FUNCTIONING OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (SMCS) IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF TRIBAL AREAS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH: TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

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Abstract

The present investigation was undertaken to study the reflections of elementary school teachers regarding thefunctioning of School Management Committees (SMCs) in elementary schools of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. For conducting this investigation, survey method was employed and a total of 181 elementary teachers were selected from 60 schools situated in two tribal districts i.e. Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti of Himachal Pradesh. The data were gathered with the help of a self-developed questionnaire for elementary school teachers which contained both close-ended and open-ended items. The data were analyzed by employing frequency count and percentage analysis. It was pointed out by elementary school teachers that the SMC members are moderately aware about their role and responsibilities and was not much enthusiastic for participating in various school affairs. The SMCs in elementary schools of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh have been rated by teachers as moderately effective to less effective in terms of different educational aspects which has been explained in detail in this paper. In the last section of the paper, the findings have been discussed and recommendations have been made for improving the functioning of SMCs in tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords*: School Management Committees, Tribal Areas, Elementary Schools*

Universalisation of Elementary Education (U.E.E.) is an educational term refers to make education available to all children in the age group of 6-14 years. It signifies that education is for all and not for a selected few. This concept accepts that education is the birth right of every child. This means all children belonging to the rich and the poor living in towns as well as rural areas or hills and plains, which are accessible with difficulty; have to be provided with facilities for elementary education. Universalisation of Elementary Education involves Universalisation of provision, enrolment, retention and achievement.Universalisation of elementary education is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the

country. It is an opportunity for promoting social-justice through basic education, an effort at effectively involving the panchayati raj institutions school management committees, village and urban slum level education committees, parents-teachers associations, mother-teacher associations, tribal autonomous councils and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools. For ensuring education for all or the goal of UEE, many initiatives have been undertaken by the government in the recent past which included; operation blackboard (OB), district primary education programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). A recent effort in this direction is Right to Education Act, 2009 which came into force on 1st April, 2010. A brief detail about RTE Act, 2009 is given below:

Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 or Rightto Education Act (RTE) under Article 21A of Indian Constitution was enacted on 4 August 2009 which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 years in India. The Act provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. There is a provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them at par with students of the same age. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, 2009 (RTE Act) is a landmark legislation which has following provisions:

- Every child in the age group of 6-14 has the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school, till the completion of elementary education. Private schools will have to take 25% of their class strength from the weaker sections and the disadvantaged groups of the society through a random selection process. Government will fund education of these children.

- No donation and capitation fee is allowed.

- No admission test or interview either for child or parents.

- There is provision for establishment of commissions to supervise the implementation of the act.

- A fixed student and teacher ratio is to be maintained etc.

Specific provisions have also been made for democratization of schools and for parents and local communities to play their due roles in shaping and running of the schools. The school has to be viewed as a social organization, organically linked to the community. Community must have an effective say in the management of the school. Over the years, an almost complete disappearance of this space for the local community in managing schools, has significantly contributed towards the decline in the school quality. For communities to be

able to effectively play that role, they need to be oriented/ trained and supported. To engage with the school system, members of community need to develop technical skills like collection of relevant information, analyzing it and finally designing appropriate interventions, basing on norms set in the RTE Act. Keeping this in view, it has been made mandatory under RTE Act to constitute school management committees (SMCs) in schools.

School Management Committees (SMCs)

SMC has a very crucial role in actualizing the goals of RTE. It has tremendous potential to transform the existing system of education, characterizedby cynicism and a defeatist outlook of the system functionaries and stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Through its positive action and a constructive dialogue with other stakeholders, the SMC can work towards reinstating a well-functioning school system. Consistency of positive action by SMC will change the dynamics and solutions will begin to take shape, first at the local level and then at the larger systemic levels. The RTE Act envisions an SMC as the basic unit of a decentralized model of governance with active involvement of parents in the school's functioning.SMCs are primarily composed of parents, teachers, head teachers and local authorities. Active parental participation has the potential to improve the efficiency of a school as parents have the highest incentive to demand a better quality of education for their children.However, it has been witnessed that in government schools, the quality of education has declined to a great extent. The participation of local community in educational affairs is very low. The parental participation is not properly ensured in the schools. Previously constituted village education committees (VECs) in primary schools have not proved to be successful in realizing its goal of community involvement in school activities. The review of previous studies which shows the importance of community involvement also highlights such issues. A glimpse of some studies undertaken in past is provided here:

