

Primary Education in Punjab: Awareness and Participation of School Management Committees

*Dr. Jatinder Grover

Associate Professor, Department of Education, Punjab University, Chandigarh (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 June 2018

Keywords

RTE Act, 2009; School Management Committees; Government Primary Schools; School Teachers; SMC Members and Chairpersons

Corresponding Author

Email: [jatinder1633\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:jatinder1633[at]gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan launched in 2001 has a strong decentralization remit, with aims to increase accountability of schools to communities. This was mandated and enhanced under the Right to Education Act, 2009 through the formation of the School Management Committee (SMC). School management committees have a significant role to play in the local governance and functioning of schools. This paper is an attempt to explore the awareness of SMC members of primary schools regarding their roles and responsibilities in school management and their level of participation in the functioning of schools. Results showed that SMCs were constituted in all the schools but awareness of SMC members about roles and responsibilities and participation in school management was not adequate. Through SMCs, parents and community members can participate and take ownership of the schools. For effective participation and quality monitoring of problems of schools, sustained efforts need to be made for capacity building of SMC members.

1. Introduction

The school and the community are related to each other in a cyclic relationship of mutual benefit. If the school serves the community through its education programmes, the community, in turn, will help enhancing the status of the school. On the other hand, if the community supports the school in implementing the educational progress, the school in turn will help in improving the community (Mehta, 2001).

The community participation in education through Village Education Committees (VEC) has been given utmost importance in most policy documents of the Government of India related to school education and the crucial link between community participation and equitable quality education has always been given due recognition. The Government of India launched SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) in 2001 to create an enabling mechanism for improved implementation of the centrally sponsored scheme for elementary education through community ownership. The objectives of SSA clearly vouch for community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization; community based monitoring with full transparency in all aspects of implementation; and to increase accountability of schools to communities (Govinda and Bandhopadhyay, 2010).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has come into force with effect from 1st April, 2010 and it recognizes the role of local governance in school education and it specifies that a school management committee shall be constituted for every school to monitor and oversee its working; to plan and facilitate its overall development with representation of parents, teachers, community and local authority members, as may be prescribed by the appropriate State government. The essential provisions regarding constitution and functions of SMCs have been given in section 21 and 22 of the RTE Act, 2009 (MHRD, 2010).

Under the RTE Act, 2009, SMC is required to include teachers, parents/guardians and others as its members. The SMC constitutes of 12 to 16 members and amongst them at least three-fourth (75%) members of the SMC should be either parents or guardians. Out of which, there should be 50% representation of women. The rest one fourth (25%) can be 1/3rd local authorities, 1/3rd school teachers, 1/3rd academicians/students etc. with proportionate representation of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other socially and educationally backward classes. The SMCs have been vested with a huge responsibility of ensuring the enrolment, retention and sustaining quality in the schools.

As per the RTE Act, 2009 guideline, SMC has to monitor school activities and its working; ensure 100% enrolment of children in the age group of 6-14 years; prepare and recommend School Development Plan (SDP); supervising and supporting implementation of SDP; supervision/monitoring of finance, management, academic progress, distribution of entitlements; monitor teachers' and students' attendance; coordinating with the local authority; generating funds from other sources for development of schools; and monitor Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme.

Anton (2005) explored that school-based management in developing countries is being increasingly advocated as shortcut to more efficient management, quality improvement in education and to maintain financial as well as administrative transparency. Wushe, Ndlovu and Shenje (2014) revealed that school development committee members and school heads lacked financial management literacy which is a potential challenge for the promotion of community participation. Kumar (2016) highlighted that SMC members were not well educated, not aware about their role, not trained to prepare SDP and guide school authorities about various issues related to teaching, learning and evaluation.

Reetu (2013) concluded that non-participation of village education development committee members in the monthly meetings was a major impediment in improving the quality of school education in Punjab. Further, Verma and Singh (2014) found that VEC were not actively involved to reform the status of school education in Punjab. To enhance participation of SMCs in school affairs, refresher courses and training programmes be organised for capacity building of SMC members. Bhattacharya and Mohalik (2015); and Singh and Sood (2016); stressed that for enhancing the participation of SMC members in various school affairs, it is essential that SMC members should be made aware of their roles and responsibilities and they should be provided appropriate training in this regard.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To study the structure and process of constitution of SMCs in the Government Primary Schools of Punjab.
- To assess the level of awareness of SMC chairpersons and members regarding their roles and responsibilities in managing affairs of Government Primary Schools in Punjab.
- To find the participation of SMCs in managing affairs of Government Primary Schools in Punjab.
- To summarise the suggestions of SMC members and teachers for enhancing participation of community for effective management of Government Primary Schools in Punjab.

