

Problems Faced by the SMDC in Improvement of the Quality of Secondary Education System

DIPAK BHATTACHARYA* AND GOWRAMMA I.P.**

Abstract

Secondary education is that stage of education which helps students to become full members of a complex modern society. It develops individual's abilities, aptitudes, interests and qualities of character to the highest potential. The objective of the present study was to find out the issues and problems faced by the School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) in improving the quality of secondary school education system. The study was conducted on 100 SMDC members of 20 secondary schools of the sub-division of Contai (from the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal) by using the descriptive survey method. A self-developed questionnaire for head-teachers and teachers, and interview schedule for parents were used for collection of data. Then the data were analysed by using frequency and percentage. The findings of the study show that majority of the SMDC members have opined that ineffective schooling environment and teachers' role do not inspire dropout students to get back to schools. Close to fifty per cent of the participants viewed the lack of infrastructural facility in secondary schools as the major barrier faced by them in establishing quality education. The present study suggested that the higher authorities and local bodies should take necessary steps to remove different barriers faced by the SMDC members in improving the quality of secondary school education system.

*Lecturer, Radhanagar Government Primary Teachers' Training Institute, Howrah, West Bengal 711 312, India.

**Professor, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar 751 022, India.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education serves as a link between elementary and higher education in the Indian education setup. It is only through secondary education that an individual becomes capable of understanding the complexity of politics and political processes and prepares to contribute to the economic and social progress of the country (Aggarwal 2003). The Report of the Education Commission (1964–66) suggested ‘secondary education for four to five years prior to university education. The four years of secondary education are divided into two cycles—secondary corresponding to Classes IX, X and higher secondary comprising Classes XI and XII. It is clear that such usage of the term in terms of specific age range is essentially administrative’.

CURRENT STATUS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA AND WEST BENGAL

According to Flash Statistics (2015–16), there are about 2,39,148 secondary schools compared to 1,12,637 higher secondary schools in India. Among the total secondary schools in India, 42.26 per cent are government, 16.58 per cent are government-aided and 41.16 per cent are private. In India, the total enrolment status for secondary education is 3,91,45,052. The total number of teachers at the secondary level are 14,48,632. In India, the total Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 80.01 per cent (girls—80.97

per cent and boys—79.16 per cent). In India, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in enrolment at the secondary level is 1.02. 90.62 per cent students are getting promoted from Class VIII to IX, that is from the elementary to the secondary level. In India, out of those who appeared for the Class X examination, the percentage of students who passed is 79.21. The percentage of secondary schools with a drinking water facility is 98.89 and 96.53 per cent secondary schools have a toilet facility for girls.

According to Flash Statistics (2015–16), there are about 10,182 secondary schools compared to 6,898 higher secondary schools in West Bengal. Of the total secondary schools in West Bengal, 85.99 per cent are government, 0.71 per cent are government-aided and 13.3 per cent are private. In West Bengal, the total enrolment status for secondary education is 27,59,187. The total number of teachers at the secondary level is 69,952. In West Bengal, the total Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 83.56 per cent (girls—92.65 per cent and boys—74.92 per cent). In West Bengal, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in enrolment at the secondary level is 1.23. In West Bengal, 92.02 per cent students are transiting from Classes VIII to IX from elementary to the secondary level. In West Bengal, the percentage of students who passed Class X examination out of those appeared is 81.66. In West Bengal, 99.61 per cent secondary schools

have drinking water facility and 99.76 per cent secondary schools have a toilet facility for girls.

BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

According to the Right to Education Act, 2009, Section 21 mentions, that every elementary school will have to construct School Management Committee (SMC) so that effective monitoring mechanism can be established at the grassroot level (Rao 2011). But, SMC is mainly concentrated on the development of elementary education. To establish access, quality and equity in secondary education, there must be a supervisory committee in every secondary school. After launching the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)* in 2009, the framework suggested that every secondary school must constitute a School Management Development Committee (SMDC) for effective monitoring and community participation. SMDC can help in effective planning, monitoring, evaluation and ownership of the government programmes and implementation of interventions by the community in the secondary schools (RMSA Framework Guidelines for Community Mobilisation and SMDCs 2009).

