

FUNCTIONS, ROLES AND PERFORMANCE OF SMCs IN SCHOOL EDUCATION ACROSS INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, provides an opportunity to the community to be part of school education. It states that schools must consist of School Management Committees (SMCs). SMCs must consist of members ranging from headmaster, teachers and parents of the students studying in the school. According to DISE Report 2015-16, 94% of the schools have constituted SMCs across India. These SMC members are given some responsibilities that vary from monitoring the quality of education and developing a School Development Plan. Few research studies conducted in various parts of the country such as Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh show a picture of how SMCs are performing. It seems like most of the School Management Committee members are unaware of their roles and responsibilities across the country and wherever there is awareness, their voices remain unheard. Their plans do not reach the responsible authorities for execution. Some of the education departments, NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) and other organizations are working towards making the members of SMCs efficient so that they become aware of the roles they have to play and can take capable decisions but still a lot has to be done. An effective bottom up approach is required so that decisions taken and plans made at the root level reaches the authorities responsible to execute the plans and decisions. Therefore, the researcher has critically analyzed the working and performance of SMCs and suggested few ways for improvement.

Keywords: SMCs, School Education

INTRODUCTION

Section 21 of Right to Education Act 2009 mandates the formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) consisting of elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children admitted in school and teachers. Three-fourth members of such committees shall be parents or guardians and also it is recommended that fifty percent of members of the committee have to be women.

Provisions for the constitution of SMCs as mentioned in the Act

- A school, other than a school specified in sub clause (iv) of clause (n) of section 2 shall constitute a School Management Committee consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children admitted in such school and teachers:
- Provided at least 3/4 of members of such Committee shall be parents or guardians; provided further that proportionate representation shall be given to the parents or guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker section.
- Provided also that 50% of members of such Committee shall be women.

These committees are expected to perform various functions such as monitor the working of school and utilization of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other source. One of the important function of SMCs is to prepare a School Development Plan which addresses infrastructure and academic achievement and form the basis for the plans and grants to be made by the appropriate government or local authority.

It is envisioned that SMCs is the key to decentralize the powers of monitoring the functioning of schools. Parents shall have a say in the functioning or management of the school and monitor the working of the school their children are attending. The active participation of parents will help in effective monitoring of schools and in turn will put pressure on school heads to improve the efficiency and quality of education. SMCs are expected to reduce the communication gap between the principal, teachers and community and hence create a participative and collaborative environment. Parents are also expected to feel motivated to participate in the school management so that they will be aware of their child's learning process. Schools are institutes that prepare children for the society therefore they should not work in isolation from the society. Active participation of members of society is important.

To find out the working, performance and contribution of the SMC members in assuring the quality of School Education following objective and methodology were taken up:

Objective

Analyze and review the structure, performance and working of School Management Committees as per RTE Act 2009.

Methodology

Researcher has critically reviewed few research articles, reports and research study on the performance of SMCs in schools.

Status of SMCs across India

In past five years, the number of SMCs constituted has seen growth. According to DISE report 2015-16, 94% of the schools have constituted SMCs and according to DISE report 2013-14, 83% government aided and unaided schools have set SMCs and prepared a school development plan.

Analysis of the structure, performance and working of School Management Committess as per RTE Act 2009

According to the report of American Indian Foundation 2011, SMC members prepares a plan as per the guidelines, then the authorities do not honor the same or they do not provide the requisite funding and other support for implementation, and do not respond in a timely manner, what can an SMC do? Who can they approach?

In November, 2010 the Department of School and Mass Education initiated a system of continuous monitoring mechanism- SAMIKSHA covering more than 50,000 schools, each month, by about 6,000 monitors with a set of 60 indicators. SAMIKSHA is a supportive supervision tool and not intended to be a fault finding exercise. Its main aim consists of identifying the gap between school and SMCs to devise and implement strategies to fill those gaps. The RTE Act and the Odisha State Rules envisages that parents should form the major part of the School Management Committees, which would however include the elected members of the Panchayat, school teachers and most importantly the students.

According to a case study, Role and functions of School Management Committees (SMCs) of Government Middle Schools in district Kullu of Himachal Pradesh: A Case Study, 2016, SMCs are not aware of the purpose behind formation of management committees. One of the major weaknesses is that the participation of PRI/ local bodies in the development and improvement of school is not as per the guidelines of the RTE Act, 2009. There is lack of management skills in SMC members or lack of planning tools to help the school development planning better. But due to SMCs' support in sports and cultural activities students from some schools have participated in the National games in the year 2013. Improvement of teaching learning processes in the schools on the part of the SMCs is weak. The study highlights few challenges to be met by SMCs such as Capacity building of the SMC members is one of the main challenges. Non-participation of SMC members in making School development plan and its execution. Further the study also gives some suggestions as giving some incentives to the committee members for encouraging their effective participation, first in the trainings of SMC and then in the management of elementary education and training the teachers in order to encourage the community participation in the school affairs.

