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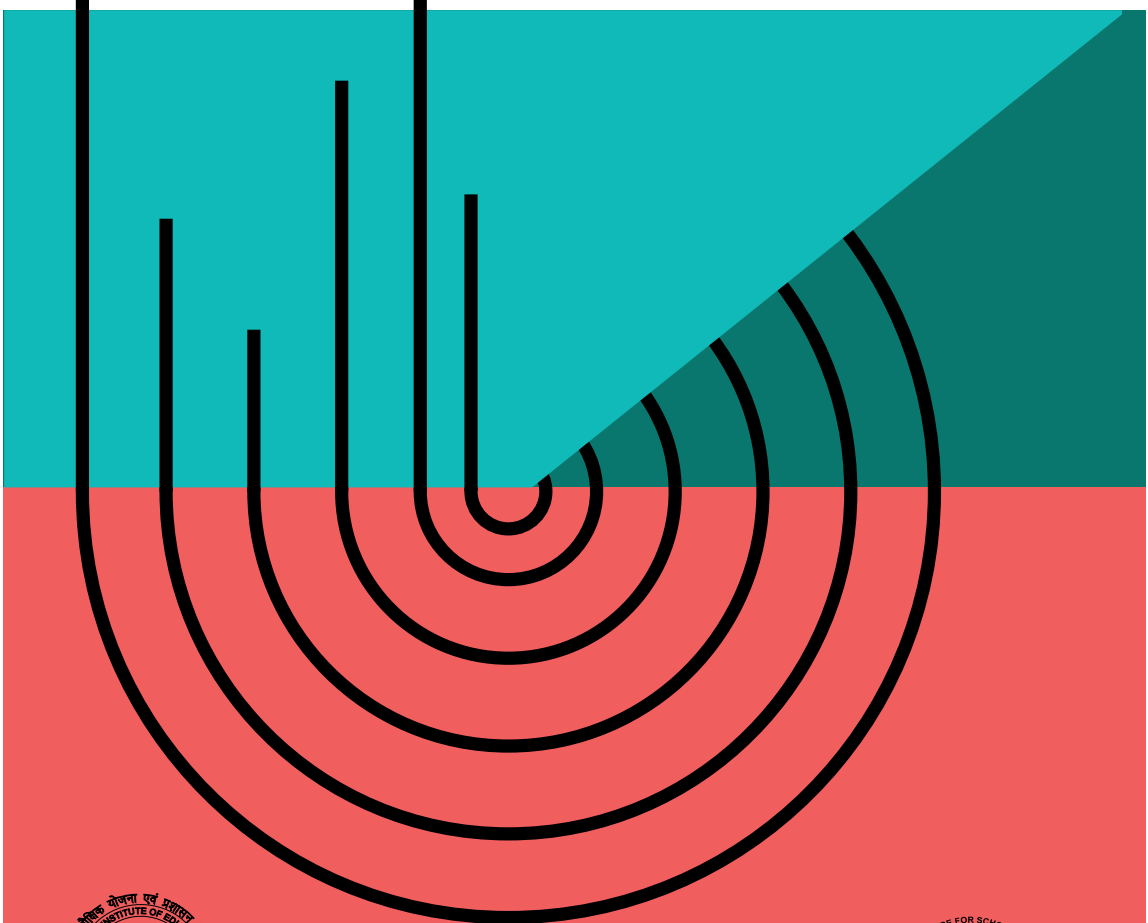
PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Mona Sedwal