SMDC members have a significant role in the improvement of secondary school education system. There are some major responsibilities

given to the SMDC members in the improvement of secondary school system (RMSA Framework Guidelines for Community Mobilisation and SMDCs 2009). Some of them are: (i) A school management and development committee shall be constituted in every secondary school. (ii) The SMDC shall meet at least once a month, and the minutes and decisions of the meetings shall be properly recorded and made available to the public. (iii) The SMDC will be responsible for all the activities including planning, collection of data, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and taking corrective remedial actions on all the components and interventions of the scheme—infrastructural as well as academic and others at the school level. (iv) The SMDC shall prepare a school level Perspective Plan and Annual Plan. (v) The SMDC, through various stakeholders should undertake extensive community mobilisation to overcome barriers for children belonging to the SC, ST, OBC and educationally backward minorities at the secondary and higher secondary stage. (vi) The SMDC can conduct civil works including repair and maintenance for the improvement of school facilities in accordance with the laid down rules and procedures. (vii) The SMDC can certify the maintenance and repair work undertaken in a school for which technical provisions need to be followed. The community's right to know the cost parameters has to be fully respected. (viii) The SMDC

will maintain all the relevant records for recurring as well as non-recurring expenditure. These records will be updated on a regular basis and placed before the Committee in every meeting. The records and progress on each component and intervention of the scheme will also be placed in the meetings of the Panchayat or urban local bodies. (ix) The SMDCs will inspect the work sites and take stock of the progress of recurring and non-recurring expenditure under various components of the scheme, of consumables, availability of required facilities and textbooks, status of education including teachers' attendance, students' attendance, conduct of teachers and students, quality aspects, law and order situation in and around the school premises, health condition and immunisation of students, equity aspects like problems encountered by girls, SCs/STs, children belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families and educationally backward minorities.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

It is evident that the SMDC members have a vital role in the improvement of quality of the secondary education system. All the SMDC members should be involved in different school activities and programmes for the implementation of a modern, advanced and effective education at the secondary level. Thus, it is the responsibility of every SMDC member to establish quality education at the secondary level. Some of the studies

relating to the problems and barriers for effective functioning towards bringing quality in secondary education are discussed in the following paragraph.

Mahiwal and Kumar (2017) in their study revealed that the major difficulties considered by teachers in SMDC were the 'shortage of funds in schools to fulfill the needs of the school', 'non-availability of guidelines regarding utilisation of school grants', 'lack of serious efforts from the Central and State Government for out of school children and drop outs' and 'no proper monitoring of in-service teacher training programmes'. Doley (2015) found that in most of the secondary schools, there was no provision of regular interaction with parents of the students; no local NGOs, social workers, experienced and skilled persons were invited to discuss the issues related to the school's progress and development. Muthoni (2015) found that the lack of funds both at the secondary school and government levels to initiate projects at schools, in addition to high poverty levels within the community make majority of the parents and community members not wanting to be involved in school management. Roul (2015) found that the total level of work motivation among secondary school teachers was moderate. Teachers were intrinsically motivated to work. Emenalo and Comillus (2013) found that the community members were not monitoring to ensure proper utilisation of funds

made available to the secondary schools. Okenwa (2013) found that the extent of community participation in the provision of the school plant in public secondary schools in Enugu state was low. Due to non-participation of community members in the functioning of the school, most of the buildings of public secondary schools are dilapidated and sagging. Ahmad and Said (2013) found that the principals of secondary schools had a very narrow understanding about the concept of parental participation in secondary education. They did not consider parents as stakeholders in the process of secondary education. Majority of principals did not know that parental participation could enhance students' academic achievements. Mupindu (2012) found that SMDC members were not aware about their roles and responsibilities. Further they did not have sufficient power to make decisions in the secondary schools. Gorret (2010) found that the lack of parental involvement in school management had been due to the parents' incapacity to play an active role in the school management. The involvement of parents in financial management was rated very low.

From the above discussion, it is clear that many researchers agreed that the lack of involvement of the community members is the major constraint in the improvement of the quality of secondary education. They also believed that poor infrastructural condition, lack of funds are the

major problems faced by the SMDC members in the improvement of the quality of secondary education. These agreements of the above discussed studies had motivated the researchers to study about the 'Problems Faced by the SMDC in the Improvement of the Quality of Secondary School Education System'. In this background, the investigators have raised the following research question for investigation—what are the issues and problems faced by the SMDC members in improvement of the quality of secondary school education system?

METHODOLOGY

The present study was a descriptive survey research. It was designed to collect appropriate information about the problems faced by the SMDC members in the improvement of the quality of secondary school education system. It was conducted in 20 secondary schools, and 100 SMDC members of the sub-division of Contai of Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal participated in this study. Out of the whole population (142 secondary schools), 20 secondary schools were selected as sample through simple random sampling technique. One head-teacher, two teachers and two parents were selected from each school. Self-developed questionnaire for head-teachers and teachers, and an interview schedule for parents were formulated and used for the collection of data. The data were analysed by using frequency and percentage.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to study the objective, a questionnaire was administered for head-teachers and teachers, and an interview schedule was used for parents and the questionnaires as administered on 20 head-teachers, 40 teachers and 40 parents in 20 secondary schools. All the selected SMDC members' responses were scored on the spreadsheet (Excel) and tabulated. Frequency and percentage were calculated with the help of the SPSS software and presented in the tables.