3. Method and Procedure of study

For the present study, descriptive survey method of research was used. Random sampling technique was employed to select 120 primary schools from six districts of Punjab i.e. Muktsar, Bathinda, Ajitgarh, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar and Gurdaspur. From each district, 20 schools were selected randomly by covering all the educational blocks. From each sampled school, chairperson of SMC; 3-4 SMC members; and 3-4 teachers including head were interviewed regarding constitution and functioning of SMC. The total sample of the study included 111 chairpersons of SMCs; 372 SMC members; and 417 teachers of primary schools. The data was collected during the months of February, 2013 to May, 2014 while Monitoring the implementation of SSA and RTE in the Punjab state, a project sponsored by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India.

For collection of data, an information schedule about constitution and functioning of SMC; an interview schedule for SMC members/ chairpersons; and an interview schedule for the headmaster/teachers of the schools was prepared as per the guidelines of MHRD, Govt. of India for monitoring of SSA and RTE implementation in elementary schools.

4. Results and Findings

For the present study, data from primary and secondary sources was collected. The primary data was collected by information schedule; by interviewing the SMC members/chairpersons; and by interviewing the teachers/ heads of schools. The relevant secondary data from Government orders, SMC meeting agendas, SMC meeting resolutions etc.

were collected from the school records. The summaries of the interviews conducted with chairpersons of SMCs, SMC members and school teachers/heads were developed and summarized under different sub heads as follows:

4.1 Constitution of SMCs in Schools: In all the sampled schools, SMCs were constituted on the directions of Director General of School Education, Govt. of Punjab as per the guidelines of the RTE Act, 2009. The representation to women, schedule caste and other backward classes was in accordance with the guidelines of the RTE Act, 2009. The process of constitution of SMC was completed as per the schedule and as per data 2.92% SMC members were post graduate; 11.55% were graduate; 44.89% were matriculate; 36.02% were middle pass; and 4.62% were literate. The chairpersons of 45.83% SMC's were graduate; of 47.5% SMCs were matriculate; and of 6.67% SMCs were middle pass. In 18% schools, the chairperson of SMC was a female. In all, 52.69% SMC members got training under school management committee training initiatives of Govt. of Punjab.

4.2 Participation of SMC members in Meetings of SMC:

As per record of the schools, meeting of SMC was held on monthly basis in all schools. On the basis of data of the last six months, on average more than 50% members participated in the SMC meetings of the 63.33% schools; and less than 50% SMC members participated in the SMC meetings of 36.67% schools. The attendance of female members in SMC meetings was encouraging but their participation in decision making was not adequate.

As per the interaction with the SMC members and school teachers, in 88.33% of schools 'chairperson and 2-3 members of SMC were participating actively in managing certain issues of schools; while in 11.66% schools only chairperson of SMC was participating actively in the management of school. Its reported by 65.79% chairpersons' and 76.6% members of SMCs that majority of the SMC members belong to farming and labour community, so it is not possible for them to attend SMC meeting by skipping their own work or house chores.

4.3 Agenda and resolutions of SMC meetings:

In all the schools, the major agenda items of the SMC meetings were related to construction/ maintenance work, improvement of infrastructure, purchase of cooking ingredients, hiring of services of cook –cum-helper, purchase of student uniform, distribution of books to students and organization of functions in school. In none of the sampled school, any issue related to improvement of quality of education and students' achievement; teachers' and students' absenteeism; students' enrolment; girl's education; and enhancing community participation in school administration was mentioned in the resolution register of SMC. No details of suggestions and discussions related to preparation of school development plan were mentioned in the SMC resolution register of any school.

It is shared by 42.47% SMC members that they put signature on the resolutions written by the head of the

school and those were not aware about the issues discussed and resolution passed in the SMC meetings. It is reported by 61.39% teachers that only 50% SMC members attend the meetings and majority of them come to the school for signing the resolutions of SMC.