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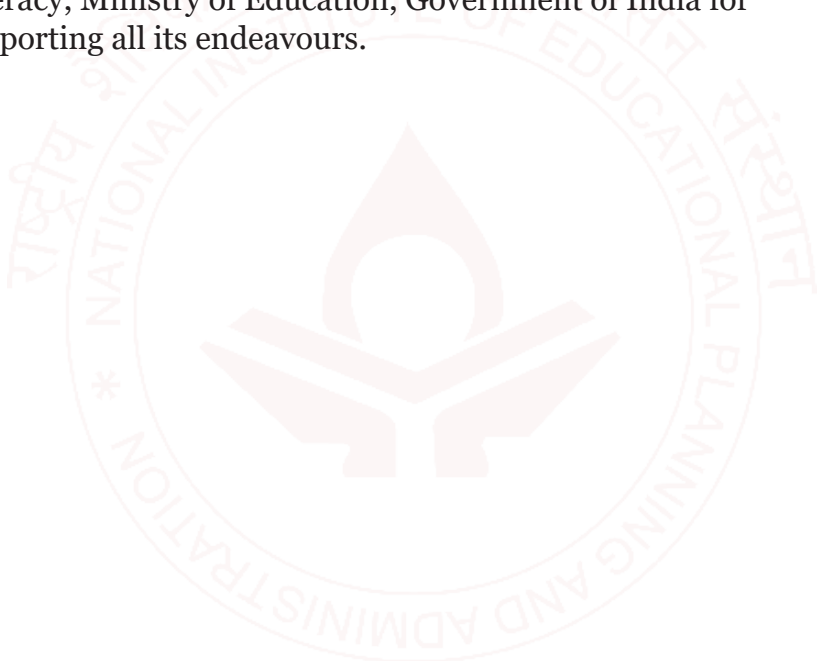

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KEY AREA
LEADING PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in changing the shape of any nation, but the onus lies on various stakeholders. The partnership of various stakeholders leads to the greater heights reflecting the perfect teamwork. The partnerships are to be maintained through context specific mechanisms as there is no one straightjacket formula to be adopted. The course deals with major stakeholders in education, on whose team-work the success and smooth functioning of the school greatly depends. But in India it is often experienced that there is a lot of compartmentalisation in the functioning of various administrative departments. The lack of convergence, coupled with the socio-economic and cultural diversities, is often ignored by the stakeholders as one and the same issue is dealt with in isolation. The alignment of the same goal by different stakeholders is essential for translating the policies into practice. Since many of the stakeholders are outside the school, it is all the more difficult to streamline the efforts made by them.

We are living through times of great changes and challenges throughout the world, and are experiencing rapid economic, social and cultural changes including globalisation, international competitiveness, introduction of new technology and the emergency situations like the COVID pandemic. Indian education policies and programmes at the centre or state level are focussed on social democracy and aim to redress the inequalities of the past through decentralisation. The National

Education Policy 2020, with the new structure of school education, conceptualises schools as organisations to adapt and organise themselves differently, keeping in view the diverse students in a classroom through school complexes. It needs to align with the wider changes in society as well as impart to learners the differential knowledge, attitudes and competencies necessary to operate in this rapidly changing world.

Schools and staff accountabilities are critical in taking stock of what they do, and how well they do it, through various school and staff evaluations. Based on it, priorities for development needs, enable them to transform, improve and, in the process, receive appropriate external support. Schools respond to changes that are imposed from the outside and manage to implement them within, thus bringing changes and managing strategically for the benefit of the schooling system as well as its personnel.

In schools there are various stakeholders, or right from parents and families, to teachers and student support teams, school leaders, partnership councils and student councils. Thus, the participation from grassroots needs to be mobilised by the leaders which, if nurtured, can be effective in bringing changes in school management. For retaining the impact, participatory decision making based on the educational goals as priority needs to be at the centre stage.

This module examines the role of the systemic administrators and school management teams in managing policy, planning, governance and school development. It considers how values, vision and mission can be developed and communicated within the school as an organisation. There is an attempt to understand and manage the requirements of education, policy, planning, school development and governance, and the changes which schools need to implement and manage. Just as a school caters to the diverse groups of students, there are diverse stakeholders as mentioned earlier. The module is divided into three sections as follows:

a) Role of Systemic Administrators

b) Role of Parents and Community

c) Role of Private Sector and NGOs

As all the stakeholders plays a pivotal role in school management to make it successful in its all aspects like pedagogy, infrastructure and human resources, the role of leadership is critical in making it happen. It may be noted that there are overlaps among different sections of stakeholders as all are interdependent upon each other in the school management.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the module, school leaders will be able to

- Explore the significance of working with other stakeholders in the system for school education to attain the goal of quality education
- Get insights around the role of various stakeholders including parents and community, NGOs in improving the educational practices in school and how to strengthen them

Sections	Topic
Section 1	Role of Systemic Administrators
Section 2	Role of Parents and Community
Section 3	Role of Private Sector and NGOs
Section 4	Drawing Lession from Stakeholder Participation

SECTION 1
ROLE OF SYSTEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

Learning Objective:

- To understand the divergent contextual realities for effective school management.
- To explore how to translate education policies into realities with specific skills for dealing with the stakeholders.

