

Theme: Leading Community Partnership for School Transformation

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TITLE: LEADING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

A CASE STUDY ON GOVT.PRIMARY SCHOOL PEWTHANG (WEST SIKKIM)

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Overview of Government Primary School Pewthang

Government Primary School Pewthang is a key educational institution situated in one of the remotest regions of West Sikkim. It provides primary education to young learners, focusing on foundational learning in subjects like mathematics, science, and language, within a supportive environment. The school is a crucial part of the educational landscape in the area, helping to shape the future of children from surrounding villages.

Geographical and Administrative Context

The school is located in Pewthang, which falls under the Gyalshing District of West Sikkim, an area known for its natural beauty and cultural significance. The school is part of the Yuksam Sub-Division, which serves as an administrative region, and is under the jurisdiction of the Tashiding Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU). This area is known for its scenic landscapes and proximity to religious and historical landmarks, which are integral to the local community's identity.

The school is positioned in the 01-Yuksam-Tashiding Constituency and falls within the administrative oversight of the Chongrang Block Administrative Center (BAC). This area is characterized by a diverse and vibrant community, with a focus on agriculture as primary sources of livelihood. The educational needs of this community are met by institutions like Government Primary School Pewthang, which plays a vital role in providing accessible and quality education.

Importance of the School in the Local Community

Government Primary School Pewthang holds significant importance in the local community as it provides essential education to children who might otherwise have limited access to formal schooling due to the remoteness of the region. The school is not only a place of learning but also a hub for community activities, fostering social cohesion and offering a space for parents and children to engage with the educational process. Additionally, it serves as a foundation for future academic success, empowering students to pursue further education and contribute meaningfully to their society.

Description of the School

The school was established in 1980 as a community-aided institution with the aim of providing basic education to children in the local area. In 1981, it transitioned into a government-aided school, gaining additional support and resources to expand its capabilities.

For much of its history, the school operated as a Lower Primary School, catering to students up to the primary level. However, in 2009, it was upgraded to a Primary School, allowing it to offer education for higher grades and accommodate a broader range of students.

The school serves as one of the feeder institutions for the Government Senior Secondary School at the Tashiding complex, playing a vital role in preparing young learners for their continued education. Despite its significance, the school faces numerous challenges due to its rural and remote location.

Covering a registered land area of 0.0800 hectares, the school is modest in size but strives to meet the educational needs of its community. It operates as a co-educational institution, fostering equal opportunities for boys and girls alike.

However, accessibility is a major issue. The school is not reachable by an all-weather road, making transportation difficult, especially during adverse weather conditions. Additionally, the infrastructure of the school lacks a reinforced cement concrete building, limiting its durability and resilience.

Most of the students attending the school come from families classified as Below Poverty Line (BPL). This highlights the socio-economic challenges faced by the local community, further emphasizing the importance of the school in providing educational opportunities to underprivileged children.

Situated in a rural and remote area, the school is a beacon of hope for the community, striving to overcome its challenges and provide a foundation for the future of its students. Despite its limitations, it remains a critical institution for education and development in the region.



Challenges Faced as a Team Leader

I joined this school on 4th November 2018 as Assistant Headmaster/In charge and from June 2023 I became full-fledged Headmaster through in-service Promotion examination. But since I joined the institute and took the charge started to work from day one. As a team leader, I have encountered various challenges that have tested my leadership skills and ability to create a supportive and effective educational environment. These challenges are deeply rooted in systemic and local issues, each contributing to the complexities of managing a school and ensuring quality learning for all students.

Infrastructure Deficits and Limited Resources

One of the most significant barriers to effective school functioning was the lack of adequate infrastructure and essential resources. Classrooms are often overcrowded and poorly maintained, with insufficient desks, chairs, and teaching aids. There is also a notable absence of technological tools, such as ICT classrooms, which are critical for preparing students for the modern, technology-driven world. Without these facilities, both teachers and students face immense difficulty in delivering and receiving quality education.

Low Parental and Community Engagement

A school's success often relies on the active involvement of parents and the local community. However, low engagement from these stakeholders had been a persistent challenge. Many parents were either unaware of the importance of their role in their children's education or are unable to actively participate due to economic or social constraints. This lack of involvement leads to reduced accountability and support for students, both at home and in school. Community engagement is similarly minimal, leaving schools isolated in their efforts to provide holistic education and support.