4.4 Awareness level of SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities: The chairpersons and members of SMCs were interviewed to assess their awareness level regarding roles and responsibilities of SMC in managing affairs of Government Primary Schools and results are summarised as follows:

| Awareness about Roles and Responsibilities of SMC | Responses of Chairperson of SMC (in %age) | Responses of Members of SMC ((in %age) |
|---|---|--|
| Enrolment procedures under RTE Act, 2009 | 78.07% | 68.82% |
| Provisions of enrolment of Out of School Children | 28.07% | 24.86% |
| Distribution of books to students | 100% | 100% |
| Distribution of uniform to students | 100% | 100% |
| Procedures adopted by teachers for quality teaching | 30.7% | 21.66% |
| Learning levels of students | 25.43% | 21.65% |
| Teachers' absenteeism | 14.04% | 6.45% |
| Students' absenteeism | 29.14% | 27.15% |
| Provisions for education of Children with Disabilities | 23.68% | 26.61% |
| Construction work norms and procedures | 73.68% | 49.73% |
| Provision and usage of School Maintenance Grant | 90.35% | 68.82% |
| Provision and usage of School Development Grant | 90.35% | 68.44% |
| Maintenance of school records | 79.82% | 65.50% |
| Auditing of school records and grants by SMC | 19.3% | 12.3% |
| Preparation of School Development Plan | 16.67% | 5.08% |
| Entitlements of a student as per MDM scheme | 55.26% | 52.40% |
| Monitoring of quality of MDM | 100% | 100% |
| Audit of procured MDM cooking ingredients | 28.94% | 21.66% |
| Provision of drinking water | 100% | 100% |
| Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in the school | 100% | 100% |
| Provisions of social auditing of grants and stock of school | 15.79% | 5.88% |
| Complaining authority, if any discrepancy found in the school | 100% | 91.18% |

From the data mentioned in the above table, it is evident that majority of chairpersons and members of SMCs were adequately aware about their roles and responsibilities towards the enrolment procedures under RTE Act, 2009; distribution of books and uniforms to students; provision and usage of school maintenance and school development grant; maintenance of school records; monitoring of MDM; entitlements of a student as per MDM scheme; and maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in school.

But on the parameters of provisions of enrolment of out of school children; procedures adopted by teachers for quality teaching; learning levels of students; teachers' and students'

absenteeism'; provisions for education of children with disabilities; auditing of school records by SMC; preparation of SDP; auditing of MDM cooking ingredients; and social auditing, the awareness level of chairpersons and members of SMCs regarding their roles and responsibilities was not adequate.

4.5 Participation of SMCs in managing Government Primary Schools in Punjab: The data regarding participation of SMC members in managing affairs of Government Primary Schools in Punjab was collected on various parameters by interviewing primary school teachers/heads and results are summarised as follows:

| Participation of SMCs' in School Management | Responses of school teachers (in %age) |
|--|--|
| Monitoring enrolment of students | 55.39% |
| Supervising availability / presence of teachers | 23.5% |
| Monitoring of syllabus completion by teachers | 19.42% |
| Monitoring of results/ learning levels of students | 23.02% |
| Supervising distribution of books and uniform to students | 100% |
| Monitoring distribution of MDM | 100% |
| Monitoring quality of MDM | 64.50% |
| Auditing of expenditure of MDMS and other grants | 16.30% |
| Participation in preparation of School Development Plan | 9.11% |
| Supporting school to develop infrastructure and other facilities | 7.67% |
| Organization of school events/ functions | 57.79% |
| Reporting good practices of school to higher authorities | 5.51% |
| Approaching higher authorities to improve functioning and infrastructure of the school | 9.83% |

From the responses of teachers as summarised in the above table, it is clear that SMC members were participating

actively in distribution of books, uniform, MDM to students; monitoring quality of MDM; enrolment of students; and

organization of school events and functions. But as reported by teachers, SMC members did not supervise actively teachers' availability and teaching learning activities; learning levels of students; auditing of school grants; preparation of SDP. It was also highlighted by teachers that majority of SMC members neither took initiative to support schools for infrastructure development at its own nor those approach higher authorities for the same.