Key Words: Collaboration; Partnership; School Development plan; Educational administrators; Principals; Stakeholders

Introduction

The term systemic administrator refers to the educational administrator working for the state as well as the principal of the school; they are critical in defining the process of making the school function. This process involves their interaction and collaboration with different stakeholders for which leaders require specific skills through the capacity development on regular basis. These skills like team building, communication, planning and funding supports the school leaders in the decision-making process. The most important stakeholders for the systemic administration are the teachers and their views on the various issues for school development are integral. In many instances it has been found that the teachers are not approached in decision-making processes for school improvement. Hence the administrative leader needs to adopt a participatory mode by involving teachers, staff and students for scheduling the duties and assignments for various activities.

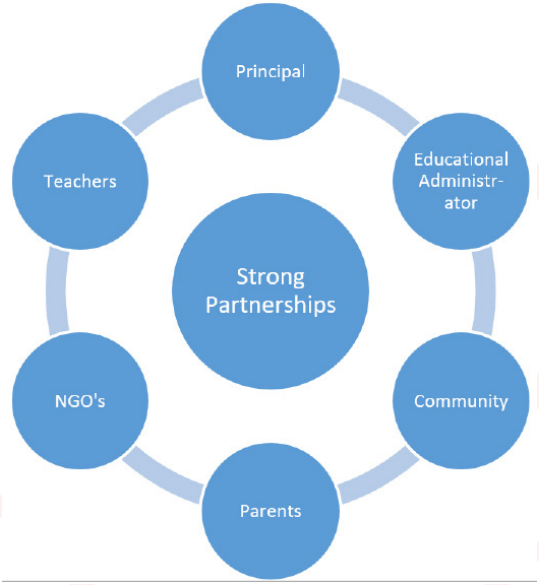

Figure 1: Stakeholders in School

As illustrated in Figure 1, there is a strong need to understand that the stakeholders play a pivotal role in school improvement. The systemic administrators, namely the educational administrators, principals and teachers, facilitate the process as the key stakeholders for all the work at different levels like the district, block and school. They are backed by other stakeholders who facilitate achieving the target goals by contributing through monitoring and evaluation based on the learning outcomes of the students. All the stakeholders may work in collaboration with a sense of belongingness and relational trust. The collaborations need to be accountable intrinsically without bureaucratic pressure, beyond any communication and compulsion. It may be useful to keep the focus on the goals to be achieved concerning the school.

Every school has a mission and vision statement which is the foundation of the school. Based on it, the leaders may plan a path with the stakeholders for school development on a regular basis. Leaders may also encourage others to be leaders by assigning such activities for which an individual has expertise. For instance, the capacity development programmes are held for teachers or non-teaching staff, but they may be shared with others for information or may be devised for the remaining staff as the key messages learned from it. Leaders need to focus on newly appointed teachers to work together for solving any academic problem through participatory approach.

Administrators may familiarise themselves with the diverse socio-economic settings and, based on it, the process of reaching the vision and mission of the schools can be actualised. This helps the leader in devising the mechanisms for catering to the specific needs and roles of different stakeholders. The assessment of the issues that are to be dealt related to enrolment, dropout, low attendance, children with special needs, to name a few, may be explored while keeping in view how they are to be addressed. The issues need context specific solutions. For example, enrolment needs to be clubbed with community awareness,

coupled with the state specific policies and its execution by the schools. It is a cyclic process involving all stakeholders in reaching the goal of quality education. Similarly, they can be playing an appropriate role in ensuring for various activities related to professional and academic development of human resources at various levels. The collaboration of different stakeholders may form an integral part of planning, distribution of materials, books, classroom space and equipment on time.

