

Role of School Management Committees in Promoting Elementary Education in Tribal Concentrated Areas in Meghalaya State

A Perspective Analysis

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Abstract

The crux of this paper is to analyse the role of School Management Committees (SMCs) in promoting elementary education in tribal concentrated areas based on a field study in Meghalaya state. This study is based on the schedules used for data collection and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held with the community members about the source of funds, management of funds, activities for school development plans, receipt of complaints and nature thereof, women participation, and specific actions taken on the school enrolment. The findings in this paper reflect a positive and motivating trend about the community's role in promoting elementary school education. However, to attain the constitutional provisions, public policies and programmes on the effective role of the community, especially in empowering the SMCs, more stringent measures should be taken uniformly, in a letter and in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The educational scenario in India was not at all encouraging at the time we

attained independence in 1947. The literacy rate of our country in 1947 was as low as 12 per cent which had

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gone up to 74.04 per cent with the male literacy rate being 82.14 per cent and the female literacy rate at 65.46 per cent in 2011 as per the report of the Census of India, 2011. Even as late as 2011, one would not fail to notice the difference between the male and female literacy rate almost after two or three years of enacting the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education falling in 6–14 years age groups under Article 21A of the Constitution of India.

Thus, the Government of India (GOI) has become one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child through the RTE Act, 2009; and has given the responsibility of managing the affairs of a school to the community through the SMC.

Review of Literature—A Brief Overview

Researchers and practitioners have documented for some time how schools and communities working together towards common goals can be beneficial. Communities can provide schools with a context and environment that can either complement or reinforce the values, culture, and learning in schools for their children or negate everything the schools strive to accomplish. Communities can also furnish schools (and the children in them) with crucial financial support systems, as well as the social and cultural values necessary for success and survival in contemporary society.

Local Community and School Collaboration

The local community including parents of children enrolled in the schools have important roles in ensuring the quality of education in schools and such involvement has made a difference (Aronson, 1996; Beveridge, 2005; The World Bank, 2006). In another study, Chowdhury et al. (2001) also expressed that, “In the wake of the existing problems of failure of the ‘top-down approach’ policy in educational management; the community participation in educational planning and management of the ‘down-top approach’ policy has been viewed as a key to success in developing countries in general”.

The local community has a direct or indirect impact on ensuring the quality school education consisting of home environment, support for education, local relevance and ownership to schools, community’s lack of skills and confidence, community’s lack of cohesion and experience in contributing to school management (Verspoor, 2005). School management often embraces determining the long-range goals of an organisation, designing, and developing the objectives, or short-range goals and determining both the human and material resources required for the attainment of the predetermined goals. It, therefore, sets both the ‘means’ and the ‘ends’ in an organisation (Okumbe, 1998).

Initiatives for Community and School Partnership by Government of India

Efforts made by the Government of India and the community to implement constitutional provisions, while universalising elementary education cannot be segregated as all such programmes have a strong component of local community participation. If we look at the history of India, then we will notice that it was towards the end of the 18th century that the voice to universalise elementary education was raised; and it was further reiterated by several Indian political leaders and social reformers. However, India was in a strong position to work in that direction only when it became independent in 1947. India had five year plans, and the planning Commission had worked out towards fixing the target dates for achieving universal elementary education. In 1966, the Kothari Commission proposed that it should be achieved no later than 1986. The National Policy on Education 1986 articulated that universal primary education should be achieved by 1990 (GoI, 1986). It was realised, by then, that it is not possible to bring all children to formal schools due to various reasons, including the number of children being extremely large and resources being meagre.

The GoI had launched the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) to increase enrolment, retention and

quality of education in schools at the primary level. This programme was focused on the universal access, equity and social inclusion, quality, inclusion, participation of community and civil society, school development, management, monitoring, grievance redressal and appraisal. All these aspects were identified and were duly covered under the RTE Act, 2009.

Provision for the SMC under the RTE Act, 2009

The RTE Act, 2009 is an instrument to convert constitutional directives to achieve the aim of universalising elementary education most appropriately. Based on the experiences, academic community has advised repeatedly elsewhere that it may not at all be wise to depend on Government initiatives to realise it, but the community must play a crucial role in working towards it. After the government is elected by us, we cannot escape our social responsibility—no matter how small it is. Community awareness programmes, parent-teacher associations, mother-teacher associations, volunteers attached to schools, and welfare groups are examples of magic support to the national endeavour.

