration between the community, government officials and NGOs must be achieved at a faster pace than at present. For an accelerated pace, this collaborative enterprise would have to be released from antiquated financial rules and centralized administrative authority. Government policy and finance would have to facilitate such a change. To begin with, the policies need to be legitimized by legal provision for decentralization of the management of local development programmes, within the framework of national policies and legislative direction. Reducing bureaucratic control could facilitate the participation of government officials in local planning and management of programmes, collaboration with the communities and achieving on-the-job training through collaborative experience. A large-scale training programme could be mounted, conducted at several points in a state, preferably at the district level where the population ranges from 2,500,000 to 5,000,000. This could be undertaken by District Resource Units which are intended to promote AE and NFE by producing promotional and teaching-learning materials, and conducting flexible training programmes

for VECs, instructors of NFE and AE centres and organizers of Jana Shikshan Nilayams. These units, which the Government of India has generally been entrusting to NGOs, could be strengthened with staff and equipment to organize orientation seminars and workshops for government officials at the grass-roots level. Research-oriented NGOs like the IIE could be available to co-ordinate such work through the training of trainers. Staff Development Institutes of state governments also exist. These could be involved in trainers' training and checking the implementation of policies and legislation.

Structures for training officials and non-officials in collaborative training are already available in India, ready to be geared to this task. As to the detailed training programmes, experiences of non-government research organizations like the IIE would be invaluable. The training programmes for collaborative development cannot be formalized as this would destroy their legitimacy. However, training organizations could share the overall course structure inclusive of statement of goals, technologies of training, some of the materials, and the type of certification to be established.

Training for collaborative expansion of basic education and relating it to development is a vast enterprise. It requires organizational skill and substantial funds. Developing countries are likely to possess the skills but not the funds. Liberal external funding for NGOs would be needed to enable them to mount training programmes for collaborative development. This funding would be a sound investment not only in the interest of human values but in the more materialistic interest of a better balanced world economy. If the path of decentralized, collaborative action for basic education and development is made smooth in Third World countries, the whole world may be able to reap large dividends.

Synthesis and conclusions
by
Sheldon Shaeffer

Chapter 6

Synthesis and conclusions

I. Introduction

These innovations examined in this book vary in many ways. Some, as in the Ugandan programme of pupil-written texts, the Philippines parent learning support system, and the Indonesian experiments with parent and parent-teacher associations, appear to focus on relatively simple additions to the system. Others call for more complicated changes. The cluster projects in Thailand and Indonesia set up quite complex new structures and procedures for professional development and curriculum reform at both school and central levels. The community mobilization required for the programmes in Bangladesh and India and the inter-institution co-ordination required by the Indonesian Community Fora for Educational Development lead to very different ways of organising the teaching-learning process and/or the partners involved in supporting it.

Underlying all of these innovations -- simple or complex -- are quite profound changes in how schools are meant to operate and how reforms are meant to be planned and implemented. Most generally, these changes make education more participatory -- more actors taking a more active role in carrying out more activities in and around schools. First, and to a varying extent, the innovations call for more active *collaboration* of a larger number of 'partners', especially at the school and community level. At a minimum, the cluster projects in Thailand and Indonesia encourage teachers, principals, and education officials, within and across schools, to work more closely together to assess their own problems and decide how to deal with them and so to improve the delivery of education. The projects in the Philippines and Indonesia (the parent associations) extend this involvement to parents and, in Uganda, to pupils, private enterprises, non-government organizations, etc.

But secondly, and again to varying degrees, some of the projects go further into issues of governance, responsibility, and accountability -- into the more genuine *participation* of more equal partners in education. In the best of the Thai schools and clusters, in an environment in which powers are being devolved to lower levels of the system, decisions about school policy and practice are being shared among teachers and headmasters. Even in Indonesia, where the pace of genuine devolution from the centre is slower than in Thailand, the experiments in forming community-school teams to develop local curricular content and in giving remote communities the responsibility to select para-professional tutors are milestones; the ambitions of the COPLANER project, where community fora of a large variety of interested parties will help to plan and manage resources of primary, secondary, and out-of-school education programmes, are mind-boggling. In the BRAC programme on non-formal primary education in Bangladesh and the PROPEL project in India, school governance and administration are shared even more widely, with community leaders, village education councils, and non-government organizations. Even BRAC's project of collaboration with the Ministry of Education, considerably less ambitious than BRAC's own non-formal education programmes, calls for

joint surveying of needs and collaborative planning among BRAC staff, Ministry staff, and school management committee members.

These innovations therefore lead to education systems in which a broader range of partners are more actively involved, in some cases in the fine-tuning of educational delivery, in others in the planning, management, and governance of the school. More specific examples of these cases are described below.

1. The context for educational changes

One commonality across the case studies is their situation in an educational context requiring change. In all of the countries in which these innovations occur, there was the realization that their education systems were in various ways wanting; at least to some extent, they were seen as insufficient in the supply of places, inaccessible to various marginal populations, irrelevant in content, inadequate in quality, and/or unable to create and sustain demand. The reasons for such conditions were many.

(i) Historical

Most of the countries concerned have had a long and profound history of colonialism, with attendant effects on both the structure and content of the education system and the norms and operations of the bureaucracy. But the duration and nature of the colonial power -- British, Dutch, Spanish and American -- have led to quite different complications in the process of educational development. Only Thailand has escaped this particular complication.

The most detailed comment in this regard relates to ex-British colonies. In such countries, as Lord Macaulay is quoted as saying for India, "we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern -- a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect" (Latif 1991:9). In such contexts, and in the Spanish Philippines and Dutch Indonesia, existing indigenous school systems, often strongly supported by local communities, were weakened, and more narrowly-focused, Western, and elitist systems were introduced in their stead, often in both urban and rural areas. The schools, and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they transmitted, were often academic, irrelevant, inequitable, and ineffectual -- conditions against which the independent education systems, decades later, are still struggling.

(ii) Political and economic

Most of the countries also suffer from varying conditions of economic underdevelopment and/or political instability. Both conditions have been the rule for many years in Bangladesh and Uganda (where there have been nine different governments since 1962) and more recently in India and the Philippines. Because of political instability in some of these countries, there has been considerable turnover in the ranks of both policy-makers and/or professional managers and a resulting lack of consistency in policy, supervision, and practice.

Economic problems have been even more damaging to prospects for educational improvement. In Bangladesh, with a GNP of US$170 and a large percentage of the population living at or below the subsistence level; in Uganda, where 96 per cent of the population can be classified as impoverished and where, in 1989, parents provided 90 per cent of the costs of their children's education; even in Indonesia, where, despite earlier windfall oil profits and an increasingly diversified economy, quite large disparities in educational access and quality still exist, the conditions for creating sustained educational improvement are difficult to create.

(iii) Bureaucratic

Some of the case studies make a special point of the hierarchical, rigid, often conservative context of central education ministries -- often imbued with a natural suspicion of NGO or community action -- in which these innovations have grown. Centralized financial and administrative systems, often necessary for the political and economic ends of colonial powers, have persisted into independence, and administrators of elite civil services have been skilled in seeing "that the conventional administrative structures and regulations within which they had been operating comfortably would be safeguarded" (Naik 1991:21). This makes difficult the staffing of ministries with professionals, the decentralising of planning and administration, and any acceleration of the decision-making process. The result is that "subordinate officers have little power and autonomy; they carry out orders of the superiors and send most of the cases upward for decision" (Latif 1991:24). A corollary of this is "the lack of accountability, resulting in mismanagement, wastage, and corruption at all levels of the administrative machinery" (Latif 1991:14). This leads to the bureaucracy's fear of 'opening' up the school too widely to outside observation and of the discovery of the frequent 'juggling' of data related to enrolment, attendance, teacher absenteeism, etc. (Latif 1991:48). A similar result, with a different cause, operates in countries such as Uganda where many of the more experienced administrators have left the country, leaving a serious gap in the available cadre of planners and implementers.