Tyagi (1999) revealed that nearly half of VEC members (4 to 5 members each) were not attending the VEC meetings regularly and not taking part in any school activities. They did not even know the specific objectives of these bodies. No efforts were being made by anyone to ensure that good people come to these committees who work with interest and devotion. There was neither any formal mechanism for decision-making nor there was any process for feed back to the VECs. One of the main difficulties which VECs face in performing their functions was that they didn't have any financial and administrative powers. Narayana and Chandrakant (2000) observed that no proper notice was given by the secretary of VEC to the members about the schedule of meeting. There was no proper representation in VEC of female and people belonging to reserved category. The educational authorities had

done little with regard to proper monitoring the VEC meetings. No or very little attention was being paid towards conducting any training programmes for the VEC members. On the other hand, Sujatha and Rao (2000) found that the VECs had been clearly involved in planning and implementation of educational intervention and conduct at least one meeting in a month. Interestingly more than 80 percent heads of the household, even those who were not VEC members, attended the VEC meetings. There were cases where the VEC collected money from the community and paid salary to the teachers from the community funds. In about three-fourth of the villages, new school buildings were also constructed by the community either by providing manpower or material or money. Apart from this, Patil (2004) found that the Gram Shikshan Samiti (GSS) members participated in enrolment scheme and they promoted education by checking attendance registers of centers after every three months. It was concluded that GSS understands its role in bringing about universalization of primary education, but still far, very few GSS had actually performed quality work. Rao (2009) revealed that the tribal community members were participating in some way or the other in school-related activities. These community level structures i.e. SEMCs play a key role in micro planning, especially in the development of a village education plan and school improvement plans. On the other side, it was pointed out by Yadav (2006) that there was no sharing of the responsibility among the VEC members while only four VECs have made contribution towards construction of classrooms and drinking water facilities. There was no coordination and rapport between Parent Teachers Association and the VEC although there were two representatives of PTA in each VEC. In the similar manner, it was indicated byBanerjeeet.al. (2007) that most parents do not know that a VEC exists, public participation in improving education is negligible, and large numbers of children in the villages have not acquired basic competencies of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It was suggested that in order to stimulate an active participation of village people in improving education, direct steps should be taken. It cannot be presumed that the mere presence of a VEC can create a basis for community-based activism that would substantially transform the educational scenario in these villages. In this context, it was remarked by Teron (2012) that SMCs were formed as per guidelines, itsregular meetings were conducted and training was imparted to SMC members regarding their roles and functions.However, it has been revealed by Nayak (2009) found that the working of the SMCs was not at all satisfactory. The meetings are either not held at all or, if held, they are just once in a year. One-third respondents stated that the SMC members did not attend the SMC meetings whenever they are held. Various problems perceived as impediments in the working of the SMCs were inadequacy of teachers,

poverty of members, lack of sufficient financial aids, lack of coordination among members, inadequacy of classrooms, lack of incentives for SMC members, political interference and reservation of SMC seats in the village community. Similarly, Owusu and Sam (2012) that SMCs were ineffective in the monitoring and supervision of head teachers', teachers' and pupils' attendance. Even though SMCs are not doing enough to assistteachers to improve teaching and learning, they are seen as very effective in solving school community relations. Verma and Singh (2014) reflect that VECs has played a good role in overall functioning of the school but need to strengthen the regularity of students and teachers in school. Initiative taken by VECs for the education of children with disability needs special attention.There is also a need for the VEC to report the educational deficiencies to higher authorities. The overall functioning of the present VECs need to be strengthened.

On the basis of review of previous studies, it appears that community participation is very essential for improving quality of education at elementary level. There is dearth of research studies in this area, especially in the state of Himachal Pradesh which is projected as one of the leading state in education sector in India. Hence, it was thought worthwhile by the researcher to undertake present investigation and study the reflections of elementary school teachers regarding functioning of these committees in tribal areas of Himachal. The study was undertaken with following objectives:

Objectives:

1. To study the views of elementary school teachers with regard to following aspects related to functioning of SMCs in tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh:

(i) Awareness among SMC members.

(ii) SMC-related teacher training programmes.

(iii)Impact of SMCs on various educational aspects.

2. To identify the problems in proper functioning of SMCs in elementary schools of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.

3. To suggest measures for improving the functioning of SMCs in tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.

Research Method Employed:

Survey technique under descriptive method of research was employed for present investigation.

Sampling:

The data were collected from i.e. Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh. A total of 60 elementary schools were selected from these tribal districts by

adopting incidental sampling technique. Further, a total of 181elementary school teachers were selected on the basis of their willingness to supply the required information related to functioning of SMCs in elementary schools.

Research Tool Developed:

For ascertaining the views and perception of elementary teachers regarding different aspects of SMCs and its functioning, a questionnaire was developed and validated by the researcher. This questionnaire was comprised of a total of 12 questions which were either close-ended or open-ended in nature.The content validity of questionnaire was appropriately ensured by the researcher.