The SMC is one legal set-up under the RTE Act, 2009, and model rules prescribed under the act have specified the role and functions of the SMC for managing a school. The prime responsibility of SMC is to help in monitoring and improving the

overall functioning of school, so that it may facilitate learning for children. An SMC consists of 75 per cent of its members from the community, so it ensures community participation through involvement in school management. The composition, roles and functions of an SMC have been elaborated, and described elsewhere under various sections of the act.

Concerns about Community Participation in Schools

The RTE Act, 2009 recognises the parents and community as important stakeholders in their children's education, and has vested them with some powers (GoI, 2009) through formation of SMCs in the schools. The 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. The RTE Act 2009 stipulates that SMCs should monitor the working of school (mid-day meal provision, toilet facilities, teacher attendance, etc.), monitor the utilisation of grants received from the government, local authority or any other source, and prepare and recommend the annual and three-year School Development Plans (SDPs), which address infrastructure, academic achievement, etc. These plans should collectively feed into creating an Annual Work Plan (AWP) for a district, and subsequently, for the state.

According to the GoI and policy brief on SMCs by the central square foundation on Accountability Initiative (2014), it was reported that—all States/UTs have notified their state-specific SMC rules, and around 95 per cent of schools that have SMCs have made the SMC President a joint bank account holder with the head master of school to facilitate the SMC's entitlement over grant expenditure.

Nawani (2017), reported that all States/UTs reported the existence of SMCs in 95 per cent of schools during 2015–16. Allegedly, most of them existed only on paper; where they did exist, they did not prepare SDPs and did not get the required grants for their schools. Since there is no homogeneous community of parents across India, their position and ability to impact the functioning of schools is influenced vis-à-vis due to diversified (heterogeneous political-social-educational-economic) status in the society. It would, therefore, be immature to view all parents through the same lens and regard the constitution of SMCs as a sign of empowerment.

However, the constitution of SMC is plagued with several issues, namely, lack of awareness and clarity around roles, lack of funds, absence of competence and training to prepare SDPs, and most importantly, lack of the autonomy and ability to question school authorities.

National Education Policy 2020

The GoI released the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

This policy document specifically advocates the importance of SMCs on various issues including:

- Ensuring participation and learning through monitoring children's attendance in school, and tracking out-of-school children.
- Involvement in setting up school culture, which encourages excellence, curiosity, empathy and equity.
- Sensitisation of SMCs on caring and inclusive school culture continuously.
- Endorsement by the SMCs on periodic (annual or higher frequency) performance appraisal of teachers.
- Efficient resourcing and effective governance through the School Complexes Management Committee (SCMC).
- Involvement in nurturing the culture of planning, both short-term and long-term goals, for the school including human resources, learning resources, physical resources and infrastructure, improvement initiatives, financial resources and educational outcomes.

Keeping in view the importance of community involvement, the present study is being proposed and executed. The study is exploratory having an in-depth approach to assess the role of community in promoting elementary school education at the grass roots level in the tribal concentrated areas of Meghalaya state.

Research Methodology of Study

The study covered data items (source of funds, management of funds, activities for SDPs, receipt of complaints and nature thereof, women's participation, and specific actions taken on enrolment) for assessing the role of community in promoting elementary education.

The members of SMCs, parents and parents' teacher associations, executive members of elementary schools and some community members of Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural, local bodies and urban areas were considered for constituting the population and sample to assess the awareness and perception of the community about SMCs. The convenient sampling method under the non-probability sampling method was applied in selecting community members for the study. The criterion for selection of community members was based on their readiness and willingness to be interviewed.

The research tools for SMC members and parents of elementary schools were developed for collecting information, and these tools were further, tried out in the field conditions in the year 2018–19, and thereafter, it was finalised based on the feedback received.

The Meghalaya Government provided the administrative support for data collection. Twenty-five respondents were randomly selected, namely, Local Authority (LA) as SMC Member, parent as SMC member, parent from children of primary

section and parent from upper primary section from the selected schools. As such, 100 respondents constituted the sample. The tools for data collection were administered by the Cluster Resource Center Coordinators during December 2019 to January 2020, and collected data were entered in the MS Excel Sheets, and processed for tabulation and analysis.