(iv) Educational

The typical educational system in which the innovations developed -- though again with considerable variety across the countries -- was underfinanced, understaffed (or staffed with inadequately trained personnel), overly centralized and standardized, unresponsive to local variety and demand (often because of sheer geographic or administrative distance), and difficult to adapt and reform. Also, as in many other parts of the world, institutions dealing with various aspects of education (teacher training colleges, examination councils, curriculum development centres) and various levels of the system lacked co-ordination.

Some countries have faced particularly difficult problems. In Bangladesh, a powerful teachers' union trades political support in return for government endorsement of the status quo -- i.e., relatively high salaries and benefits. In India, strong teachers' lobbies have guaranteed similar benefits for their clients, representing them as *the* key to school improvement. In Uganda, the insecurity of political, economic, and daily life have made difficult any continuity of educational policy and implementation. This affected particularly the work of the central inspectorate which "progressively retreated from their role of on-the-job training of school managers, and of supervising and monitoring the activities of

schools and teachers.... Therefore, a lax school authority under the supervision of a retreating inspectorate, was forced to preside over a less qualified, poorly remunerated and unmotivated teaching force, which was required to teach without instructional materials, during inconsistent timetables, and at periods of personal insecurity" (Namuddu 1991:6-7).

The effect, at least in Uganda, was profound: high drop-out rates, low cohort survival rates, and a growing rate of illiteracy. But this effect is mirrored in other countries. Despite spending almost 50 per cent of its education budget on primary education, Bangladesh has a 70 per cent drop-out rate from primary schools and only a 44 per cent gross enrolment rate for girls; one result is 70 million illiterates. India, with a drop-out rate of 48 per cent in grades I-V and 63 per cent up to grade VIII, and a gross enrolment rate for girls at 41 per cent, has been obviously affected by a reduction in the percentage of educational budgets for primary education from 56 per cent in the first Five-Year Plan to 29 per cent at the end of the Sixth (28); 95 per cent of the budget goes for teacher salaries. The Philippines, despite spending 84 per cent of its education budget on primary education, loses 35 per cent of its pupils before the completion of grade six. Even Thailand, with its relatively high enrolment rate of 96 per cent, and Indonesia at 99 per cent, admit to serious problems of inequity in access and quality across districts and to basic, enduring problems of untrained and underutilized resources.

If these conditions result in anything which might be called a 'typical' school -- meant here to be an average school in India, Bangladesh, and Uganda, and a remote or marginal (but not uncommon) school in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines -- it is likely to be ill-equipped with teaching materials and other facilities (running water, latrines) and suffering from hierarchical and often bad management, an inactive or at least unaccountable school management committee or PTA, and slow and inefficient servicing by local officials in regard to salaries, promotions, and transfers. It will also be staffed by undertrained and poorly supervized teachers, often distracted by local politics, weighed down by complacency and a lack of initiative, isolated and perhaps suspicious of sharing too widely the few advantages they might have; and mystified by a long series of innovations and reforms transmitted incompletely from the top to the bottom and meant to 'fix' the rote, custodial care model of education found in the classroom. In such a context, any remaining demand for education from the community is often due more to the unsatisfied aspirations of marginal groups for inclusion in modern society than to clear evidence of the school system's relevance and responsiveness to local needs.

The common problem, therefore, behind the specific issues of insufficient textbooks (Uganda), inadequate resources and professional supervision (Indonesia), and high drop-out rates and low enrolment rates, especially for girls (Philippines, India, and Bangladesh), is how to improve the quality of education in systems economically or administratively unable to implement profound and sustainable reform at the school and community level.

2.   Examples of collaboration and partnership

The cases studied represent a considerable range in the nature and extent of collaboration intended and achieved among the various actors and partners in basic education. The experiences can be analysed according to the collaboration attained in several areas of the school and education system: in the collection and management of

resources; in the setting of school policy and governance; and in determining the content of, and the methods of teaching within, the educational process.

(i) Resources

In some of the innovations, the new 'partners' (teachers or the community) gain a larger role in either the collection or the management of resources, although in general few new resources are required or available beyond the costs of the reform itself (as in the school cluster projects) or the resources are provided and managed by the animating agency (BRAC in Bangladesh, the Indian Institute of Education in India, and MINDSACROSS in Uganda). The core BRAC programme is one example, where the community often provides the school land and building and then manages the rent paid by BRAC for these facilities. In some Thai clusters, the community plays a role with the headmaster in deciding how school funds should be spent; such budgets are then reviewed by the local cluster offices. Also, the BP3 (the parent association) in Indonesia is meant to have the authority to develop its own work plans (e.g., for extra-curricular activities or school improvement), to levy and collect extra-budgetary resources from parents, and to decide how they are to be spent for such items such as facilities and teacher incentives. In practice, however, this appears to happen more often in private than in public schools where the associations are often dominated by school staff and a small group of officers recommended by them. The COPLANER project in Indonesia is meant to alter this process quite radically, with community fora of many interested parties helping to shape a budget for education programmes of an entire sub-district.

(ii) School policy and governance

In this area, there is somewhat more authority devolved to schools. While in none of the studies do teachers, parents or community school committees actually set specific goals and expectations for the school (these having generally been decided by the State or the animating agency), there are examples of wider participation in governance and management. In the best of the cluster activities in Thailand, teachers gain a larger say in policies regarding staff development, school-community relations, and school improvement activities. BRAC and PROPEL communities, largely via village education committees, help determine annual school calendars and daily timetables to ensure that they interfere as little as possible with family and community economic cycles. They also identify candidates for teaching posts and assist in interviewing and selecting them, encourage linkages among other educational activities (e.g., literacy classes, early childhood education centres), help to monitor and evaluate achievement of the non-formal education centres, and encourage high enrolment and attendance of both teachers and pupils. Although Indonesian parent associations ordinarily do not move into the area of policy and governance, that being seen as clearly a 'professional' area, the new project catering to remote schools does assign local communities the task of selecting part-time tutors and a daily timetable appropriate to local economic cycles.

(iii) Educational content and methods

It is in this area -- the determination of what should be taught, using what materials, and in what ways -- where greatest collaboration occurs. In several of the cases, either the

teachers alone (as in Indonesia and Thailand) or with the parents and community (India, Bangladesh, West Java) carry out surveys of community resources and knowledge and/or assessments of local educational needs in order to select local content for the curriculum. In Thailand and Indonesia collaboration is continued in the actual design and preparation of learning materials through school clusters and teacher clubs. In the West Java experiment, this has led to the inclusion in the curriculum of information on the natural and social environment, village organization, and local culture (Moegiadi et al 1991). In India, such materials are discussed with community members, including women, and modified to reflect their viewpoints (Naik 1991:57). On a daily basis, teachers and headmasters, in the best of the Thai and Indonesian clusters, assume more collegial responsibility for planning various curricular and extra-curricular activities. Academic cluster teachers in Thailand also work with regular teachers to demonstrate teaching methods, develop materials, and design tests.In India and Bangladesh village education committees are also active in ensuring linkages between the school and the various non-formal education units in the village, e.g., pre-schools and adult education classes. In Uganda the pupils themselves, with teacher assistance, write and revise school texts.