4.6 Suggestions of SMC members and teachers for effective management of Government Primary Schools in Punjab with the participation of community: SMC members and teachers suggested certain measures to enhance participation of SMC and community members in the functioning of schools, those are summarised as follows:

- It is suggested that monthly meeting of SMC either be scheduled in evening, as most of SMC members were from agrarian or labour class and those could not spare time for SMC meetings on working days,
- Sustained efforts should be made for capacity building of SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities.
- Special training programmes be arranged for orienting women SMC members about their roles and responsibilities.
- Special training programmes be organized for training of SMC chairpersons'.
- Periodic training sessions and workshops be organized for SMC members at block level for supplementing their awareness about social auditing procedures, auditing of grants, SDP formulation, record maintenance etc.
- The parents and SMC members be involved actively in the preparation of school development plan, so that grassroots level issues can be undertaken.
- There should be provisions for effective convergence and collaboration with other SMCs' at block and district level.
- There should be provisions for visits of the SMCs' to other schools where the SMCs' are doing exceptionally good, so that others can learn from their experiences.
- Interface meetings need to be organized between the SMC, other community members and the District Education Department to redress grievances at the community level.
- SMC members suggested that there should be a clear cut criteria for checking the learning levels of students. Due to no detention policy at primary level, learning levels of students could not be monitored.
- In each SMC, minimum two members having academic expertise be added, so that those can monitor teaching learning activities in the school.
- School teachers and SMC members stressed that sincere efforts need to be made for capacity building of SMC members to enhance the

participation of all SMC members in the functioning of schools.

5. Discussion of Results

A vigilant community can demand its entitlements, access available government incentives, monitor programs and initiate processes of change to ensure better delivery of government services (Kapoor, 2010).

In the light of passage of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, as a fundamental right to all children between 6-14 years of age, there is a critical need to find ways in which objectives of the Act can be realized. It is also now widely acknowledged that without community as a primary stakeholder in the process, this right would not meet its intent. The community participation is deeply interwoven in the implementation of RTE Act, 2009 and the Act has entrusted parents with certain powers through the SMC elected by them, for improving the functioning of schools.

The present study aimed to study the awareness level of SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities and their participation in the functioning of schools. The results of the study shown that school management committees are constituted as per guidelines of the RTE Act, 2009, in the primary schools of Punjab. But results of the study highlighted that SMC members did not participate regularly in the meetings and school development plan formulation processes. In SDP preparation suggestions and issues are not responded properly at the grassroots level. Training mechanism of SMC members was not adequate. SMC meetings were not conducted regularly and agenda was not followed up properly during the meetings. The results of the study corroborate the findings of Reetu (2012) who concluded that non-participation of village education development committee members in the monthly meetings was a major impediment in improving the quality of school education in Punjab.

The results of the study revealed that SMC chairpersons and members participate enthusiastically in activities related to distribution of books, uniform and MDM to students. They also had knowledge about provisions of enrolment of students; availability and usage of school maintenance and school development grant; maintenance of school records; and monitoring of quality of MDM. But SMC chairpersons and members were neither adequately aware nor participating actively in assessing quality of teaching and learning levels of students; auditing of school records and grants; and formulation of school development plan. The findings are in accordance with Kumar (2016) who revealed that SMC members were neither aware about their role nor trained to prepare SDP and guide school authorities about various issues related to teaching, learning and evaluation.

As the primary stakeholders of the education system, it is parents and children who bear the brunt of a failing education system. The positive and constructive engagement of parents and society with the schools can help to reverse the trend of declining quality of education in the schools (Brahmachari, Laddha and Acharya, 2015). In the present study, teachers and SMC members suggested that sustained efforts need to be

made for capacity building of SMC members and chairpersons, so that the parent- teacher partnership can plan to promote and support the child's learning, school performance and general well-being. Verma and Singh (2014) also stressed that refresher courses and training programmes be organised for capacity building of SMC members in Punjab.

Although SMCs' in Punjab had appropriate representation of the women, but the real task is to make their active participation in decision making process of SMC. As women SMC members reported that in majority of the schools' resolutions were passed without their knowledge and their signatures were later sought by the teachers. It's also suggested that timings of SMC meetings need to be rescheduled as per the availability of SMC members, so that SMC members and teachers can interact to make strategies for enrolment of out of school children, improve the learning levels of students and other issues related to the school. As parents and SMC members have a good rapport and knowledge of the community and the local area, they are

usually more successful in ensuring certain aspects like motivating other parents to send their children to the school regularly, monitoring children's attendance, provision of basic infrastructure and seeking enhanced resource allocation in the schools (Brahmachari, Laddha and Acharya, 2015).