Results and Discussions

The data concerning SMCs about source of funds, separate bank account for funds managed, activities for SDPs, receipt of complaints, ability to receive complaints, nature of complaints received, women participation, rating of women participation, specific action taken on enrolment and rating of involvement on school enrolment of Drop Out School Children (OoSC), girl students, Scheduled Cast (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Economically Backward Minority Community (EBMC) children in the schools were collected in face-to-face mode. The responses received from the community members were segregated and analysed at four levels, namely, SMC members at two

levels—members as LA and parents, and parents at two levels—parents of children from primary and upper primary sections.

Awareness of Community Members about Funds for the SMCs

The SMCs are responsible for preparing an annual account of receipts and expenditures of the school. They need to estimate the financial requirements, i.e., undertake a budgeting exercise in the school to fulfil all norms under the RTE Act 2009. In this regard, Figure 1 presents the distribution of per cent response by community members on the source of funds for the SMCs.

It is evident from Figure 1 that on average, nearly 84 per cent of community members (92 per cent SMC members as LA, 76 per cent SMC members as parents) were aware of the source of funds coming from the SMCs. The raw data spreadsheet also revealed that 16 per cent of community members had not responded on the issue of the source of funds, thereby, such members had at large no idea about the annual

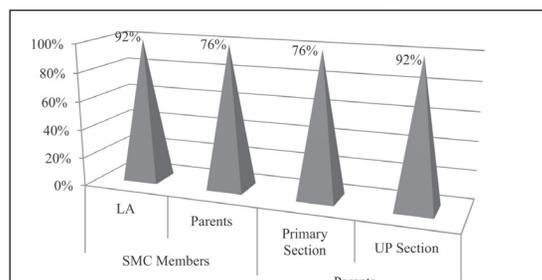


Figure 1: Distribution of per cent response by community members on source of funds for the SMCs

receipts and expenditure of funds for the SMCs.

The table 1 presents details of the perceptions of community members about the source of funds for SMCs. The source of funds for SMCs five levels for responding community members such as, school budget, Cluster Resource Centre (CRC), Block Resource Centre (BRC), District Education Office (DEO) and State Education Office (SEO).

From Table 1, it may be viewed that nearly 84 per cent of community members had responded in favour of their awareness about the source of funds coming for SMCs. The maximum number of members perceived in favour of the DEO (30 per cent) as the main source of funding, followed by the SEO (26 per cent) and BEO (23 per cent). All community members had clear-cut perceptions

that funds are not coming from the CRC for SMCs.

Awareness of Community Members about Funds Managed by the SMCs

The financial powers vested in the SMCs are essential for effective school management under provisions of the RTE Act 2009. In this regard, Table 2 provides information regarding the awareness of community members on a three-point rating scale about separate bank accounts for funds managed by the SMCs.

The table 2 indicates that only 70 per cent of responding community members were aware of the separate bank account for funds for SMC in the schools. However, 20 per cent of community members were either not aware or 10 per cent community members do not know about separate bank accounts managed by the SMC

**Table 1
Perceptions of Community Members about Source of Funds for the SMCs**

Source of Funds for SMC	Perceptions of Responding Community Members (in per cent) as				
	SMC Members		Parents of Children		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
School Budget	6	4	1	5	16
CRC	0	0	0	0	0
BRC	7	3	5	8	23
DEO	7	5	9	9	30
SEO	6	7	9	4	26

Table 2
Awareness of Community Members about Separate Bank Account for Funds managed by the SMCs

Awareness about Separate Bank Account for Funds	Responding Community Members (in per cent) as				
	SMC Members		Parents of Children		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
Yes	19	16	19	16	70
No	5	4	4	7	20
Don't know	1	5	2	2	10

in the schools, and surprisingly, 24 per cent of SMC members belonging to local authority fell into this category even after passing 10 years or more on the enactment of RTE Act 2009 in the country. It became clear during FGDs that the head teachers had sole control over the financial activities of the school. Other than head teachers, only those SMC members who had some idea about finances for the schools were enjoying some kind of power locally by being educated or politically connected.

The community members belonging to all levels had perceived that funds were inadequate, and it was found that 71 per cent of the per cent counts. The community members also gave justification for their answers about the inadequacy of funds as received by the SMCs. It was reported that foodgrains were not sufficient for children due to an

increase in school enrolment. The money is insufficient for maintaining the schools towards the expenses on extra teachers' salaries, repairing and other items of expenditure. However, Figure 2 provides perceptions of the community on the inadequacy of funds for the SMCs. Accordingly, more than 60 per cent of either SMC members (LA or parents) or Non-SMC members (parents from primary and upper primary sections) had confirmed about inadequacy of funds for the SMCs.