Student Diversity and Varied Learning Needs

Managing a diverse student population with varied learning needs presents a continuous challenge. Students come from different socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds, each requiring tailored approaches to ensure their success. Some students struggle with language barriers, while others face learning disabilities or require additional support to meet academic expectations. The lack of resources and specialized training for teachers further complicated efforts to address these diverse needs.

Economic and Social Barriers

Economic and social factors play a significant role in determining student success. Many students come from impoverished backgrounds where basic necessities like food, clothing, and stable housing are not guaranteed. These conditions negatively impact attendance, focus, and overall performance in school. Additionally, unstable home environments—marked by issues such as family conflict or lack of parental supervision—further hinder students' ability to engage fully in their education.

Low Learning Outcomes

One of the most concerning challenges is the consistently low learning outcomes among students. Many struggle to meet academic benchmarks due to gaps in foundational knowledge, ineffective teaching methods, or a lack of motivation. These gaps often stem from poor early education and are compounded by insufficient resources and support in

later years.

Lack of a Cohesive School Culture

The absence of a strong, cohesive school culture has a profound impact on the morale and productivity of both students and staff. Without a shared vision, values, or set of practices, it becomes difficult to foster a sense of community and collaboration within the school. This lack of unity often resulted in a fragmented learning environment, where neither students nor staff feel fully invested in the school's goals.

Teacher Retention and Professional Development

High teacher turnover rates are another critical challenge. The frequent departure of teachers disrupts continuity in learning and reduces students' trust and rapport with their educators. Moreover, limited opportunities for professional development mean that teachers are often ill-equipped to adopt innovative teaching practices or address the diverse needs of their students. This stagnation not only affects the quality of education but also contributes to teacher dissatisfaction and burnout.



High Dropout Rates

A significant number of students leave school prematurely, a problem that is often rooted in disengagement, financial pressures, or other external factors. Many students struggle to see the value of education in improving their future prospects, particularly when faced with immediate economic needs. High dropout rates not only hinder individual potential but also have long-term societal impacts, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting community development.

Low Confidence in Government Schools

Another critical issue was the general lack of trust and confidence in our school. Many parents perceive these schools as inferior to private institutions, believing they lack the resources, quality teaching, and infrastructure necessary for their children's success. This perception discourages enrollment and contributed to a lack of motivation among staff to improve school outcomes.

Low Enrollment

Our school was on the verge of closure due to by very Low enrollment which is closely tied to the perception of the school and the barriers families face in accessing education. Some Key factors include:

1. **Negative Perception of Schools:** Government schools, in particular, often face criticism for inadequate facilities, poor teaching quality, and lack of extracurricular opportunities. These perceptions discouraged parents from enrolling their children in our school.
2. **Financial Constraints:** Despite free or subsidized education, families may struggle with hidden costs, such as uniforms, books, and transportation, which deter them from sending children to school.
3. **Cultural and Social Norms:** In some communities, education may not be prioritized, especially for girls, due to traditional gender roles or a lack of awareness about the benefits of schooling.
4. **Competition from Private Schools:** The rise of private schools offering better infrastructure and perceived quality has diverted enrollment from government institutions.

Addressing High Dropout Rates and Low Enrollment

To combat these issues, a strategic, multi-faceted approach was initiated with smc:

1. **Economic Support Programs:**
 - **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** Provided financial assistance with stakeholders to cover hidden costs of education, ensuring that no student is excluded due to economic hardship.
 - **Free Meal Programs:** Ensured students receive adequate nutrition, reducing the burden on families and encouraging regular attendance.
2. **Community and Parental Engagement:**
 - **Awareness Campaigns:** Educated families about the long-term benefits of education and dispel misconceptions about government schools.
 - **Incentives for Attendance:** Offered incentives, such as free school supplies,