The researchers enquired from the SMDC members about their opinions regarding nine issues and problems faced by the SMDC in the improvement of the quality of secondary school education system. These included—(i) constraints in increasing enrolment at the secondary level; (ii) constraints in identifying, admitting and training the dropout students; (iii) barriers in establishing

quality secondary education; (iv) constraints in developing a 'School Development Plan' at the secondary level; (v) constraints in preparing the curriculum and textbook as per the NCF 2005 norms; (vi) constraints in the implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation; (vii) problems of participation in SMDC meetings faced by the SMDC members; (viii) problems in providing Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and basic infrastructure in the secondary schools; and (ix) problems in maintaining proper student-teacher ratio.

The responses given by all the 100 SMDC members with regard to the different challenges faced by them in their working are analysed. Similar concerns brought out by the participants in the open-ended response are grouped together and presented in the tables below. With regard to each of the problems, the reasons are identified and the numbers of participants bringing out the same concerns are presented.

Table 1
Problems Faced by SMDC Members during Enrolment of All Students
between 14–16 Years of Age

Reasons	Percentage
Low economic status of family does not inspire their children to study in secondary schools	43
Uneducated parents do not motivate their children to study in secondary schools	38
Ineffective teaching-learning process does not inspire adolescents to study in secondary schools	19

Majority of the SMDC members have viewed that the low economic status of families and illiteracy of parents discourage their children to study.

Majority of the SMDC members have opined that ineffective schooling environment and teachers' role do

not inspire dropout students to get back to schools.

Close to 50 per cent of the SMDC members have indicated that the lack of infrastructure in schools is the main reason that hinders the process of providing quality education.

Table 2
Constraints in Identifying, Admitting and Providing Training to Dropout Students in the Secondary School

Problems	Percentage
Lack of interest among dropout adolescents to get admission in secondary schools	30
Ineffective teaching-learning process does not motivate the dropout students to admit in secondary schools	23
Teachers are playing an ineffective role to identify the dropout adolescents	21
Parents are not showing interest to admit their dropout children in secondary schools	16
Lack of awareness among the administrators in providing training facility to the dropout secondary school students	10

Table 3
Barriers in Offering Quality Secondary Education

Problems	Percentage
Lack of infrastructural facility in secondary schools	47
Lack of skilled, professional teachers	22
Lack of community participation	15
Lack of awareness about government initiatives	16

Table 4
Constraints in Developing of 'School Development Plan' (SDP)

Problems	Percentage
Lack of awareness among SMDC members to prepare SDP	32

Lack of government (administrative) support to prepare SDP	20
Lack of funds to execute SDP	20
Lack of participation by parents to prepare SDP	14
Lack of participation by teachers to prepare SDP	14

One-third of the SMDC members believed that the lack of awareness among the SMDC members is the main constraint in preparing a School Development Plan. Lack of funds, administrative support and poor participation by the members are considered as other reasons.

Majority of the SMDC members have opined that as per the NCF 2005, since the government is taking full responsibility in curriculum and

textbook preparation, the SMDC members do not participate in it.

One-third of the SMDC members have viewed that the lack of skilled teachers is the major constraint in implementing CCE.

Table 7 shows that 32 per cent SMDC members have opined that 'lack of interest among parents to participate in SMDC meetings' is the major problem of participation in SMDC meetings. 30 per cent SMDC

Table 5
Problems Faced by SMDC Members during Preparation of Curriculum and Textbook as per the NCF 2005 Norms

Problems	Percentage
Curriculum and textbook does not reflect local needs	15
Government takes full responsibility to prepare curriculum and textbook at the secondary level	85

Table 6
Constraints in Implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

Problems	Percentage
Infusing skill and competency among teachers during in-service and pre-service training is not sufficient	34
Lack of seriousness among teachers to implement CCE	27
Government does not enforce implementation of CCE	22
SMDC does not show responsible behaviour to implement CCE	17

Table 7
Problems of Participation in SMDC Meetings

Problems	Percentage
Lack of interest among parents to participate in SMDC meetings	32
SMDC meetings are being dominated by the teachers	30
During SMDC meetings, parents' views have not been taken seriously	26
The SMDC meeting schedule is not prepared according to parents' work schedule	12

members have viewed that 'SMDC meetings have been dominated by the teachers due to which the parent SMDC members do not want to participate in SMDC meetings.

51 per cent SMDC members believed that the 'lack of funds provided by the government' is the major problem faced by the SMDC members in providing teaching-learning materials and basic infrastructure

in secondary schools (Table 8). Rest of the SMDC members viewed that secondary schools are unable to utilise funds properly for teaching-learning and infrastructural development.