It has been observed that lack of resources, especially in small and remotely located schools, is a stupendous challenge which can be tackled by recognising the contributions made by the community or teachers. It also helps in maintaining the motivation, as in many schools and communities we may find that, given the lack of resources – physical and human or financial – the maximum utilisation of available resources can be possible by involving the stakeholders. For instance, the lack of teachers can be met by volunteers from the community like the retired teachers or experienced youth with qualifications suitable for the position.

A conducive environment for learning may be created and facilitated by the leaders so that learning achievements increase every year. Such measures are to be supported and achieved with the active participation of the stakeholders who may be motivating and supporting the teachers and students in particular. There may be an effort to weave in local history, monuments or landmarks for the students to relate with the native region. The curriculum may be related to existing realities in which regard the stakeholders also contribute by participating in the narration of the oral histories at annual functions and other occasions.

The role of a leader, as an administrator and planner, is to facilitate the above stated roles, and this is integral to the school performance. The alumni from the schools who have achieved the greater heights in terms of employment or in any other field can also be traced and invited as the role models for motivating the students and community. Similarly, there

may be a pool of resource persons from the community as well, for motivating the students and retaining them in the school till the completion of studies. As many researches point out, there is a huge dropout of students from the middle grades, especially in the rural areas or the least developed areas due to poverty or lack of education. This can also be addressed by the leaders by organising the social awareness programmes.

Another area of concern for school leaders is related to discipline and safety issues which may be addressed jointly by the stakeholders. For adolescents' issues, the guidelines have been provided by the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) for children in 13-18 age group, which is coordinated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in partnership with the Ministry of Education (earlier MHRD) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).Through this programme, the energies of the children may be tapped and specific skills may be imparted for their growth and development involving the different stakeholders. By involving the different stakeholders, the leader ensures complete transparency between the school and parents.

The administrator also contributes in implementing the programmes and schemes for children with the help of the stakeholders, for instance, in the disbursement of mid-day meal (MDM), scholarships, textbooks, etc, on time. There may be some mechanisms where the responsibility of certain activities may be given to different teachers for ensuring the team-work and inter-personal relations among them. Also, leaders may give less of a workload, fewer responsibilities and duties to new teachers so that they may concentrate on experiencing the school processes and exploring the local culture.

The availability of adequate furniture and its maintenance is a huge challenge for the school leaders, which can be ensured by keeping the onus on all the stakeholders. These facilities help the teachers as well as students to develop a positive mindset leading to smooth teaching.

Leaders may act as facilitators for keeping the school environment conducive and vibrant for both teachers and students. For assigning various responsibilities related to school with the stakeholders, the leader may adopt the strategies for overcoming issues like shortage of teachers. With the collaborative efforts with stakeholders, this issue may be resolved by appointing the retired teachers on voluntary basis. Where there is lack of infrastructure, the contribution from various stakeholders may also be ensured through collaborative partnerships.

Often the teachers are appointed on contract basis, leading to a scenario where the teachers are not professionally qualified. Hence, the role of a leader is to equip these teachers with the essential skills in pedagogical practices or learning assessments or classroom management or distribution plan for different schemes. These skills are to be periodically upgraded also, with the collaboration from different institutions at the block or district level - through the Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) - for academic purposes. At times the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) may also be approached for documenting the best practices through their action research activity. It also needs creating networks with the neighbouring schools in the clusters, blocks, district and state, with the teachers and heads of these schools, for sharing the innovative practices for information and motivation. Specific formats may be developed by administrators and leaders for continuous monitoring and evaluation for systemic processes at the decentralised levels with all stakeholders for internal strengthening of the schools.

Lastly, a school leader needs to be sensitive regarding the children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds along with children with disabilities by providing opportunities to all for equitable education. In addition to the problems created by the ongoing COVID pandemic, there have been a huge challenge for leaders to transact curriculum through the use of online networks or in blended system. Thus, the use of ICT has been a

compulsion and not a choice. As an illustration, the following description can be useful in understanding the role which a leader needs to adopt.

