

Monitoring and Supervision of civil and academic works by School Management Committees in Sikkim

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ABSTRACT

This piece of research is an attempt to study the functioning of School Management Committees in civil and academic areas in the state of Sikkim. For the purpose of the study the investigator collected data from School management committee members of 40 elementary schools in east and north districts of Sikkim selected through purposive sampling. For this study, convergent parallel design of mixed method research was used. The qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis and quantitative data was analyzed statistically. The results of the research show that civil works of SMC took precedence over academic works in all schools. It was found that one major area of academic involvement was that of increasing enrolment and regulating dropouts.

1. Background

One of the most important strategy in management of education, particularly elementary education has been mobilizing community and its resources. More than anytime else, today there is global consensus that for improving the system of education involvement of community is a prerequisite. The policy-makers, educators, scholars and civil societies across the globe have been striving hard to attain the goals of universalization of education and as such participation of community in education has been acknowledged as the most crucial strategy in achieving these goals. The Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien (1990) and the UNESCO Delhi Declaration (1994) have provided for a necessary momentum to the community participation movement across the Globe. In India community participation in education is not a novel approach. It has existed since time immemorial as community has always been thought as an integral part of the educational set up. The centralized approach to education that existed after Independence was severely criticized (Wankhede&Sengupta, 2005) and a notion prevailed that everything belonged to the government and not the community. This idea was not sustainable as centralization of powers failed to make any significant changes on the quality of education. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) clearly emphasized the need for decentralization of school education and as such involvement of local bodies in the processes. As per the Commission, the immediate goal was to associate communities with the schools in their locality. These provisions were taken further by the National policy on Education (1986), and community participation as an important measure for ensuring decentralization in school education got another major boost. The Policy laid primary emphasis on decentralized planning and management of elementary education in the country. Village Education Committees (VECs) for supervision and management of school education at the village level was visualized by the policy as an element of community participation. The Village Education Committees were further strengthened by the Programme of Action (POA)

1992 which clearly entrusted the State Government for laying down general guidelines regarding the constitution of village education committees and established norms of accountability for the Heads of these institutions. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provided for decentralization and facilitated the transfer of power and participation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). But it was not until 2002 when the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) assigned greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. This has been taken further by the Right to Education Act 2009. The act also recognizes the role of local governance in school education by necessitating the formation of a School Management Committee (SMCs) in each school.

Community involvement and participation in education is the essence of the RTE act, even if the idea of grass root governance and community participation has existed since time immemorial in India. The provisions of the RTE Act, thus offers a potential space for communities coming together in support of education to create a joint process of synergy. Section 21 (states that the SMC will consist of elected representatives, local educationist, parents or guardians of children admitted in the schools and teachers. It also provides for "proportional representation "of parents or guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged group and weaker section. The section further provides fifty percent reservation for women. The second part of Section 21 lists down in detail the functions of the SMC. The functions are as follows:

- To monitor the working of the school.
- To prepare and recommend school development plan.
- To monitor the utilization of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority.
- To monitor the enrolment and attendance of all children from the locality.
- To monitor the identification and enrolment of CWSN.

- To ensure that all children are provided with facilities and materials till the completion of elementary education.
- To monitor the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal and other Government school schemes.
- To monitor the maintenance of norms and standards prescribed in the Act which includes classrooms, school facilities, teacher-pupil ratios, etc.
- To monitor the attendance and punctuality of teachers.
- To monitor the attendance of students
- To monitor enrolment and regulate dropouts
- To prepare an annual account of receipts and expenditure of the school.
- To ensure that meeting of SMCs and teachers should be conducted on a regular basis.
- Daily interaction with students, teachers and other community members.
- To ensure that teachers are not burdened with non-academic duties.
- To protect children from any type of mental and physical harassment.
- To monitor the implementation of the special provision for children who are out of school and who have not completed elementary education.
- To monitor school activities regularly.
- To share school development plans in gram Sabha (village council meetings).
- To review the overall performance of the School Management Committees.