- for students with regular attendance records.
3. Inclusive and Relevant Education:
 - Curriculum Relevance: initiated basic vocational training and life skills, making it more applicable and practical to students' futures.
 - Remedial Classes: Support struggling students through additional learning programs to help them keep up academically.
 4. Strengthening Infrastructure:
 - Upgraded school facilities, including ICT classrooms, libraries, and sports equipment, to create an appealing and modern learning environment.
 - Ensured that schools are accessible, especially for students in remote areas, by providing
 - transportation options.
 5. Retention Programs:
 - Mentorship and Counseling: Offered guidance to students dealing with personal or academic challenges, helping them stay motivated and engaged through one-to-one home visit.
 - Monitoring Attendance: Established early-warning systems to identify at-risk students and intervene promptly as per the needs.
 6. Reputation Building for Schools:
 - Highlighted success stories of alumni to showcase the value of education at the school.
 - Engaging with social media and community leaders to improve the school's image and rebuild trust among parents.
 7. Partnerships and Collaborations:
 - Worked with NGOs, local businesses, stakeholders and government agencies to mobilize resources and support for programs aimed at reducing dropout rates and increasing enrollment.

Conclusion

These challenges underscored the need for strategic planning, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts to create a supportive and inclusive educational environment. By addressing these systemic and localized issues, it was possible to improve the overall functioning of schools and ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed and the effort is continued.

Identification of the Problem

The challenges I faced as a team leader stem from systemic issues and local barriers that impede the effective functioning of schools and the holistic development of students. These include limited resources, low parental and community engagement, varied student learning needs, economic and social constraints, poor learning outcomes, teacher retention issues, and the lack of ICT facilities. Additionally, the widespread lack of trust in government schools exacerbates these problems.

Diagnosis of the Problem

A detailed diagnosis reveals that the root causes of these challenges are multifaceted:

1. Infrastructure Deficits: Inadequate facilities, outdated or nonexistent ICT classrooms, and insufficient teaching materials hinder effective teaching and learning.
2. Low Engagement: Minimal parental and community involvement reduces the

support system for students.

3. **Diverse Learning Needs:** A lack of resources and training for teachers makes it difficult to cater to students with varied learning paces and abilities.
4. **Economic and Social Barriers:** Poverty and unstable home environments contribute to irregular attendance, low motivation, and high dropout rates.
5. **Teacher Retention:** High turnover rates disrupt learning continuity and lead to inconsistencies in teaching quality.
6. **School Culture:** The absence of a shared vision and values weakens morale and collaboration among staff and students.
7. **Perception of Government Schools:** A negative reputation limits enrollment and support for the school.



Description of the Problem

These interconnected issues created a cycle of underperformance, disengagement, and limited opportunities for students. A school with limited resources struggled to attract qualified teachers and maintain consistent teaching practices, which in turn affects student learning outcomes. The absence of parental and community involvement weakens external support, while economic and social pressures outside the school exacerbate dropout rates and low achievement. Together, these factors highlight the urgent need for intervention to build a more supportive and effective educational ecosystem.

Action Plan

To effectively address the challenges faced by the school and create a positive, supportive environment for students and staff, a comprehensive and multi-pronged action plan was implemented. This plan focuses on infrastructure development, stakeholder engagement, inclusive learning, social support, professional development, school culture, and community outreach.

1. Infrastructure Development

Recognizing the impact of inadequate infrastructure on learning outcomes, efforts were made to advocate for funding and establish partnerships to improve school facilities. The priority was to upgrade classrooms, ensuring they were safe, well-maintained, and conducive to learning. Special attention was given to the integration of ICT classrooms, equipping them with modern tools like computers, projectors, and reliable internet connectivity. These advancements aimed to bridge the digital divide and prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce. Additionally, resources such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and classroom furniture were procured to address basic teaching and learning needs.

2. Stakeholder Engagement

Parental and community involvement was identified as a key factor in student success. To strengthen this, regular parent-teacher meetings were organized to discuss students' progress and address concerns collaboratively. Workshops and awareness campaigns highlighted the importance of education and the critical role parents and the community play in supporting the school. Community members were invited to participate in school events, creating a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. By fostering these relationships, the school aimed to build a strong support system around the students, encouraging their growth and development.