Data Analysis:

Data collected with the help of questionnaire on an individual basis were analyzed with the help of frequency count and percentage analysis.

Main Findings of the Study:

On the basis of analysis and interpretation of data, the results were extracted which are given in Table 1 and Table 2:

Table 1 Reflection of Elementary School Teachers Regarding Functioning Of School Management Committees (Smcs) In Tribal Elementary Schools

Sr. No.	Item Statement/ Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Awareness level of SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities (i) High (ii) Moderate (iii) Low (iv) No Response	27 134 19 01	14.91 74.03 10.49 0.55
2.	Training provided to teachers for smooth operation of tasks assigned to SMCs (i) Yes (ii) No (iii) No Response	153 20 4	84.53 11.05 2.21
3.	Standard of utility of topics covered during training programmes for teachers (i) Very Useful (ii) Useful (i) Useless (ii) No Response	45 129 02 05	24.86 71.27 1.10 2.76
4.	Training techniques, strategies and technology employed in SMC related training programmes for teachers (i) Lecture Method	121	66.85

Sr. No.	Item Statement/ Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	(ii) Discussion Method	146	80.66
	(iii) Use of TV and Computer	68	37.56
	) Use of other Audio-Visual aids	67	37.01
	(v) No Response	09	4.97
5.	Extent of achievement of goals of training programmes		
	(i) To a great extent	26	14.36
	(ii) To some extent	138	76.24
	(iii) Not at all	05	2.76
	(iv) No Response	12	6.63
6.	Attendance status of SMC members in meetings		
	(i) High	28	15.46
	(ii) Moderate	139	76.79
	(iii) Low	11	6.08
	(iv) No Response	03	1.66
7.	Enthusiasm among SMC members for effective functioning of school		
	(i) High	79	43.65
	(ii) Less	94	51.93
	(iii) Forcibly enthusiastic	03	1.66
	(iv) No Response	05	2.77
8.	Annual evaluation of various school affairs/activities by SMC		
	(i) Yes	115	63.53
	(ii) No	52	28.72
	(iii) No Response	14	7.73
	If Yes, implementation of recommendations for further improvements		
	(i) Yes	77	66.96
	(ii) No	02	1.73
	(iii) No Response	36	31.30

Table 2 Impact of Functioning of Smcs on School Improvement

Sr. No.	Item Statement/ Responses	Frequency	Percentage
9.	Improvement in functioning and quality of school due to activation of SMC		
	(i) Yes	118	65.19
	(ii) No	44	24.30
	(iii) No Response	19	10.49
10.	Impact of SMC on following aspects: Improvement in enrollment and retention of students		
	(i) Very effective		
	(ii) Moderately effective	59	32.59
	(iii) Less effective	94	51.93
	(iv) Ineffective	13	7.18
	(ii) Improvement in girl education	05	2.77
	(i) Very effective		
	(ii) Moderately effective	109	60.22
	(iii) Less effective	46	25.41
	(iv) Ineffective	12	6.62
	Providing educational opportunity to children with special needs	04	2.20
	(i) Very effective		

(ii) Moderately effective	58	32.04
(iii) Less effective	101	55.80
(iv) Ineffective	10	5.52
Arrangement of education to SC, ST and OBC children	02	1.10
(i) Very effective		
(ii) Moderately effective		
(iii) Less effective	82	45.30
(iv) Ineffective	81	44.76
Arrangement of community mobilization programmes	06	3.31
(i) Very effective	02	1.10
(ii) Moderately effective		
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	35	19.33
ᵥi) Inspection and supervision of school activities	121	66.86
(i) Very effective	11	6.08
(ii) Moderately effective	04	2.21
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	77	42.54
(vii) Use of financial grant	52	28.72
(i) Very effective	101	55.80
(ii) Moderately effective	13	7.18
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	05	2.76
(viii) Maintenance of school infrastructure	53	29.28
(i) Very effective	95	52.49
(ii) Moderately effective	16	8.84
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	03	1.66
(ix) Management of different school resources	69	38.12
(i) Very effective	15	8.29
(ii) Moderately effective	10	5.52
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	32	17.68
(x) Maintenance of SMC record	124	68.51
(i) Very effective	11	6.08
(ii) Moderately effective	04	2.21
(iii) Less effective		
(iv) Ineffective	50	27.62
(v) No Response	94	51.93
	17	9.39
	10	5.52
	10	5.52

The major findings of the research study are presented below:

It was reported by a very large majority (74%) of elementary school teachers that SMC members were aware about their roles and responsibilities to a moderate extent. There were only about 15% elementary school teachers who remarked that SMC members were aware to a higher extent. It was further indicated by a very large majority (84.53%) of elementary school teachers that they were provided with training for smooth operation of tasks assigned to SMCs. Similarly, a large majority of teachers (71.27%) reported that the topics covered during training programmes were useful in nature. However, there was one-

fourth (24.86%) elementary school teachers who considered the topics covered during training programmes as very useful for them. The major techniques and strategies employed during SMC related training programmes included lecture method and discussion method. The use of TV, computers and other audio-visual aids during training programmes is not to a much extent. A large majority (76.24%) of elementary school teachers pointed out that the training programmes were successful only to some extent in terms of achievement of its goals.