2. Review of Literature and Rationale of the Study

Pailwar and Mahajan (2005) in their assessment of Janshala experience of community involvement in education in Jharkand concluded that community members have provided support in the form of “physical labour” (such as cleaning the schools, constructing approach roads to the schools, painting the schools and also furniture repairing. **Khator (2014)** in an article entitled ‘SMCs bringing back students to classrooms in remote Uttar Pradesh’, stated that areas in which the SMCs had undertaken crucial work was the beautification of school compound, purchasing of furniture, fencing of the school and quality and nutritional mid-day meal. **Reddy & Devi (2015)** conducted a study to identify the level of community participation and strategies adopted for its mobilization in the functioning of the schools in Andhra Pradesh concluded that the participation of the community in civil works was not significant.

Duwarah (2010) conducted a study on “Community Participation on Elementary Education in Assam. He concluded that VECs were working towards improving infrastructure, furniture, and other related aspects of the school. They also took measures for improving enrolment in the school, increasing attendance of the children, improving teaching learning process of the school, preparing qualitative teaching learning aids for the teaching learning process of the school etc. for total development of the school. **Wankhede and Sengupta (2005)** in their study of the Village Education Committees in West Bengal found that the VEC members in all

the studied schools involved in ensuring regularity and punctuality of attendance of the teachers, ascertaining use of the pedagogical methods taught in the training and looking after the level of learning of students. **Institute of Media Studies (2007)** carried out a study to ascertain the level of participation of VECs in ensuring quality education in schools of Balasore & Sundergarh district in Orissa. The sample comprised of 10 schools from 2 blocks of each district. Findings revealed that all VECs were involved in childrens’ enrolment, ensuring regular attendance of students and teachers in school, facilitating smooth conduct of teaching, organizing co-curricular activities. **Mishra & Gartia (2013)** investigated the role perception and performance of the VEC members with respect to the teaching learning processes in the school While 37% of the members agreed to their responsibilities in the preparation of study aids, only 5% of them actually performed some activities in that regard. In effect, 63% of the members did not agree to their role in preparing study aids.

One of the overarching findings from literature is that that the SMCs/VEC s do not have the capability to do academic monitoring or provide academic support. Civil works remains an important area where the SMC/VECs were found to be actively involved but an important insight is that even where the VECs/SMC members were actively engaged in monitoring or executing civil works, only one or two members (mostly the chair person or other influential members alongside the head master or head teacher) do the supervision. SMCs have been entrusted with tremendous responsibility in the overall development of the school. Civil and academic works are the most important areas of engagement. Mere presence of a SMC in a village may not transform the educational scenario so long as the members of these committees are not active and sensitized and allowed to perform their functions. The study is an attempt to understand the functioning of SMCs in elementary school of Sikkim.

3. Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been formulated for the study.

1. To assess the contribution of SMCs in management and supervision of civil work
2. To assess the contribution of SMCs in monitoring enrolment, retention and achievement of students.

4. Operational Definitions

School Management Committee: School management committees refer to those bodies which are constituted in all government and government aided elementary schools under RTE Act, 2009 for decentralizing the education system to make it more effective and to encourage participation of parents in decision making process related to the education of their wards. Under section 21(1) and 21(2) of RTE Act, 2009, the SMC is comprised of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents/guardians and teachers of children admitted in schools.

Monitoring and Supervision: refers to the monitoring and supervision works (civil and academic) allotted to School Management Committees as per the RTE Act, 2009.

5. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The present study was confined only to the civil and academic roles and functions of School Management Committees constituted vide section 21 of RTE Act, 2009 in elementary schools of two districts of Sikkim and as such the findings are therefore delimited to those two districts. The study was confined to Heads, Teachers, Chairpersons and SMC members of 40 selected Government junior high schools from two districts in the state of Sikkim.

6. Methodology

The investigator adopted convergent parallel design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the heads, teachers, SMC chairmen and parent SMC members of 40 government elementary schools under study with the help of school information schedule, questionnaires, interview schedules, classroom observation schedule and Focus Group Discussion schedule. The reason for combining both quantitative and qualitative data was to better understand this research problem.