Parents in some cases are also encouraged to participate more actively in the teaching-learning process. In the Philippines, through school and home-room PTAs, they become active in observing classes, participating in training courses and parent education seminars, and organising field trips and other school activities. As a result, parents become more active in motivating and helping their children at home and following their progress at school. In PROPEL, parents get involved in community evaluation of pupils and schools via children's fairs, and in the visiting teacher project in Indonesia, community members serve as tutors in the absence of regular teachers.

3.   Problems and constraints to collaboration

These various examples of collaboration were only gained through the overcoming of a variety of hindrances at both macro- and micro-levels. These include the following:

1. *A lack of resources*, in terms of finances, personnel, labour, and time. Overworked teachers and parents struggling for survival, compounded by the inherent passivity and illiteracy of many communities, do not find it easy to participate in labour-intensive, collaborative activities, and participation in the management of meagre resources is often seen as not worth the effort. This is especially true, of course, in countries such as Uganda where both teacher salaries and parent incomes are low, but may also be the case in (especially) the urban areas of somewhat wealthier countries, such as Thailand and Indonesia, where the practice of multiple jobs, across schools or in other sectors, is common.

2. *The inability or resistance of institutions and individuals to change* -- the inertia of inflexible systems, bureaucracies, schools, and individuals. Some teachers in Uganda, for example, found children's texts useful only to the extent that they did not interfere with, or somehow supported, the academic, examination-oriented aspects of the curriculum. Suggestions that MINDSACROSS was somehow a 'different' approach in terms of instructional and learning strategies aroused fear and suspicion. In Indonesia, "it is common belief that the school personnel know better about education matters than the parents or community in general" (Moegiadi et al 1991:72); the latter are often seen as offering little of

use to the school besides additional resources. And teachers and higher-level officials in India saw the PROPEL project as intrusive, unprofessional, and working against the accepted wisdom that quality necessarily depends on higher teacher salaries and better facilities.

3. *Organizational and administrative obstacles.* Such problems are compounded by more concrete administrative obstacles. In India, for example, there are regulations prohibiting the hiring of local teachers and mandating their transfer every three years. In Indonesia, ministry regulations forbid parent associations from involvement in 'academic' matters, and in a number of countries more than one ministry may have responsibility for primary education (usually both the ministries of education and interior). This can make any innovation, let alone that based on greater popular participation, difficult to implement.

4. *Political and cultural constraints* which hinder innovation and change in general -- the culture of politics, based on state structures and levels of tolerance, which determines the extent to which participation is tolerated or becomes a genuine mechanism for change. In Indonesia, initiatives toward reform require clear sanction from above, and both parental participation in designing (let alone questioning) school policies and flexible, non-standardized responses to contextual variety are difficult to encourage. In Thailand conflicts have arisen between two quite different approaches to improving quality -- the 'accountability' approach, which uses public accountability for pupil achievement as the incentive for school improvement, and the 'capacity-building' approach, which attempts school improvement through the training of, and collaboration among, teachers, headmasters, and cluster officials.

5. *Inherent weaknesses of the other 'partners'.* A major obstacle to the new partnerships is the sheer lack of experience and skill in encouraging participation and collaboration. As we will see later, these processes do not just happen by themselves, but rather require new managerial and supervisory skills, attitudes, and behaviours among the actors in education. Principals able to share authority within and across schools and with cluster offices, teachers able to carry out surveys of community needs, district officers able to work with programme staff of non-government organizations -- all of these are not easy to find or, if once found, sustain.

Participation *by* the community in education and collaboration of the community *with* other partners also implies certain knowledge and skills -- often not easy for the education system to foster. For example, partners encouraged to observe more actively the nature of their children's schooling, as in the Philippines, might wish to look only at examination results -- their particular interest -- and so must be educated to look beyond such outcomes and see others e.g., skills training, political socialization) which should receive equal attention. The sheer heterogeneity of communities -- divided by class lines if not by ethnic or religious difference -- can lead to domination by the local elite; it is not an accident that the most active members and office holders of parent associations in Indonesia tend to be the better-educated and the wealthier of a given community.

6. *The surrender of education to the community.* In some countries, rather than maintaining their monopoly on the education system, as omnipotent planner and funder, governments are moving in the opposite direction -- surrendering their (expensive)

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responsibility for basic education to the family and the community. Collaboration then becomes co-optation, and governments may even be able to blame poor results and poor quality on the other 'partners'; the more actors involved, in other words, the more blame can be distributed and the less the government itself can be held accountable.

7. *The lack of standard and invariable approaches to collaboration.* To the extent that participation is not an 'intervention' *per se*, that culture, history, and government policy affect its success, and that it is a dynamic process which requires flexibility, it is very much situation-specific. As the Thai case makes clear, the possible *range* and *type* of participation possible in even in one national setting are wide. Different schools and clusters may respond in quite different ways to regulations concerning collaboration, and the nature of such collaboration and the kinds of structures which might encourage it differ across urban, suburban, and rural contexts. This makes standard approaches to, and the sustainability of, collaboration difficult to achieve.

II.   Conditions and factors facilitating collaboration

The studies present a variety of conditions and factors that serve to enhance collaboration in the innovations analysed. These relate to the nature of existing organizational norms; administrative structures and procedures; and knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

1.   Organizational norms

In order to change, institutions must *want* to change. Clearly, many of these innovations have succeeded because individual schools, clusters, and districts wanted to create a better system of education and were willing to work collaboratively to achieve it. Such norms are reflected in several areas:

1. As the case in the Philippines showed, schools and the systems in which innovations flourish need to be *open and ready for change* -- both 'permeable' in their receptivity to, and willingness to accept, new ideas, and flexible in adapting to them. As the Indian case put it, schools must be open to the "gaze, support, and appropriate intervention" of the community (Naik 1991:104). One potential benefit of opening the school to the community is to establish more clearly and directly the link between good education and greater parental and community demand and support for education. In other words, both the more visible ways of making the school 'open to the gaze' of the community (PTAs, parents' days, the observation of classes by parents, as in the Philippines) and the less concrete (e.g., policy and practice that make parents feel welcome in the school) may determine parental interest in, and support for, the school.

Teachers, also, must share these norms. As expressed in the Indonesian case, they need to reach a point where professional development is seen as a regular and continuing feature of their corporate lives. Individual communities must also want to create a better way of education. In many of these cases, they have shown a willingness to participate in, gain some ownership over, and share in the responsibility and accountability for education.

2. Behind some of these innovations is an even *higher level commitment to change* -- as in some powerful sections of the central Ministry in Thailand, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. Even lower down in the system, there must be continuous pressure for reform, as from the district office and the cluster officials in Thailand. This implies comprehension of, and commitment to, the principle of greater participation throughout the system. What is necessary, in other words, especially in strongly centralized and hierarchical systems, is strong commitment to the principle that good school management and good teaching, *by definition*, have to include collaboration and participation. As the Thai case puts it, "the major determinants of effective school performance reflect collaborative, participatory relationships within schools and between schools and their communities" (Wheeler et al 1991:2). Thus, teacher training colleges and principal training courses must train personnel in how to mobilize and work with the community, curriculum development centres must develop guidelines for how to involve communities in the development of local curricula, and national staff colleges must teach the same message -- to be sensitive to community collaboration and participation -- to officials at all echelons of the system.

3. An additional norm of great importance in Bangladesh and India has been a willingness, at least among some levels of the government, to *trust and support NGO activities* and even to grant them further autonomy and influence (i.e., to 'empower' them) -- an attitude not common in many countries of the world.