Around 50 per cent SMDC members have opined that secondary schools are unable to maintain the required student-teacher ratio due to governmental unawareness in teachers' recruitment process.

Table 8
Problems in Providing Teaching-learning Materials and Basic Infrastructure

Problems	Percentage
Lack of funds provided by the government	51
Lack of proper utilisation of funds provided by the government	49

Table 9
Constraints in Maintaining Student-teacher Ratio in Secondary Schools

Problems	Percentage
Lack of awareness and action at the administrative level regarding recruitment of teachers at the secondary level	48
Lack of trained teachers (particularly in science subjects) in the state	10
West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) does not play active role in the recruitment of teachers at the secondary level	42

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

In the present study, majority of the SMDC members have opined that the 'low economic status of the family does not inspire their children to study in secondary schools', which is the major problem faced by the SMDC members in increasing enrolment of all students between the age-group of 14–16 years in their locality. Similar findings have been reported by investigators in the past too (Muthoni 2015; Mcdougall, Mensah, and Dippe 2012; Gorret 2010). They also revealed that the poor economic condition of a family is one of the important reasons for unsuccessful community participation in secondary education. In the present study, one-third of the SMDC members have viewed that the 'lack of interest among dropout adolescents to admit in secondary schools' is the major problem faced by SMDC members in admitting drop out secondary school students. There are researches (Das and Deb 2015; Shivam and Dkhar, 2012) in the past that have shown similar findings. They have reported that SMDC members are unable to admit dropout students in schools because they intrinsically are not encouraged to study and get admitted in schools.

In the present study, close to 50 per cent SMDC members have indicated that the 'lack of infrastructural facility in secondary schools' is the major barrier faced by SMDC members in establishing

quality secondary education. Some investigators (Okenwa 2013; Mupindu 2012) have envisaged similar situation in their studies. They revealed that due to the absence of good infrastructure, quality education cannot be established in secondary schools. In the present study, one-third of the SMDC members have agreed that the 'lack of awareness among SMDC members to prepare SDP' is the main constraint faced by SMDC members in developing of 'School Development Plan'. Although some researchers (Nana Adu Pipim Boaduo, Milondzo and Adjei 2009) found contrary results revealing the SMDC members' conscious involvement in the preparation of the school development plan and its execution. In the present study, one-fourth of the SMDC members believed that the 'non-involvement of local head-teachers, teachers and parents in the preparation of curriculum and textbook' is the main problem faced by the SMDC members during the preparation of curriculum and textbook as per the NCF-2005 norms. But Ahmed et al. (2013) found that some representatives from their management committee had participated in the curriculum preparation and got scope to express their views. In the present study, majority of the SMDC members have opined that the 'lack of funds provided by the government' is the major problem faced by the SMDC members in providing teaching-learning materials and basic infrastructure in

secondary schools. Some researchers (Okenwa 2013; Gorret 2010) agreed with this result expressing a similar situation in the context of their study also. In the present study, around 50 per cent SMDC members have viewed that the 'lack of awareness at the administrative level regarding the recruitment of teachers at the secondary level' is the main problem faced by SMDC members in maintaining student-teacher ratio in secondary schools. Certain studies (Project 2013; Mupindu 2012) in the past have found the same problem in the context they studied. They revealed that shortage of teachers seemed to be a major factor hindering the implementation of curriculum, and the administration is unaware about this.

In the present study, one-third of the SMDC members have opined that the 'lack of skilled teachers to implement CCE' is the major constraint in implementing CCE at secondary level and that the 'lack of interest among parents to participate in SMDC meetings' is the major problem of participation in SMDC meetings. Few researchers (Bhutia 2013; Gorret 2010) in the past have found similar findings in their study. They found that the rate of participation of community members in the activities for school effectiveness is very low. The present study also

found that 'insufficient infusing of skill and competency among teachers during in-service and pre-service training' is the major constraint in implementing continuous evaluation in the secondary schools. So, educational administration and government have to organise continued teachers' professional development programmes in such a way that teachers can gain clarity and can develop themselves professionally.

CONCLUSION

From the opinion of the SMDC members, it can be concluded that there are many problems faced by them in the improvement of the quality of secondary education. Low economic status of family, illiterate parents, lack of infrastructure, lack of funds, lack of skilled teachers, ineffective teaching-learning process, lack of community involvement are the major barriers in improvement of the quality of the secondary education. Necessary steps at the administrative level may be essential to reform present condition of the secondary level educational system. To eradicate the different barriers in the secondary education, all members of our society must take responsibility without any social, economic, political or regional discrimination.

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