The community based management gives authority to the SMCs for taking care of the functioning of the schools as per the demands and needs the school and community. The SMC and the local community as a whole form an important part of the accountability chain to monitor and oversee the functioning of the school. For improving the quality of school education and functioning of schools, the school management committees be strengthened to perform the role as expected from them. The results of the present study highlighted the need of capacity building of SMC members for enhancing their participation to smoothen the functioning of schools and achieve the targets of the RTE Act, 2009.

References

- Anton, D.G. (2005). Improving the quality of education through school-based management: Learning from international experiences. *International Review of Education*, 51 (4), 269-287. Retrieved on March 30, 2017 from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ733515>
- Bhattacharya, D., & Mohalik, R. (2015). Problems faced by the SMC members in implementing the RTE Act, 2009: An analysis. *Eduquest an International Referred Journal in Education*, 4(2), 15-24. Retrieved on January 25, 2017 from <http://eduquestjournal.com/assets/issue/9/EDUQUEST%20J uly-December%202015.pdf>
- Brahmachari, A., Laddha, R., & Acharya, S. (2015). School Management Committees: Bringing in Accountability in Schools and Overall Education - Learning from the field. *Oxfam in Action, ES-Education*, 11, November, 2015. Retrieved on January 24, 2017 from [https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/LN-OIN-ES-Education-11-SMCs Accountability-Schools-Education-EN.pdf](https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/LN-OIN-ES-Education-11-SMCs%20Accountability-Schools-Education-EN.pdf)
- Govinda, R. & Bandyopadhyay, M. (2010). Changing framework of local governance and community participation in elementary education in India. *National University of Educational Planning and Administration: Consortium for Educational Access, Transitions and Equity*, Research Monograph No. 35. Retrieved on January 10, 2017 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED510902.pdf>
- Kapoor, R. (2010). People as Change makers- Essential Services: Community Based Management for Right to Education. *Oxfam India working papers series- II*, June, 2010. Retrieved on January 11, 2017 from [https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/II.%20Essential %20Services Community%20Based%20Management%20for%20Right%20to%20Education.pdf](https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/II.%20Essential%20Services%20Community%20Based%20Management%20for%20Right%20to%20Education.pdf)
- Kumar, S. (2016). Roles and functions of school management committees (SMCs) of Government middle schools in district Kullu of Himachal Pradesh: A case study. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and Language*, 3(17), 3876-86. Retrieved on April 10, 2017 from <http://oaji.net/articles/2016/12011476446631.pdf>
- Mehta, C.S. (2001, July 3). Low enrolment and irregular attendance. *The Hindu*. Retrieved on March 21, 2017 from <http://www.thehindu.com/2001/07/03/stories/13030374.htm>
- MHRD (2010). *Right to Education Act, 2009*. Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi. Retrieved on May 6, 2017 from www.mhrd.gov.in/rte
- Reetu (2012). A study of the functioning of village education development committees in educationally backward districts of Punjab. *Shodhganga: A reservoir of Indian theses @ INFLIBNET: A doctorate thesis, Punjabi University, Patiala: Faculty of Education and Information Science*. Retrieved on February 22, 2017 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/8013>
- Singh, A., & Sood, V. (2016). Reflections of SMC members regarding functioning of school management committees (SMCS) in elementary schools of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(26), 2997-3005. Retrieved on March 27, 2017 from [http://www.srjis.com/pages/pdfFiles/148033535638.%20Dr. %20Vishal%20Sood%202nd.pdf](http://www.srjis.com/pages/pdfFiles/148033535638.%20Dr.%20Vishal%20Sood%202nd.pdf)
- Verma, S., & Singh, J. (2014). Functioning of village education committee (VEC) in educational management: An analytical study of selected villages of Punjab. *Journal of International Academic Research for Multidisciplinary*, 2(9), 233-253. Retrieved on January 12, 2017 from <http://www.ijarm.com/OCT2014/paper17772.pdf>
- Wushe, T., Ndlovu, D., & Shenje, J. (2014). An analysis of basic management and financial skills by school development committees (SDC) in selected Harare schools. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Advanced Engineering*, 1(10), 378-386. Retrieved on May 21, 2017 from [http://www.ijrae.com/volumes/vol1/issue10/60.NVBS10092.p df](http://www.ijrae.com/volumes/vol1/issue10/60.NVBS10092.pdf)