7. The Results

The objective wise results have been discussed in the following sections

Major Findings and Recommendations on the participation of SMC in civil works

Major Findings

- Civil works of SMC took precedence over academic works in all schools.
- Majority of the parent members (81%) said that they looked after various civil works of the school.
- A high percentage of teachers (85%) and heads (70%) reported that the SMCs look into the functionality of washrooms
- Another major area of involvement was assuring the quality of mid-day meal as reported by a high percentage of members.
- Drinking water related issues were also looked after by SMC as reported by 80% of the chairman and 70% of heads.
- Various aspects of civil works were looked after by the SMC
- Electricity issues were also solved by some SMCs as reported by 22% of the school heads.
- Minor repair works and construction works were also undertaken by SMCs
- A little more than half (52%) of heads reported that SMCs took care of maintenance and construction of toilets at schools
- A very high percentage of heads (77%), teachers (76%) and chairman (75%) reported that construction of Drains and footpaths in the school had been undertaken by SMCs
- A very high percentage of school heads (72%) reported that SMCs were supervising the construction works at school

- A very high percentage (100%) of parent non SMC members reported that repair and maintenance of school building was undertaken by the SMC members
- 92% of the parent members also reported that drinking water facilities had improved in the school.
- More than one fifth (68%) of the non SMC parents reported that toilet facilities had improved with the help of SMCs
- It was observed that SMC members had taken personal involvement in construction works.
- It was also reported that contribution in materials for various civil works were also done by SMC members

Recommendations

Since SMCs are playing a major role in the civil works of the school, some form of remuneration could be introduced to ensure continued participation.

Transparency measures must be introduced particularly in works that involves major expenditures.

Major Findings and Recommendations contribution of SMCs in monitoring enrolment, retention and achievement of students.

Major Findings

- It was found that one major area of academic involvement was that of increasing enrolment as reported by cent percent chairmen and majority of the school heads (85%).
- Monitoring attendance of students was also done regularly by the SMC members as reported by a high majority of school heads (92%) and chairman (97%).
- The SMCs were not involved in the supply of teaching learning materials as reported by teachers.
- SMCs were also involved in preventing dropouts as reported by school heads (100%)
- Meeting with the immediate community was an important step taken for enrolment as reported by all the school heads (100%) and teachers (88%).
- In case of dropouts counseling the child and meeting his/ her parents was done regularly as reported by all the members.
- Informing higher authorities about enrolment and dropouts was another important measure as reported by more than a quarter of school heads (35%) and teachers (42%).
- An important measure of monitoring achievement was felicitation of meritorious students with cash/ prizes as mentioned by more than 70 % of parent members, 80 % of teachers and heads.
- There was regular discussion held with parents on results as reported by all the school heads (100%)
- Remedial teaching was also organized for slow learners as reported by (64%).
- Regarding retention organizing various types of activities (sports, games and cultural) in the school was looked as an important measure.
- Changes in mid-day meal menu was also looked upon as an important measure of retention.

- It was found that Committee had done nothing to address the issues of CWSN as a very high majority of parent non SMC members (85%) reported.
- A very high percentage of parents non SMC members (78%) reported that student's attendance had improved with the help of monitoring done by SMCs.
- It was also found out that in academic activities not all SMC members are equally involved.
- The nominated members and the chairman had taken the lead in academic activities and not the parent members.

Recommendations

- It is necessary to sensitize the SMC members and Panchayat members on the issue of differently abled and the need for mainstreaming them

- The functioning of SMCs should not be confined to chairman or Panchayat members. It should be a collective effort but SMCs, particularly parent members have to be trained to monitor various academic activities.

8. Conclusion

Community participation can play a great role in the overall development of the school. The school suffers on account of apathy and negligence of the community. SMCs as an institutionalized form of community participation must be nurtured and parents must be oriented properly so that the school benefits in all aspects

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