In addition, it became clear during FGDs that the state officials seldom visited the school, training for community members was scanty and therefore, there was no sense of ownership that the members of SMCs had towards the school management. All these resulted in the SMC members' reluctance to lose their daily wages when called for a meeting or training programme.

Perceptions of Community about Activities for SDPs as Planned by the SMCs

The RTE Act of 2009 empowers the SMCs to develop School Development Plans (SDPs). Henceforth, the community members through SMCs are essentially required to follow the prescribed methods to evaluate the demand and gaps present in the school to meet out the statutory norms, and put together SDPs to fulfil the existing gaps. The SDPs need to focus on all aspects of school, from

entitlements of children to school infrastructure, and community mobilisation to school teachers.

It is evident from data analysis that 76 per cent of community members responded in favour of partially complete activities for SDPs as planned by the SMCs. In addition, Figure 3 points out that most community members either as SMC members or as parents (non-SMC members) of children belonging to schools had stated that the task of activities for SDPs as planned by the

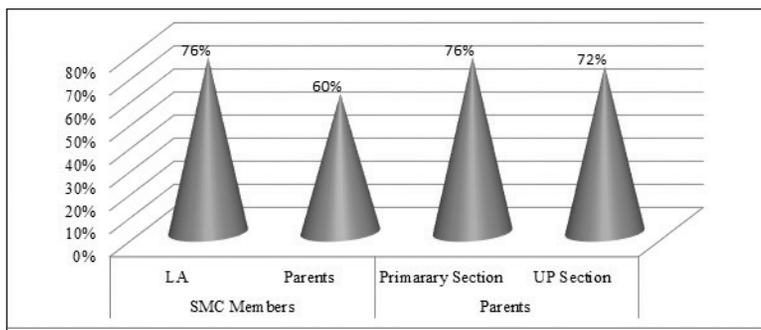


Figure 2: Perceptions of Community on Inadequacy of Fund for the SMCs

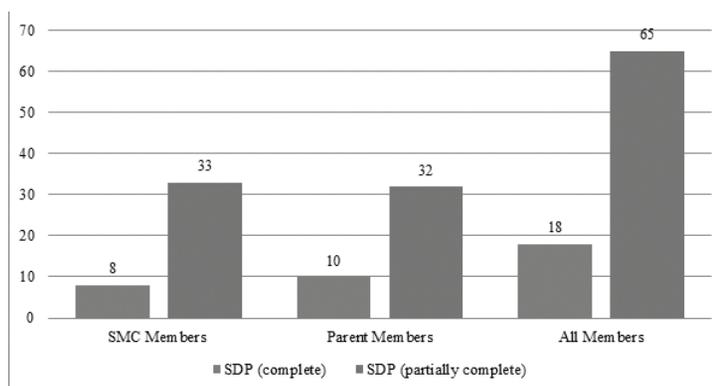


Figure 3: Perceptions of Community Members about Activities for SDPs as Planned by the SMCs

SMCs were partially completed in the schools. However, nearly 21 per cent of community members gave their opinion that SDPs as planned by the SMCs had been completed in the schools, while merely 3 per cent members perceived other activities.

As seen for the financial functions, the community members including SMC members who participated in the FGDs mentioned that it was mainly the head teacher of the school who was solely responsible for making the SDPs. The SMCs are seldom consulted transparently. In a system where the grants are fixed and no provision for flexi-funds is available, the idea of an SDP needs to be relooked more critically. Also, the head teachers gave their inputs that preparation of SDP had been an additional non-academic workload for them.

Perceptions of Community Members on Receipt, and Ability

to Receive the Complaints by the SMCs

The SMCs shall be the first level of grievance redressal mechanism at the school level for children, parents, and teachers as per the RTE Act, 2009. As such, Table 3 provides the details of the perceptions of community members on a three-point rating scale on receipt of complaints by SMCs.