Key Characteristics	Leadership Strategy
Schools did not have strong traditions or culture. Enhanced teaching effectiveness and ICT competence of students were the main objective for implementing ICT. Emphasis on sharing of teacher-produced course materials is one key implementation strategy. Schools have successfully engaged in a continuous process of reform by engaging teachers in the process of change. ICT in teaching and learning interest was focussed on ICT which supports or enhances the curriculum reform. It has more interesting users of ICT than these found in schools. Strong cultural and historical foundation. ICT is used as an empowering tool for both students and teachers. Students are given opportunities to initiate new ideas with ICT themselves. Realisation of students individual potential and development of self-actualisation is essential.	Top-down management to ensure that all teachers reach the minimum level of ICT competence. Set clear targets and timetable for achieving specific ICT competencies. Set the timeline for all teachers to demonstrate the actual use of ICT in teaching and learning. A visionary leader and principal is the key change agent. Top-down arrangement with teacher involvement must be actively cultivated. Staff development is stressed. There needs to be multiple leadership as the principal may not necessarily the leader in initiatives related to ICT. Teachers should have free hand to implement new ideas in a supportive and enhancing culture.

Source: Yuen et. al. 2003

Let us sum up

Systemic administrators are critical in defining the process of making the school function including teachers. It is important to create opportunities for the participation of teachers, staff and students in decision making. Apart from taking care of the issues faced by the diverse group of students, a leaders' role is also to support teachers in pedagogy practices, learning assessments, or classroom management.

SECTION 2

ROLE OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Learning Objective:

- To access the strength of parents and community through management strategies.
- To overview the role of various stakeholders in improving the educational practices in school.

Key Words: Community resources; Optimisation; Stakeholders; Parents

Introduction

The role of parents and community needs to be focussed by the administrative leader for attaining the mission and vision of the school. The incorporation of the changes occurring in the socio-economic environments have either direct or indirect impacts on the school's functioning. The schools are located in the urban, semi-urban or rural areas. Each context needs a different kind of approach for school processes and involvement of the stakeholders. For instance, a school located in a remote rural area, and classified as a small school catering to the educational provision of a village, may be a one-man show with the assistant staff. In this context, coordination of parents and community is decisive for support as well as for monitoring the progress of students and teachers. A leader is the link between the parents and the community for making the school overcome any problems. A critical area in this situation is to cater to the multi-grade teaching skills which may be organised with the help of parents.

Let us take another context. If the literacy level of the parents and community is low, then the challenges are much more for the leader to face. Nevertheless, that does not reflect that there would be no demand for education from the community though the home environment of the student may not be conducive. But a combined effort from the parents and community may change the situation by contributing to the process of smooth functioning of the school. There may be an assessment to examine the existing service delivery gaps in the schools regarding management and pedagogy. The forums like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committees (SMC), may well be the platforms for discussing various issues related to student achievement, attendance and chronic absenteeism, discipline, safety, and any significant disparities between the diverse groups of students. It may be sustainable if a coordinator may be appointed on honorary basis (a retired teacher or community leader or selected from existing staff)

who may work as the facilitator on a regular basis. Secondly, there must be continuous communication among different stakeholders who may have strong bonding in regard to the school activities.

In yet another context, the parents and community can perform their duties by ensuring their contribution, either in cash or kind, for the school's development as and when required. Coordination among stakeholders may be useful where students of different age groups grapple with some issue like the security of students while reaching schools. With active participation of the PTA and the SMC members, a participatory mechanism may be devised for catering to the academic activity in education to enhance the academic delivery. Some of them have had negative schooling experiences themselves, some of the parents or other community members are illiterate and feel that they do not have any management experience due to which they do not seem to be willing to collaborate with school activities.