In the report of Central Square Foundation 2014 few challenges were found such as headmasters, teachers and parents were not aware of SMCs related information, their roles and responsibilities. A greater effort is required to encourage headmasters to share information with parents. Unclear guidelines for the selection of members of the SMC existed. The report states that most state rules do not stipulate an election procedure for the formation of SMC. The funds allocated are not utilized properly by the states for the training of SMC members. For example, in 2012-13, of the total money allocated for SMC trainings, Maharashtra spent only 14% and Madhya Pradesh spent 22%. It was found that trainings are of poor quality which in turn could not build up capacity of the members to prepare effective SDPs (School Development Plan). The follow up sessions are either not conducted or do not takes place on time.

State Collective for Right to Education (SCoRE) organized its first state level School Management Committee Convention, more than 1600 SMC members from 72 districts of Uttar Pradesh gathered at Ravindralaya, Lucknow to put their voice for claiming right to education for their children. Few SMC members shared that no information or training has been provided by the government on their roles and responsibilities. It was seen that SMC members participated enthusiastically in the discussions. One of the SMC member said that "Many members do not know that they are in SMC. I

was also unaware about my role until I contacted an NGO. In my village if female teacher belong to the upper cast they never come to the school, rather the register is sent to their home for the attendance”.

A final report “A Study on the impact of Training on SMC members and functioning of the SMC: Evidence from Jharkhand” (2016) shows very poor representation of women in SMCs. The report mentions the Head Masters did not gave clear answers for the process undertaken for the selection of SMC members. As far monitoring powers are concerned, SMCs could only cite one monitoring that is to ensure the enrollment of students and to encourage the out of school children to enroll in school. SMC members were largely unaware of the monitoring powers. The research study states that SMC members at large were unaware of financial planning and monitoring of the funds. The results of the study shows that there was some convergence between the SMCs and the teachers when it came to discussing the issues that the school faces and planning in terms of the required steps that need to be taken in order to deal with the respective issues. The study suggested the need for developing training manuals keeping in mind the diversity of the members in the SMCs.

A research study conducted by OXFAM India “Federalism and Fidelity-A review of the provisions under the national Model and State Rules under the RTE Act 2009” in 2014 to analyze the extent to which the various states adhere to the rules and provisions mentioned in the Act. According to the report, SMCs provide an opportunity to children to participate in organizing the education for themselves. Bihar also allows students from the Bal Sansad (children’s parliament) and those from the Meena Manch (girls group established across the state by education department) to attend regular meetings of SMCs. To make sure that the committee remains active, according to the report, Bihar has a no confidence motion against the president of SMCs and also has provision whereby local authority can dissolve SMC. For not holding meetings regularly, Bihar provides for provision to file complaint against SMCs.

The report states that West Bengal has laid down the most detailed description of School Development Plan (SDP) including almost everything ranging from location, infrastructure to strategies for innovative activities to improve the academic and non-academic performance of children in school. Moreover, its School Development Plan includes the history and the good practices of the school and the students. The details of class-wise enrolment have been included

along with the children with special needs and children of special focus groups and enrolments. Lastly, the three year projection of the requirement of additional infrastructure along with the child-friendly and barrier free building was there. SDP also mentions the minimum number of working days and the instructional hours to be there in an academic year, along with the minimum numbers of working hours per week for the teachers.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the clarity of roles and functions to be performed by the SMC members is still a need. The gap between the policy and actual field work is huge. SMC members or states as a whole are still not clear about the way provisions and functions mentioned in the RTE Act have to be followed or performed. Few states like the state of West Bengal are outperforming as it has clearly laid down a detailed School Development Plan. It is seen in many states that funds allocated for training of members is not utilized properly and where it is spend properly, training seems to contribute less in improving the capability of members. Increasing women participation still needs attention. School Management Committees were viewed to ensure the regular and effective functioning of the school education where parents have a say. Therefore, following are the few suggestions in this regard which can contribute in improving the quality and could help in improving the performance of SMCs.

Suggestions

The analysis of various research reports reflects the need to strengthen our School Management Committees. These are the few suggestions to contribute in improving the performance of SMCs.

- Elections can be held in schools to elect the SMC members. Democratic ways should be adopted to select the members. So that everyone gets an equal opportunity to be a SMC member and contribute.
- As observers are appointed in every school to supervise the election process by the Delhi Department of Education. Similarly, observers should monitor the biasness at selection stage. Observers should also assure that committees are revised time to time to assure the active participation of parents.

- Strong monitoring system is required to monitor the utilization of grants. As seen in many reports that funds allocated are not utilized properly. Clear guidelines should be made to utilize the funds.
- Headmasters, teachers and other staff of schools should consider the suggestions made by the SMC members other than school staff. Effective bottom up approach is required in which decisions taken at the root reaches the higher authorities in timely manner.
- Incentives can be given to SMC members to increase their participation. SMC members will regularly attend the meetings and also contribute effectively.
- Trainings provided are not effective and do not contribute to enhance the capabilities of the members. So various NGOs can be allotted the task of providing the training to SMC members to develop the insight of the members on how to improve the quality of education.
- Participation of women should be increased and allowed to participate freely in the discussions. Increase in the number of SMCs constituted is not a thing to be happy about, but what is required is to check whether these committees are working in the desired manner and are active enough to improve the quality of education.
- Student participation in SMCs is a good step taken by many states but a proper framework is needed so that their voices are heard.
- Stakeholders should have effective understanding of the provisions for the School Management Committees in the RTE Act to bring about greater accountability at the school level.

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