2. Structures and procedures

A number of different mechanisms to encourage collaboration can be identified from these studies. Underlying all of them, however, is the need for clear, systematic, and consistent guidelines. Formal rules and regulations may not always be necessary, especially at the village level, but the reforms and their purposes, and the new structures and procedures meant to support them, must be explicitly and generally understood by all participants in the process. Mechanisms supportive of collaboration include the following:

(i) Decentralization and local autonomy to adapt

These projects in general worked because they were developed in a context of relatively decentralized structures and procedures which allowed them a freedom of action not otherwise or previously found in their systems. The clusters in Indonesia are allowed, even encouraged, to develop and alter components of the innovation to make them more suitable to local needs. While operating within certain guidelines issued by the animating agency, the schools established in the BRAC and PROPEL communities can be quite different in organization, staffing, and schedule, even to the extent of the community being able to hire its own teachers and headmasters. And the small, isolated schools in Kalimantan (Indonesia) are clearly given a degree of autonomy concerning tutors and timetables not enjoyed by other schools in the country. The systems are therefore able to respond flexibly to the needs and context of individual communities, clusters, and schools and move towards both a clear division of labour and responsibility among various levels of the system and clear patterns of expected behaviour and tasks among the various actors in education. Even more might be done in this regard. Naik indicates that to accelerate a collaborative enterprise, it "would have to be released from antiquated financial rules and centralized

administrative authority" (1991:129), thus releasing as well 'grass-roots level officials from their bondage' to the central system (Naik 1991:126).

(ii)   Committees and councils

Essential to collaboration in general is some kind of "public forum which serves as a clearing house for all collaborators to either air their views or contribute to the debate regarding their collaborative activities" (Namuddu 1991:45). More specifically, essential to the success of the 'private' systems (BRAC and PROPEL) and to the more collaborative of the 'public' cases (the better clusters in Thailand, the more productive schools in Indonesia and the Philippines, the experimental committee working on local content in West Java) has been the presence of some kind of parent, parent-teacher, or community/village committee focused on the school. These committees have a variety of roles to play; more than merely being money-raising agencies, they also encourage the substantive involvement of parents and the community in the school. At the extreme, they represent the kind of 'total community-oriented approach' discussed by Naik which discards "the selective, individual-target approach which has characterized most of the development programmes and which is totally antithetical to the community-ethos in the rural culture....The community approach fitted into the traditional ethos and revived the spirit of partnership inherent in the interdependent rural community structures" (1991:126-127).

But these partnerships cannot work in a vacuum, and here specific guidelines concerning their functions and responsibilities are critical -- for example, as suggested for Indonesia, guidelines to ensure better candidates as officers of parent associations and guidelines for clear accountability of headmasters to the associations in regard to the utilization of financial contributions.

This leads to a difficult question: the extent to which communities, almost as pressure groups, should be able to apply sanctions, formal or informal, on 'defaulting' schools an teachers -- for low attendance, abuse of pupils, financial mis-expenditures, poor examination results, etc. This probably can be encouraged, but with considerable caution, taking into account the particular context and the need for a clear definition of responsibilities which could be the basis for such accountability and for clear procedures concerning how it would be exercised. Just as important, perhaps, is to find a way for governments to apply the sanctions already available (but often unused) in order to guarantee the quality of teaching and management for which large percentages of educational budgets are expended.

(iii)   A focus on process

The innovations are concerned, at least in their formative stages, with the development of various kinds of participatory processes rather than the achievement of specific targets or prescriptions of success. In Uganda, for example, the idea was not (at first) to develop a given number of visible (and countable) texts but rather to develop processes of student writing leading to greater literacy. In Thailand, the clusters are said to be successful to the extent that they focus on local capacity-building of teachers and headmasters rather than on school accountability (measured via academic tests) to the Ministry.

(iv)   Assessment, reward, and promotion procedures

In a few cases, procedures have been established to assess and reward personnel in the programmes based not on the achievement of targets such a student pass rates or the completion of a certain number of years of service, but rather on the extent to which they have been able to work with others in the system and/or mobilize communities. This is at least one criterion for assessment in the 'capacity-building' approach of the Thai clusters, and was the basis as well for the selection of participants in both domestic and foreign training programmes held in conjunction with the Indonesian professional support programme. Naik urges strongly that this be done as well in India. "The whole system of performance-assessment of officers and teachers at the field level needs drastic changes. At present, performance norms are based on achievement of numerical targets and not on action to mobilize people for self-development" (1991:38)

(v)   Publicity

Clearly also, attention and publicity, planned or not, have been important to an innovation's success.   The attention brought to the Thai cluster project through USAID-supported research activities; the support carefully cultivated from local and state officials and opinion leaders in India for PROPEL; the quite visible foreign agency support for MINDSACROSS; the association with the world-famous BRAC system in Bangladesh -- all of these played an important role in programme success.

3.   Knowledge, skills, and attitudes

Innovators must have a particular competence in over to innovate -- knowledge of what to do, skills to do it, and a willingness to experiment, fail, and try again. In the best of these cases, such competence has been available. The well-trained, experienced, and politically astute animators of BRAC and PROPEL know how to work with community groups and parents and how to gain the support of political and administrative figures; in the same programmes, people in certain critical government positions are willing to trust and work with otherwise suspect NGOs. In the best of the Thai and Indonesian clusters, headmasters, district officers, and cluster staff have learned how to work in flexible, collegial, and supportive ways -- to adopt a 'mindset' more democratic and less bureaucratic in nature. They have learned to accept new ideas, use knowledge of good practice that already existed (instead of trying to impose knowledge from above), and seek the help of teachers and the community in the assessment of needs and the design of alternative solutions.

III.   The results of enhanced collaboration

Though in some cases definitive results of greater collaborative activities in these programmes are not yet clear or quantitatively assessed, it is possible to describe several ways in which the more active participation by a wider range of actors has led to changes both in the education system and among the partners themselves.

1. Within *the educational administration*, the experience of Ministry officials with the various innovations appears to have led slowly to a greater willingness to permit even

greater experimentation and autonomy. A benign circle has begun to operate in some settings so that greater Ministry flexibility has led to greater autonomy, which leads to further experimentation and greater evidence of success, which lead in turn to greater autonomy. This has been the case in the Thai and Indonesian cluster programmes where the evolution, with some to-ing and fro-ing in the process, has been one of increasing authority being given to (if not always taken by) district offices, school clusters, and cluster offices in the development of structures and mechanisms supportive of their work. In the projects in India and Bangladesh, the burden of proof has been placed on the sponsoring NGO, but in both cases the relative success of the activity has convinced many government officials, often against considerable opposition and suspicion of the need to co-operate with, rather than fight against, such initiatives. In the Indian case, this has been easier to do with local officials who find community involvement helpful in the achievement of their targets and who see participatory planning and development as a relatively 'stress-free' way of shifting the 'onus of decision-making' to all partners (Naik 1991:114). Such co-operation has been less successful with local *education* officials who see their work considerably complicated by such processes.

2. Within *the education system*, there has also been an impact. This can be seen partly in terms of magnitude. The visible success of cluster activities has led to the slow but steady spread of the innovation in both Indonesia and Thailand. In Indonesia, in fact, the original programme developers have had difficulty containing the rapid 'bush-fire' replication of the project, often with few controls and little training. Other impact has also been felt. The revised primary school curriculum in Indonesia is based largely on active learning techniques, and textbooks, many of which have been developed by private publishers, also are (or claim to be) based on such principles. And in the best of cases, more apparent in the Thai study than in the Indonesian, the presence of cluster offices and supportive district offices have made available to schools "a wide range of capacity-building initiatives" and a greater repertoire of innovative school activities from which a motivated principal can "create his own richer blend of policies...to promote internal improvement" (Wheeler et al 1991:51, 57).