It is evident from Table 3 that 83 per cent of community members responded that no complaints were received by the SMCs. Nearly 1 per cent of members responded that complaints were received by SMCs, and the nature of complaints as reported was about delay in the distribution of school uniforms to children including irregular payment of honorarium to cooks associated with the mid-day meal programme in the schools. It was unfortunate to find that nearly 16 per cent of community

Table 3

Perceptions of Community Members on Receipt of Complaints by the SMCs

Receipt of Complaints by SMCs	Perceptions of Responding Community Members (in Per cent) as				
	SMC Members		Parents		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
Yes	0	1	0	0	1
No	22	14	24	23	83
Don't Know	3	10	1	2	16

members had no idea about the receipt of complaints by the SMCs.

The table 4 depicts the details of the perceptions of community members regarding the ability to receive complaints by the SMCs.

Nearly 49 per cent of community members perceived that SMCs could receive the complaints, while 16 per cent of members responded that SMCs could not receive the complaints in the schools. Many community members, 35 per cent of total respondents, were not aware or more appropriately did not have awareness about the ability to receive the complaints by the SMCs.

As far as non-awareness among 35 per cent of responding community

the complaints by the SMCs. It may be recalled that the SMCs should take a keen interest in the functioning of schools, which was not evident from their awareness level about the ability to receive complaints and understanding of the real issues. Therefore, there was a lack of interest in community members in terms of performing their duties as the SMC members.

Perceptions of Community Members on the Nature of Complaints Received by the SMCs

The information on the nature of complaints as received by SMCs was collected from the community members about academic activities

Table 4
Perceptions of Community Members on Ability to Receive the Complaints by the SMCs

Ability to Receive the Complaints by SMC	Perceptions of Responding Community Members (in Percentage) as				
	SMC Members		Parents		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
Yes	15	10	12	12	49
No	2	5	6	3	16
Don't Know	8	10	7	10	35

members was concerned, it was reported that 51 per cent of SMC members and 49 per cent of parents (non-SMC members), respectively, were not aware of the ability to receive

of the school, teachers' attendance, basic facilities (drinking water, toilet, textbooks, uniform), school building, admission, and mid-day meal. From data analysis it is found that 38

per cent of community members perceived that complaints received by the SMCs were related to the basic facilities regarding drinking water, toilets, textbooks, and uniforms. However, nearly 28 per cent of community members responded that the nature of complaints received by the SMCs might be related to teacher’s attendance. Nearly 23 per cent of community members perceived that the nature of complaints received by SMCs in the schools were about academic activities of the school and mid-day meal-related issues, whereas 18 per cent of community members reported about school building and admission in the schools.

Figure 4 points out further the perceptions of responding community members, such as, SMC members and non-SMC members (parents) on

the nature of complaints as received by the SMCs.

It may be viewed from Fig. 4 that non-SMC members (parents) were more concerned than SMC members regarding the complaints associated with the school building whereas, the SMC members were more concerned about the nature of complaints on all other considered issues. However, in terms of percentage points, the responses received by the responding community members on the nature of complaints as received by the SMCs had been very low (less than 50 per cent in all cases), and this was a cause of serious concern in uplifting the elementary school education.

From the interviews and FGDs, it was reported that the community members were aware of the issues that the schools had been facing.

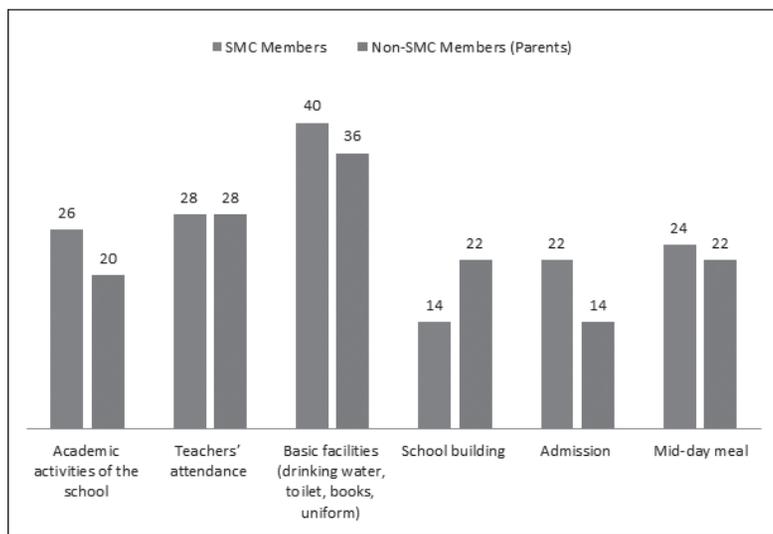


Figure 4: Perceptions of Responding Community Members on Nature of Complaints Received by SMCs (in per cent)

The community members were also informed about the nature of issues that SMCs had to deal with being a grievance redressal forum in the schools. In the opinion of the members, these issues (a) issues related to child entitlements like uniforms, mid-day meals, scholarships and textbooks, (b) issues related to the school building, toilet, boundary wall and so on, and (c) issues related to academics, such as teacher absenteeism, shortage of teachers and learning outcomes of children.