Importance of community participation in education can be visualised as an ongoing organic process. There may be an effort to learn from the best practices and strengthen the collaborative processes at all layers for making a mark in the school's identity. Their continuous involvement in the school activities along with the leader is essential in changing the school within. There may be some records that needs to be maintained with regard to such activities of collaboration among stakeholders related to school development. The stakeholders' partnerships, based on data, may be useful about discussing the current needs of the school and celebrating successes, sharing the challenges, and considering the ways to improve and have a consensus on what really works for school's improvement. The community's participation plays a critical role in overcoming the lack of resources and capacities in learning materials as well as human resources.

The parents and community can also collaborate in raising their voices against a few social taboos like those related to girls' education, social

identities, children from poor backgrounds and children with special needs. Their contribution greatly helps girls' education as community participation can contribute to the delivery of education in schools through various channels by ensuring enrolment, funding, attendance of students and teachers, improving school facilities, and many other activities.

The role of parents and community is also instrumental in retaining the teachers in the school by providing them various facilities, for example, by organising a place for them to stay and in many other ways. Some academic issues may also be discussed, like those related to the medium of instruction, support through additional measures like community TV for learning purposes or a common hall for discussing any point for enhancing the learning environment for children.

The NEP 2020 "recommended that regions of the country with large populations from educationally disadvantaged or Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all the schemes and policies are implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts, in order to truly change their educational landscape" (GoI, 2020: 26). The NEP has focussed on school complexes for maintaining the minimum basic requirements of the schools; this has various challenges for all the stakeholders. For achieving it, the onus lies mainly on parents and the community. But it may also be kept in mind that many times, due to the heterogeneity in the social composition, there may be conflicts within the group of parents or within the community.

A leader must be aware of such realities and try to address the common problems, without creating conflicts in the social environment. There may be many differences based on various parameters like gender, age or the economic status of the families. The need is to overcome such situations with the aim of attaining the single goal of quality schools for children.

Let us sum up

As the schools are located in different areas i.e urban, semi-urban, rural and have different contexts including the educational level of parents. Understanding the contexts is hence, very important for school leaders. They must create opportunities for participation of parents and community in dealing with school related issues in different contexts. Active engagement of parents and community can be promoted on platforms such as PTA and SMC.

SECTION 3

ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR AND NGOS

Learning Objective:

- To reflect on the strength of partnerships for various activities for improvement of schools.
- To focus on collaborations of third sector organisations in social influence through activities pertaining to the Corporate Social responsibility (CSR).

Key Words: NGOs; CSR activities; Sustainability; Stakeholders

About sustaining the programmes for school development, a major part is played by constant funding. As discussed in the earlier sections, the stakeholders contribute in various ways for numerous activities in the schools through participatory mode like in cash or through other means. A major role played by the leader is to ensure the funding on time-either from the government or from non-public establishments or donor organisations. Though there is no constant and sustained source of funding, it may be secured from both public and private sources in order to maintain the partnerships. This mechanism of making varied funding stream will improve collaboration across various stakeholders as all of them are working for a similar shared goal of attaining the school improvement.

The role of private sector and the non-government organisations (NGOs) may prove to be beneficial in many ways - for example, in facilitation, for creating awareness on social issues, creating linkages for job opportunities for the youth, and in many activities as per the changing situation. For instance, at the time of an emergency situation like the COVID pandemic or about the adolescents' issues, every school may have a counsellor for specialised instructional support for psychological wellbeing of students. Such facilities may be coordinated with the help of district officials and shared by the schools, like the provision of a nurse, school psychologist, or school social worker by making it available for all. It may be made possible through the contribution on the sustainability of school–community partnerships for quality and dedicated funding in education sector.

The increasing involvement of third sector organisations in the public education system is a global phenomenon. In recent decades, such organisations have become a major source of social influence in developed as well as in developing nations. The increase in the numbers and involvement of these voluntary and philanthropic organisations demarcates the development and expansion of neo-liberal policies in the

education system. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a way through which the support for school activities may be coordinated by the leader on continoues basis.

The activities under the CSR may be planned in the context of the school location, and some checklists may be prepared for involving the contributions made by the different NGOs or the private sector for enhancing the school quality at different levels. For example, the following checklist may be useful in recording the contributions made in the specific areas in the form of academic and physical contributions.