While the programmes developed by the NGOs in Bangladesh and India have not yet achieved national dissemination (although the parent BRAC non-formal primary education centres will soon number over 13,000), they have had some impact on the formal system. Partly as a result of the PROPEL project, the government of India has agreed to support fully some innovative NGO projects in primary education. The PROPEL project itself, much like the BRAC/FAPE programme, is also now beginning a process of working with local education offices and schools to develop ways to 'non-formalize' the formal system. This may lead to an integrated system of rural primary education among the non-formal education centres, the non-formalized primary schools, and the host of other non-formal education programmes in the village.

The MINDSACROSS project in Uganda, on a much smaller scale, has also proven to the system the potential and the availability of *indigenous* reading materials and so to some extent has de-mystified the process of book production -- so much so that the government is exploring ways to produce even more such materials, across a wider sample of pupils. But this has apparently been at the expense of the *process* orientation which underlay the original project.

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3. At the *school* level, many results are evident. Quite concretely, the projects have led to several achievements: (1) new textbooks and teaching materials developed at the local level, by pupils in Uganda, by a committee of parents, community leaders, and teachers in West Java, by teachers working in cluster arrangements in Thailand and Indonesia; (2) community assistance in teaching, both as tutors in the visiting teacher model of Central Kalimantan in Indonesia and as resource person to enrich the local curriculum developed in West Java; and (3) in Bangladesh an increased number of visits to schools by the assistant education officers and BRAC staff and more frequent cluster training activities.

Less concretely, the Thai and Indonesian studies talk about a greater realization among school and local office personnel concerning the need for, and the potential benefits of, collaboration. Wheeler *et al* talk of an "ethos of constant improvement" (1991:33) which has been developed through greater teacher-teacher collaboration. Receptive headmasters, particularly within well-run clusters, have been able to develop a greater academic focus and more efficient and collaborative management systems and encourage greater teacher involvement in materials development, test construction, and community interaction. Djam'an Satori in Indonesia talks of more professional satisfaction of teachers and headmasters, in part through their greater identity within a group (1991). And in Uganda, albeit for a very limited number of teachers, Namuddu speaks of enhanced skills in curriculum development and an increased respect for a variety of feasible writing genres (1991).

4. Although the studies, due to a lack of access to data or the early stage of project development, can not say a great deal about *pupil achievement*, some specific information is available. The BRAC/FAPE project has preliminary data about an increase in pupil attendance rates pre- and post-FAPE (from 65 per cent in 1989 to 73 per cent in 1990), an increase in the percentage of children enrolled in school who sit for final examinations, and the number of drop-outs retrieved into the system as the result of closer links between the school and the community; these results are assumed to be at least partly due to greater attention paid to potential and actual drop-outs, more interesting co-curricular activities, and a generally healthier educational environment (Latif 1991:65-69). Individual cases reported in Thailand speak also of increased pupil scores related to the freedom principals have to collaborate with community associations in the purchase of additional teaching materials.

More generally, the studies speak of greater pupil creativity and pride in their work and more enjoyment in their learning. The results of the PROPEL project appear particularly interesting in this regard. Graduates of the non-formal education centres are said to be able to succeed in formal system examinations and to read to parents and siblings, write letters, and keep accounts -- all skills which, according to the project's rules, must be demonstrated in their homes every day. Pupils also are encouraged to speak in village meetings, and do so with a certain 'social etiquette'; for girls especially, who are often shown to be learning more rapidly than their brothers in formal schools, this has led to greater respect in their communities and greater demand for further education (Naik 1991: 112-115).

5. Finally, the impact of these projects on *communities* is by no means negligible. Here there is demonstrably greater involvement by more actors in education, more community learning occurring, greater awareness of the potential of education, and greater

involvement of women in education (pre-school and adult) and in the local political power structure. In Bangladesh, there is evidence of more PTA and school management committee meetings, and greater parental participation in them (Latif 1991:66-67). In Indonesia and even moreso in Thailand, there is greater visibility of the school in the community and a concomitant greater awareness in parents and local community members of the need to support the school; the building of such awareness is an explicit part of the Thai clusters, where good relations among the school, community, and temple are essential for school improvement. And in India, the training of various partners, has made members of village education committees and panchayats more fully informed about the nature of education, its problems, the rationale of decentralization, and the importance of micro-planning; thus, "the community has in general acquired the information and skills essential for carrying out its educational responsibilities" (Naik 1991:113).

IV. Implications for training and for institutional change

The studies analyse with considerable success the individual characteristics and institutional procedures and structures which need to be altered in order to bring about the conditions facilitative of greater collaboration for educational reform.   But what should be clear from the studies is that the kind of changes required within systems to make them genuinely and enduringly supportive of greater participation by the various partners in development cannot be brought about merely by the occasional and short-term training or upgrading of administrative staff.   Such training -- leading to new knowledge, skills, and attitudes -- is an essential but not sufficient condition for organizational change. It must be accompanied by intensive, longer-term, more experiential exposure to new ways of analysing problems, designing possible solutions, and acting on them.

But as more profound changes are considered, planned, and implemented, specific and focused training of government officials at three levels -- the school and cluster, the district and sub-district office, and the central and provincial ministry offices -- can begin. The following sections describes the structures and procedures; the skills, knowledge, and attitudes; and the training methods potentially useful in encouraging greater collaboration and participation in educational reform.

1.   School and cluster levels

(i)   Structures

Three types or levels of structures can be identified: (a) within and across schools, (b) between the school and parents, and (c) more generally between the school(s) and the community and local government.

(a)   Structures *within and across schools* include school clusters and cluster offices in Thailand, with full-time staff to assist in cluster activities, and the various school discussion groups, teacher clubs, headmaster clubs, and teacher centres in Indonesia.   Other structures potentially useful in encouraging collaboration include regular staff meetings in schools, subject-specific panels or committees, and local branches of teacher unions or associations.

(b)   Structures *between the school and parents* include parent associations and parent-teacher associations. These may be formed around individual classes, grades, and/or the entire school and may, depending on their mandate, have the power of a school management committee or a school board. Parent groups may also form more specifically into alumni organizations or even private foundations in support of the school.

(c)   It is also possible to go *'beyond the PTA'* in the sense of seeing education as an integrated, location-specific whole, involving all sectors of the community in some shared responsibility and accountability for education. Resulting structures include the Village Education Committee of BRAC and PROPEL and more inclusive bodies of individuals and organizations, such as the Community Forum for Educational Development in the COPLANER project in Indonesia which is meant to include representatives of various kinds and levels of school, local government, NGOs, religious groups, community associations, and government offices.

Moving beyond the PTA and its focus on parental participation brings one to a considerably more complex world of potential collaboration. Here appear links with schools and education activities at other levels (secondary schools, literacy programmes); with NGOs and religious bodies (the temple, church, or mosque); with local councils or development committees and autonomous or council-appointed local education committees; and with officers and agencies of other sectors such as health and agriculture.

Here one also enters into the world of 'community schools' where the school becomes a genuine *community* facility, a centre where the community can learn and get something of quite direct benefit from the school. This could simply be education and training programmes for out-of-school youth and adults, but it could go further. Some primary schools in Thailand, for example, offer information and counselling services, lunch programmes, a co-operative store, and insurance. Whatever the nature of services offered, such community schools are usually linked in some way with local education committees or councils and need to work with them to agree on shared goals, responsibilities, resources, and complementarities of purpose. Thus, for example, the school staff might advise and assist the council with education and training activities in exchange for council and community assistance in maintaining the school, monitoring pupil attendance, supervising home study, and focusing special effort on children with learning difficulties.