3. Inclusive Learning

The diversity of student learning needs required tailored solutions. Programs were developed to address these needs, including remedial classes for struggling learners and advanced opportunities for high achievers. Teachers received specialized training in differentiated instruction, equipping them with strategies to accommodate various learning styles and abilities. Inclusive practices were emphasized, such as integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms and providing additional support where needed. By focusing on equity and personalization, the school sought to ensure that every student had access to a high-quality education.

4. Social Support Programs

Economic and social barriers were a major impediment to student engagement. To alleviate these challenges, social support programs were introduced. Free meals ensured that no student attended school hungry, improving their concentration and performance. Scholarships were made available to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds cover expenses such as uniforms and books. Counseling services were established to support students dealing with emotional or psychological issues, providing them with a safe space to express themselves and seek guidance. These initiatives aimed to create a nurturing environment where students could thrive academically and personally.

5. Professional Development

Teacher retention and development were addressed through ongoing training and mentorship programs from SCERT Sikkim, DIET and NCERT. Professional development workshops focused on modern teaching techniques, classroom management, and the use of technology in education. Mentorship programs paired new teachers with experienced ones, providing guidance and support. To boost morale and retention, incentives such as performance-based rewards and career advancement opportunities were introduced. These measures aimed to empower teachers, improve their job satisfaction, and ensure consistent, high-quality instruction for students. We have also collaboration with National Institute of Singapore for professional development programme.

6. Building School Culture

A cohesive and positive school culture was essential to fostering collaboration and motivation. Efforts were made to establish a shared vision and set of values that aligned with the school's goals. Regular team-building activities and professional learning communities encouraged collaboration among staff. Celebrations of student achievements and cultural events were organized to instill pride and a sense of belonging among students and staff. By creating a unified and supportive environment, the school aimed to enhance morale, build trust, and inspire collective effort toward achieving its objectives.

7. Community Outreach

The lack of trust in government schools was addressed through targeted community outreach initiatives. Campaigns highlighted the achievements of the school, including student successes and improvements in infrastructure and teaching quality.

Testimonials from alumni and parents were shared to showcase the value and potential of the school. Open house events were organized to invite community members to tour the school, meet the staff, and observe teaching practices. These efforts sought to rebuild confidence in government schools, increase enrollment, and strengthen ties with the community.

Conclusion

By addressing these areas in a holistic and strategic manner, the action plan aimed to tackle the root causes of the school's challenges. Through infrastructure improvements, enhanced stakeholder engagement, inclusive learning, social support, professional development, a strong school culture, and community outreach, the school took significant steps toward creating a thriving, inclusive, and effective educational environment. The plan not only addressed immediate issues but also laid the foundation for sustainable growth and long-term success.

Methodology

The following plan or strategies was implemented using a systematic and collaborative approach:

1. **Data Collection:** Gathered quantitative and qualitative data on student performance, attendance, teacher satisfaction, and community feedback.

2. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Observation, Engage parents, teachers, and community members in decision-making and planning processes.
3. **Resource Mobilization:** Partnered with government agencies, NGOs, and local businesses to secure funding and support.
4. **Pilot Programs:** Tested new initiatives on a small scale to measure impact and refine strategies before full implementation.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assessment of the effectiveness of interventions and make adjustments as needed.

Strategies

1. Infrastructure:

- Collaborated with SMC, local government and NGOs for funding.
- Introduce a phased plan for upgrading classrooms and ICT facilities.

2. Engagement:

- Hosted interactive parent-teacher meetings and community events.
- Established parent advisory committees to foster collaboration.

3. Teacher Support:

- Provided regular training on modern teaching methods.
- Offer incentives and career growth opportunities to retain skilled teachers.

4. Inclusive Programs:

- Implemented remedial classes for struggling students.
- Introduce peer learning initiatives to leverage student diversity.

5. Reputation Building:

- Conducted outreach programs highlighting the school's achievements.
- Showcase successful alumni to rebuild community trust in government schools.

6. Social and Emotional Support:

- Introduced mentorship programs pairing students with role models.
- Provided access to counseling and mental health resources.

By addressing the root causes with comprehensive plans and strategic interventions, it was possible to create a thriving educational environment where students, teachers, and the community work collaboratively toward success and the process is continued.