S. No.	Date & Year	Activity	Collaborators	Contributions
1.	17 March 2021	Annual Day Celebrations	Name of the Company under CSR Activity	Prizes for Students
2.	15 May 2021	Revising for Exams through Online Mode	NGO Working in the Field of Education	Software for Remote Learning

The above illustration may be taken as a suggested model that may be used by the schools for devising continuous mechanisms for involving the private sector and the NGOs working in the vicinity. This may bloom into long-term collaborations, bringing the desired support in attaining the school outputs.

Let us sum up

Role of private sector and the non-government organisations (NGOs) is significant in many ways including creation of awareness around social issues, creation of linkages for job opportunities for the youth, and in many other activities as per the changing situation.

SECTION 4

DRAWING LESSONS FROM STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The role of a leader is manifold as the role of stakeholders is multi-dimensional and gets evolved with every new situation. Every new situation is contextual and has its own course of action, and school leaders ought to negotiate through it by involving community and making relationships with families of the children. Leaders may have one to one relationship with each stakeholder and evolve mechanisms in enhancing the school environment for children. Various activities may be generated where the family, community members, private sector and NGOs may participate and contribute their abilities to the school development.

As for the policy perspective, collaborations among stakeholders have been evolving through the changes in the school context from Right to Education (RTE), School Management Committee (SMC), Samagra Shiksha and subsequently the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP 2020 lays special emphasis on the school complexes which are exemplars of collaborations at various levels. The role of a school leader is pertinent in building such collaborations by creating platforms for communication through the media platforms or community radio or print media for school improvement.

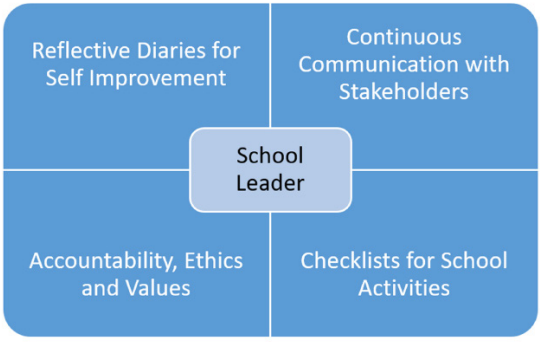

Figure 2: Desired Qualities of School Leader

Figure 2 highlights a few basic and desirable qualities that can help principals or school heads in devising strategies on how to build a partnership with various stakeholders-through the SMCs, for example. This platform engages in proper understanding and implementation of the policy and efforts may be made to ensure its achievement. They may also devise specific occasions for public-private partnerships like the school foundation day or community leaders' anniversaries, etc, which may be enhanced through continuous planning for school improvement. Since stakeholder communication is an important part of relationship building, an extended list for each block can be prepared so that subgroups can be identified under each group of the stakeholder for reaching the desired goal of the school.

The NEP 2020 focuses on the school complex for tackling the issues faced by small schools in remote areas. In such scenarios the role of stakeholders becomes crucial as every stakeholder is interdependent and has to work in coordination for reaching the goal of effectiveness with quality in school management. Thus, the leadership has to be in tune with all the stakeholders through the innovative mechanisms created in the contextual realities.

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Assessment: Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Q1. Is the role of a leader critical in ensuring the cooperation of the stakeholders in improving the quality of school?

a. Yes

b. No

Q2. Which of the following skills are needed by a leader for stakeholder engagement?

a. Communication

b. Management

c. Coordination

d. Planning

e. Administration

f. All the above

Q3. Are parents required to contribute in developing rigorous and meaningful academic goals for schools that encourage students to do their best with the coordination of all the stakeholders?

a. Yes

b. No

Q4. Does the engagement of private sector and NGOs in school activities develop an active and vibrant partnership to promote student learning?

a. Strongly Agree
b. Agreed
c. Satisfactory
d. Disagree

Q5. As a leader, one needs to check on which variables that impact the performance of the school?

a. Resources – physical and human
b. Curriculum transaction
c. Progress in student achievement
d. Communication with stakeholders
e. All the above

Ans: Q.1-a, Q.2-f, Q.3-a, Q.4-a, Q.5-e

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