(ii)   Procedures

Mechanisms and procedures required to implement these various structures effectively, ranging from the general to the quite specific, include the following:

- clear, but flexible guidelines and frameworks for collaboration and participation;
- open dialogue, frank feedback, and clear channels of communication among the participants (e.g., via short announcements of school activities);
- regular meetings of the various school/community groups and clarity in reporting on their decisions;

- for each of the participants, clearly defined (and written) rights; tasks, functions, and responsibilities; and limitations, resources, and accountability procedures;

- the establishment of assessment and promotion procedures and criteria to reward principals and teachers for efforts in community mobilization and collaboration;

- mechanisms for developing collaboration in tasks such as surveying local needs, setting goals and priorities, mobilising and managing resources, selecting and monitoring teachers, setting timetables and calendars, developing curricula, assisting in teaching and tutoring, help to guarantee pupil enrolment and continuation, and monitoring school performance and the achievement of goals;

- innovations in providing teachers from within marginal communities where non-local teachers are difficult to send and retain (such as admitting underqualified applicants from these communities into teaching and providing them remedial training as required).

(iii)   Knowledge, attitudes, and skills

New knowledge, attitudes, and skills are required of school personnel (especially of principals) in order to ensure the effective operation of these structures and procedures and thus to facilitate greater collaboration within and across schools and with communities. Most generally, these include:

- knowledge of the rationale for greater participation, its potential advantages and its constraints and risks;

- knowledge of local conditions -- economic, social, cultural -- which influence educational demand and achievement, of local social and political relationships, and of the local education system and its problems;

- research and planning skills: the ability to facilitate and carry out simple surveys and interviews, to analyse the data collected, and to implement the micro-planning of school and cluster needs;

- attitudes which encourage an open, transparent, collegial environment in the school and open channels of communication between the school and the community;

- school management skills -- the ability to:
  (i) encourage shared, more participatory decision-making, in regard to issues such as setting school goals, defining problems, designing solutions, managing resources, evaluating success, etc.;
  (ii) define clearly the responsibilities and functions of each participants;
  (iii) plan, organize, conduct, and report on meetings;
  (iv) manage and account for government and community resources provided to the school; and

(v) encourage teachers and the community to assist in developing and adapting curriculum relevant to the local environment.

- supervisory and leadership skills: the ability to develop more collaborative skills in other school personnel and within the community;

- human relations skills: the ability to gain the trust of parents and other partners in the community; to communicate, collaborate, and build consensus with them; and to animate them and encourage their involvement in the school; and

- resource mobilization skills, and strategic and political skills: the ability to mobilize the resources (financial and otherwise) available from the various interest groups and power centres in the community.

(iv) Training

It is clear that these kinds of attitudes and skills can not be taught in the traditional style of teacher upgrading and principal training. The training itself will need to be more participatory, with the trainees (perhaps including community or school committee members) playing a more active role in identifying needs, discussing and solving problems, and evaluating results. Several specific suggestions can be made in this regard:

- simulation games designed to develop collaborative skills in tasks such as setting goals and designing alternative means of reaching these goals;
- role plays of meetings (e.g., PTA meetings) designed to gain a consensus, resolve conflicts, divide responsibility for solving a particular problem, and encourage collaboration;
- case studies of collaborative experiences in order to examine what was achieved or not achieved and why;
- practical exercises, including preparing meeting agendas, proposals for school-community action, and minutes; keeping records and accounts of school-community activities; and encouraging group dynamics (e.g., stimulating active participation in group activities through task assignments, discussions, and reporting the results of group work);
- training in interviewing techniques, questionnaire design, and the analysis and interpretation of resulting data;
- actual experience in collaborative projects, and perhaps in the observation of successful collaborative activities; and
- guidebooks, handbooks, manuals, etc., providing guidelines on specific topics (e.g., how to carry out village surveys, how to conduct meetings).

Such training could obviously benefit from a range of materials (videos, games, case studies) and activities (simulations, role-playing, brainstorming, parent-teacher dialogues) considerably different from that found in most upgrading courses, and therefore requiring special expertise and careful preparation and testing.

2.   At the sub-district and district levels

(i)   Structures and procedures

Because this level of management is very often responsible for the administration of school clusters, it must develop procedures useful in clarifying cluster responsibilities, pushing them to be more active, and facilitating collaboration within clusters and between the clusters and the community. Given the range of schools it often has responsibility for, it must also serve a useful function to help exchange information about collaborative activities across schools. Given this level's links to a wider community beyond that of a particular school, it must be able as well to identify a wider range of partners for schools and identify and lobby for a wider range of resources. Its involvement is especially critical in the development of village (or sub-district, or district) education committees, councils, or fora.

This level is also very often a crucial mediator and channel of communication between the top and the bottom of the system. To the extent it performs this role well, passing information both up and down the system, it can assist in helping to clarify regulations about, and provide information about actual experiences with, community involvement in schools.

Finally, this level also frequently has the authority to select, place, and promote teachers and principals, and perhaps to provide other special incentives as well; it can encourage greater collaboration in education by using it as a criterion for such personnel decisions.

(ii)   Knowledge, attitudes, and skills/training

Many of these would be the same as those required at the school level: skills in open communication, leadership, motivation, group dynamics, problem-solving, etc. What is probably new here is the need to be able to work with a wider range of agencies and actors, at somewhat higher levels of the bureaucracy. The training programmes required would also be similar: modules and guidelines, case studies and role plays, with perhaps more substantive content in reading materials, more self-study, and more use of structured discussions and field trips.

3.   At the provincial and national levels

At the provincial and national levels of the system, the needs and proposed activities are quite different from those at other levels. The planners, managers, administrators, and policy-makers at these more central levels can be encouraged to implement two kinds of activities related to the facilitation of greater collaboration for educational change: (1) the development of structures and procedures to encourage such collaboration at their own level, and (2) the development of policies and regulations to encourage it at the school level.

1. *At the national and provincial levels*, as at lower levels, structure and procedures can be developed which facilitate collaboration among the various actors in educational development. These include national education councils, advisory boards or commissions, education-for-all committees, etc., which bring together various parts of the education

establishment, representatives of other development sectors, and members of non-government organizations. Systematic contact with the last may require some kind of co-ordinating unit for NGO activities in the Ministry of Education in order to encourage NGO participation and seek ways of identifying appropriate representation from the NGO community. More specific multi-sectorial consultative groups or task forces might be formed on particular educational issues, and policy seminars might be organized to examine the nature of participation in education. Such fora as these might also lead to the more informal discussion of problems and policies in education -- such as conflicts between ministries responsible for various aspects of basic education and the greater involvement of non-government organizations and other community-level associations in education.

2. Offices at these levels can also establish policies, laws, regulations, guidelines, and procedures for encouraging greater collaboration *at the school level*, within and across schools and with the community. These can relate to: (1) the responsibilities and functions of parent-teacher associations, school management committees, and/or village education committees; (2) the implementation of school clusters; (3) the training of school and education office staff in collaborative skills; (4) procedures for involving the community in curriculum development activities; and (5) the use of collaborative activities as criteria for the assessment and promotion of school personnel.

The development of these kinds of structures and procedures can be encouraged less through the explicit training of personnel at the provincial and national levels, and more through their sensitization or orientation to the rationale for, potential of, and constraints to greater participation in educational development. Several methods might be useful in this regard: well-chosen case studies concerning the role of collaboration in solving educational problems; the dissemination of information about successful experiences elsewhere in the world; the implementation of policy seminars on these issues; and the development of high-level task forces and pilot projects using more participatory and collaborative approaches.