A large majority of elementary school teachers (76.79%) reported that the attendance status of SMC members in meetings is moderate and majority of elementary teachers (51.93%) revealed that SMC members were less enthusiastic for ensuring effective functioning of schools. About two-third (63.53%) elementary school teachers indicated that SMCs are involved in evaluating various school affairs and activities on an annual basis. Further, two-third of such teachers also revealed that the recommendations on the basis of evaluation are implemented for further improvements in school functioning.

Table 2 shows the impact of functioning of SMCs on various educational aspects. It was observed that about two-third (65.19%) elementary school teachers agreed with regard to improvement in functioning and quality of school due to activation of SMCs. However, there were about one-fourth elementary teachers (24.30%) who were not in agreement with regard to this. A good majority (60.22%) of elementary school teachers rated SMCs as very effective in terms of its impact on improvement in girls' education. SMCs in tribal elementary schools have been rated as moderately effective in terms of providing educational opportunities to CWSN, community mobilization, managing different school resources, maintaining school records and improvement in students' enrolment and retention by majority of elementary school teachers (52% to 69%). Majority of elementary school teachers (55.80%) rated SMCs as less effective in terms of inspection and supervision of school activities and use of financial grant. With regard to impact of SMCs on arrangement of education to SC, ST and OBC children and maintenance of school infrastructure, 44.76% and 38.12% elementary school teachers rated the SMCs as moderately effective respectively.

The major problems in functioning of SMCs as perceived by elementary school teachers included; (i) lack of co-ordination between SMC members and teachers due to cultural differences (44.19%), (ii) less participation of male parents in school affairs (35.91%), (iii) lack of infrastructure and human resources in schools (27.07%), (iv) non-cooperativeness and unfavourable attitude of SMC members (26.52%), (v) lack of awareness and interest/zeal among SMC members regarding their functions and responsibilities

(20.44%), (vi) lack of funds with the school for development works (19.33%), (vii) non-completion of tasks started by SSA and RMSA in time due to administrative reasons (16.02%), (viii) less participation of SMC members due to unfavourable geographical conditions (14.36%), (ix) irregularity in conducting SMC meetings (13.81%), (x) lack of knowledge among parents regarding different education schemes and provisions (11.04%) and, (xi) paucity of time and resources with SMC members for contributing towards school improvement (11.04%).

For improving the functioning of SMCs, different suggestions were given by elementary school teachers which included; (i) ensuring proper co-ordination between teachers and SMC members (34.25%), (ii) making SMC members aware about their roles and responsibilities (33.14%), (iii) proper training should be given to SMC members and teachers (29.83%), (iv) educated and interested members (other than parents) should come forward in SMCs (24.86%), (iv) funds should be released through SMC (24.86%), (vi) ensuring full participation of SMC members (23.20%), (vii) SDP should be prepared scientifically (16.02%) and, (viii) proper inspection of SMC works should be ensured (11.60%).

Discussion of Findings and Implications

On the basis of findings of the present study, it may be concluded that elementary school teachers were of the opinion that SMC members are aware about their roles and responsibilities only to a moderate extent. This is not a healthy indicator for effective functioning of SMCs. Hence, it is required that SMC members should be made aware about their role and responsibilities through different means like, training programmes, awareness campaigns, publications etc. It has been observed that the teacher training programmes related to SMC functioning were mostly dominated by lecture and discussion method. As a result of this, these training programmes are not getting appropriate results. Therefore, it is recommended that modern training techniques and technologies should be employed in these training programmes so that these training programmes can achieve its goals to a greater extent. In order to improve the participation of SMC members in meetings and make them more enthusiastic, it is essential that the SMC members and teachers should develop proper coordination and feeling of mutual co-operation for ensuring effective functioning of schools. The elementary school teachers have rated SMCs in tribal areas as moderately effective in terms of providing educational opportunities to CWSN, community mobilization, managing school resources and improving students' enrolment and retention. This needs proper attention by the educational administrators and higher authorities. The role of SMCs in terms of inspection and supervision of schools and use of financial grants also needs due attention

from the concerned authorities. Moreover, there should be a provision for regular assessment of various tasks and activities undertaken by the school management committees in elementary schools of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.

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