4.   Institutional change

This summary of the potential structures and processes by which collaboration within and across schools, and between the school and the community, can be encouraged, and the skills and knowledge required to do so leads to a very important further question: how can these structures and procedures, these skills and knowledge, and the longer-term change which would sustain them, be institutionalized within often large, inefficient, and conservative bureaucracies? This is the much larger question of how to change bureaucracies and the culture which supports them. How can they be made more willing to adapt and adopt some new forms of work behaviour -- more professional and less bureaucratic, more open and permeable to new ideas, less rigid and more participatory in their work, and more supportive of bottom-up planning?

Several ideas were raised in this regard: (1) the possible intervention of creative high-level administrators committed to change; (2) the staggered, large-scale training of staff, followed by some reinforcement through specific projects in which new skills and attitudes can be tried out; (3) a support system of sorts to continue to encourage and help those newly trained in performing their tasks differently; and (4) the establishment of a

'think tank' -- an autonomous, innovative commission of sorts under the Minister, charged with exploring creative ways to resolve problems in the bureaucracy.

In summary, the evidence of these studies and synthesis indicate that collaboration and partnerships can lead -- under certain conditions -- to more effective and relevant education, greater equity of such education, greater demand for and acceptability of education, and more resources for education. There are structures and mechanisms of a wide range which can be established to assist in this effort -- an effort made easier by the extent to which there are clear, systematic outlines of the functions, goals, and responsibilities of the various collaborating actors and clear accountability mechanisms up, down, and across the system. There are also new kinds of knowledge and skills about collaboration and in regard to shared decision-making, needs analysis, budgeting and planning, etc., which can be developed, as well as very practical skills such as how to hold meetings. And there are training materials and methods which themselves are more participatory in nature, specific manuals to assist the newly trained in carrying out their work, and methods to sensitize higher levels of a bureaucracy to the potentials and practice of educational partnerships. The task now will be to see how and under what conditions such training can be carried out, and whether it can achieve any of the changes in organizational norms, mechanisms, skills, and behaviour desired.

Appendices

Abstracts of other case studies

Qualitative improvement of primary schools through professional support for teachers -- Indonesia (Active Learning and Professional Support -- ALPS)

by

Djam'an Satori

A project of qualitative improvement through professional support for teachers in primary schools, known as the Active Learning and Professional Support (ALPS) or the 'Cianjur Project', was derived from the Office of Educational and Cultural Research and Development's Seminar on supervision and the quality of education held in April 1979. The project aims to construct support systems to explore means of advancing the quality of instruction through the improvement of professional support to primary school teachers at the local level. The project also aims to strengthen the supervisory role of primary supervisors and principals to improve their competency to help teachers professionally.

The project has developed a working model of support by enhancing professional collaboration among educational personnel to continuously improve the quality of instruction in primary schools. Activities include in-service training as a regular feature of teachers' corporate life. These are organized at the building level, and include school-based discussion and local/sub-district organizations such as teachers', principals' and supervisors' clubs, and teachers' centres. These allow local initiatives and active involvement of educational personnel in planning, implementing and evaluating in-service programmes. These practices have shown that, within the learning community of local educational personnel, needs can be identified more easily and in-service experiences can be devised and related more closely to these needs.

A case study of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's Facilitation Assistance Programme on Education (FAPE)

by

Abu Hamid Latif

The education system in Bangladesh, including the primary education sub-sector, suffers from a poor school management system. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) developed the Facilitation Assistance Programme on Education (FAPE) to improve the managerial and professional competency of teachers and government field-level officials as well as ensuring effective participation of the community in the school.

FAPE was introduced in three Upazilas (sub-districts) from July 1989. It will eventually cover all the 324 government primary schools and by the end of the project period (December 1991), BRAC and the collaborating partners -- the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) and UNICEF -- will be able to assess the programme's achievement. The indications from FAPE field staff suggest that the measures and interventions are yielding positive results.

BRAC's long-term collaboration with the government and funding agencies helped facilitate collaboration in the case of FAPE at the macro-level. The Tripartite Agreement to be signed soon by BRAC, the Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF provides separate and joint responsibilities of the partners in the implementation process of the programme.

Although the conditions for collaboration are country specific, there are some factors that can be generalized for encouraging collaborative partnerships; these can be incorporated in the training programme of government officials. In general, a participatory approach should be followed so that trainees can examine the issues involved and identify the processes for resolving those issues which further collaborative partnerships.

The first phase of FAPE, from July 1988 to June 1989, included a survey of primary schools in three Upazilas and testing of the variables contained in the preliminary project proposal in 22 primary schools in one Upazila. The second phase began in 55 primary schools in each of the three selected Upazilas from July 1989. At this stage, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) showed interest in the programme and made funds available for one year ending in June 1990. UNICEF also became interested in the programme, and BRAC prepared a project proposal for the third covering from July 1990 to December 1991.

The FAPE programme is implemented by programme officers (POs) of BRAC in co-operation with government education officers, public representatives and community leaders under the guidance and supervision of a team leader placed by BRAC in each Upazila. There are 15-20 primary schools under each PO.

FAPE stresses need-oriented training, especially on developing managerial skills and organizing abilities of its own staff, government education officers and principals of primary schools. These training programmes are conducted using participatory approaches at BRAC's Training and Resource Centres. The other feature of the programme is personal contact with parents, community leaders, school managing committees and public representatives of union councils and Upazila councils. The purpose is to regain the interest of the community in the affairs of the schools which has gradually diminished since the schools were nationalized. For the improvement of teaching-learning, short training is provided for teachers.

Community participation in the planning and management of educational resources (COPLANER)

by
Simanungkalit, Colin Moyle, and Doran Bernard

Decentralization of the education system in Indonesia began 15 years ago and has steadily been reinforced. The process was aided by an earlier project of the Planning Bureau which trained district officials in bottom-up planning processes. The current COPLANER project is a Ministry of Education project which began in March 1991 with UNESCO and UNDP assistance. It operates with the objective of working even more closely to the local level -- in sub-districts, villages and schools -- to build a needs-based system through joint decision-making between the school and the community. Ways will be sought to utilize community resources of all kinds in education through community participation in the planning and management of primary, secondary (public, private and religious) and out-of-school education at the sub-district level, in the framework of improving the quality of education. In the short term, school-level planning mechanisms will be developed to improve identification and prioritization of needs, the management of resources, supervision and evaluation; organizational mechanisms will be designed to encourage community participation in a bottom-up style process; and training programmes and orientation meetings will be organized to ensure that administrative personnel at all levels, and community level participants, have appropriate knowledge and skills in project management, programme evaluation and financial management.

The project will lead to models for the dissemination of decentralization processes as outlined in Repelita VI (Five-year Plan, 1995-1990). An inter-ministerial task force will be set up, and a set of guidelines will be established within which all aspects of COPLANER will be developed. Provincial implementation units will come into operation, evaluation plans and systems will be organized, and a reporting and control system will be set in place.

From the national to the district levels, the vertical structure of COPLANER will operate through:

a steering committee: to give advice, guidance and support to the COPLANER team;

a task force: to oversee all aspects of COPLANER (implementation guidelines, ideas, technical assistance, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation) and suggest corrective measures;

a project implementation unit: to administer the allocation of funds for programmes and activities of the Community Forum for Education Development (CFED), and to monitor, evaluate, supervise and report on these activities;

working groups: to prepare, arrange and provide inputs to provincial Project Implementation Units;

advisory groups: to review the planning of activities proposed at the CFED level, and to provide technical support, monitoring services and inputs to provincial working groups;

Community Forums for Educational Development (CFED): to plan and implement innovative activities within the framework of developing community participation in the planning and management of educational resources; to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities, and to report on these.

The most important tool in this process is the CFED which will bring together village leaders, principals, teachers, supervisors, parents and other community participants. The forum will be directly linked to the local cluster of public, private and religious schools in primary, secondary and out-of-school education. It will take some time before it is fully operational, and in the meantime, an 'interim' and sub-forums will be established to determine the membership and processes, and specific needs for transition to the CFED respectively.

At present, the project operates through a series of working and advisory groups at the provincial and district levels and the forum at the sub-district level. Twenty-four sub-districts will be identified for the project in four provinces. When the CFED is in place, the sub-district will act as the administrative unit for the school community and all the schools in the community will be considered as one vertically organized group or cluster. The community fora to be formed will co-ordinate and forward annual plans for the resource needs of all schools and out-of-school education units within the sub-district. Mechanisms to develop budgets at the school level have yet to be formulated, but the concept of 'sub-forums' will be explored.

In order for this process to succeed, it is important that attitudes begin to change visibly. This can be encouraged through participatory training and real devolution to the provincial level, with guidelines and some major components determined at the central level, but with much room for exploration by the fora in how to bring the school and community together. Evaluation will help in identifying possible conflicts and potentially useful practices.

If decentralization is actually to be implemented, it is essential that the central level refrain from taking decisions which may be made at lower levels. This will entail greater planning and co-ordination of activities. The planning cycles of the Ministries of Education and Home Affairs and COPLANER will need to be co-ordinated. When the CFED develops its draft annual budget for all education activities, 15 months previous to the formalization of annual plans, COPLANER will begin to operate.

However, the decentralization process is complicated. Planning at many levels implies extensive training, especially in technical skills such as evaluation and auditing. This may be built up through simple plans (and training) at the lower levels of the system.

Through the project, sources of funding will be encouraged other than those granted by the central level or received directly from parents. More established planning systems should lead also to greater utilization of available resources.

A case study of the participation of government, NGOs and the community in the improvement of basic education through MINDSACROSS, a school literacy project in Uganda

by

Katherine Namuddu

MINDSACROSS was a literacy project in which pupils, aged between five and 14 years in four primary schools in Uganda, in both urban and rural environments, practiced and consolidated their developing literacy skills through writing for themselves and their peers. The main tasks in writing -- planning, writing and displaying the written products -- were not of themselves innovative, since these are tasks that pupils are expected to undertake as part their normal teaching-learning activities. The innovative components were:

1. the audience for the written texts were the authors themselves, their peers and the community rather than the classroom teacher. In addition, the purpose for writing was more for improvement and self-satisfaction as authors rather than for the award of grades;

2. authors added value to normal classroom writing by writing more and better, and by compiling the written texts into unpublished and published books for children by children;

3. a mixture of collaborators in the form of institutions, agencies and personnel either supported or participated in various activities; and,

4. a mix of pedagogical and social-cognitive elements made MINDSACROSS a simple but comprehensive curriculum enrichment tool easily implemented by participants and likely to result in visible educational quality improvement.

The process of implementing the project in primary schools, consisted of popularizing among school heads and teachers four main ideas concerning the value of pupils' writing for themselves and their peers:

1. writing consists of technical, reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and an important way of understanding concepts in subjects such as language, science and health, and social studies, is to engage pupils in writing about how these classroom concepts manifest themselves in daily experience;

2. primary school pupils can write and produce interesting and educative materials for themselves, their peers and adults, and in the process, practice, consolidate and improve their developing literacy and communication skills;

3. books for general and supplementary reading in a variety of formats can be written and 'published' by pupils, and be made available to as wide an audience as possible

for the purposes of debate and improvement through the use of simple techniques of display and compilation; and

4.   all schools, with a large number of new literates, are an important national reservoir of authors of simple, locally relevant supplementary reading resources.

Teachers who volunteered to participate in the project were inducted into its ideas and tasks through discussion, and meetings between teachers and implementors. Schools were encouraged to evolve locally suitable strategies for organizing participation which was undertaken during and/or outside official school hours. The nature of the implementation process and the products of participation in terms of personnel and the written products, differed between schools because of various elements related to the following school environmental factors:

1.   the degree to which teachers regarded the new ideas as fitting into their existing patterns of work and within the requirements of skills needed by pupils in an examination-driven system of education;

2.   the intensity of devotion to a teaching-learning strategy which recognized pupils' independent work in general, and creative writing in particular, as a way of learning and consolidating learned concepts in the curriculum;

3.   the extent to which particular teachers became aware of the inadequacy of their current instructional methodologies in equipping pupils with a wide range of literacy skills, and therefore were willing to explore new ways of improving their overall teaching methodology;

4.   the presence and continuity of adequate school management and an organizational structure able to receive, implement and perpetuate the new ideas over a two-year period and beyond;

5.   the extent to which the production of supplementary reading materials was perceived as fulfilling a critical need for reading resources within particular classes and schools; and

6.   the extent to which the production of books from pupils' written texts was perceived as catering to a special group of pupils previously considered under-served by existing services.

The collaborative processes through which schools, pupils, teachers, the community, curriculum developers, Ministry of Education (MOE) personnel, Ministry of Finance (MOF) planners, local private individuals and companies, and international agencies were involved in supporting the project evolved either through direct appeals from the project implementors to potential collaborators or by dissemination of project ideas and products resulting in advocacy by various agencies. Factors enhancing collaboration were varied and depended on the manner in which MINDSACROSS was perceived by the partners as: (a) a curriculum enrichment strategy; (b) a research development strategy on acquisition of literacy in schools; (c) a useful method of preserving indigenous knowledge; (d) a method of

stimulating and enhancing national pride in the production of children's materials by children; (e) a less costly mechanism for producing children's supplementary reading materials; or (f) a method of advertizing individuals' and private companies' concern for the work of schools in general, and literacy development in particular.

The project's innovative strategies were successful to the extent that:

1. at classroom and school level, teachers involved their pupils in writing outside conventional classroom mandates, topics and times, and pupils produced a wide array of texts in different genres and sometimes for differing audiences; participating teachers were more critical of their instructional techniques and were much more likely to doubt the efficacy of these techniques in equipping every pupil with a full complement of basic literacy skills;

2. pupils became much more aware of the kinds of skills they acquire through gathering information and writing creative texts, and they expressed the desire to continue as 'authors' and as agents disseminating ideas of MINDSACROSS in their schools and other schools;

3. compiling written texts into durable formats resulted in the production of many titles in four main book formats: Chart Books, Scrap-books, MINDSACROSS Booklets and Picture Books; many of the 150 titles of MINDSACROSS Booklets are in the process of final printing for dissemination to schools in and out of the project;

4. MOE personnel came to regard some of the materials produced by pupils as part of the evolving curriculum on health education likely to encourage schools and pupils to consolidate classroom concepts;

5. MOF planners came to regard the written products of MINDSACROSS as testimony to the national potential and indigenous talent that lies untapped, and were prepared to seek finances to create a recognized locus, for processing written materials from a wider sample of pupils than what MINDSACROSS had attempted and achieved;

6. at inception, financial support had come solely from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Ottawa. By the end of two years, three other agencies (the British Council, the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) and the Rockefeller Foundation) had become interested in the projects' materials' production aspect, and the last two agencies had made substantial financial contribution to this aspect of the project as well as to dissemination and teacher professional development; and,

7. at the beginning of the project, only two local institutions, the Institute for Teacher Education, Kyambogo (ITEK), and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), had shown interest in the ideas. By the end of two years, seven private companies and numerous private individuals had contributed to the production aspects of the project, describing their involvement as an indication of their interest in national development through disseminating materials illustrating the potential and creativity of Ugandan children and youth.

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