Perceptions of Community Members on Women's Participation in the SMCs

The participation of women as members of SMCs had been

mandated under the RTE Act 2009. Given this mandate, information about the perceptions of community members was collected. An analysis of data reveals that nearly 88 per cent of community members reported in favour of women's participation, and the remaining 12 per cent of members responded as non-participating women in the affairs of SMCs. The data item on the rating of women's participation in the SMCs in the schools was included in the tool. The responses from the community were recorded on a five-point rating scale. Accordingly, Table 5 presents the details of the perceptions of community members on the rating of women's participation in the SMCs.

Table 5
Perceptions of Community Members on Rating of Women's Participation in the SMCs

Rating of Women's Participation in SMC	Perceptions of Responding of Community Members (in Percentage) as				
	SMC Members		Parents		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
Very Active	6	3	2	3	14
Active	17	17	17	20	71
Neither active nor inactive	1	0	3	0	4
Inactive/Very Inactive/No Response	1	5	3	2	11

The data item was processed, and community members rated that women participation had been 'active' for 71 per cent followed by 'very active' for 14 per cent in SMC. Only 4 per cent of community members gave a rating as 'neither active nor inactive' on women's participation in SMC in the schools. As far as ratings on 'inactive' or 'very inactive' or 'no response' of women participation in SMC were concerned, it was reported 11 per cent only. The community members also provided inputs that women members took part regularly in the SMC activities and meetings

organised by the schools, and usually conveyed about their absence, if any.

Perceptions of Community Members on Involvement of SMCs in Enrolment of OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, EBMC Children

The data item on the rating of involvement of SMCs on enrolment of drop OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, and EBMC children in the schools was also considered, and accordingly, Table 6 presents the details of perceptions of community members on the rating of involvement of SMCs on enrolment drives and efforts.

Table 6
Perceptions of Community Members on Rating of Involvement of SMCs on Enrolment of Drop OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, EBMC Children

Rating of Women's Participation in SMC	Perceptions of Responding of Community Members (in Percentage) as				
	SMC Members		Parents		All Community Members
	Local Authority	Parents	Primary Section	Upper Primary Section	
Very Active	6	3	2	3	14
Active	17	17	17	20	71
Neither active nor inactive	1	0	3	0	4
Inactive/ Very Inactive/ No Response	1	5	3	2	11

The responses from the community were recorded on the five-point rating scale, namely, 'very active', 'active', 'neither active nor inactive', 'inactive' and 'very inactive'. Table 6 presents the details of perceptions of community members on the rating of involvement of SMCs on enrolment of drop OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, and EBMC children. It is quite evident from Table 6 that nearly 80 per cent of community members responded that SMCs were actively involved in the enrolment of drop OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, and EBMC children. However, only 1 per cent of community members responded that SMCs acted inactively on enrolment of referred children in the schools. The community members also provided examples in support of their answers as—teachers were involved in counselling with parents, and community members visited children's homes and invited them to join the schools.

FINDINGS

- Community members (84 per cent) had responded in favour of their awareness about the source of funds coming for the SMCs. They perceived in favour of the DEO (30 per cent) as the main source of funding, followed by the SEO (26 per cent) and BEO (23 per cent).
- Community members (70 per cent) were aware of the separate bank accounts for the SMCs. Surprisingly, 24 per cent of SMC members belonging to local authority were not aware of bank accounts even after passing 10 years or more on the enactment of RTE Act, 2009 in the country. It became clear during FGDs that the head teachers had sole control over financial activities of the schools.
- Community members (71 per cent) perceived that funds were inadequate for the schools, and provided their justifications about the inadequacy of funds for schools due to increase in school enrolment, expenses on extra teachers' salaries, repair, and other items of expenditure.
- During FGDs, it was reported that government officials seldom visited the schools, and trainings for community members were not adequately conducted. There was least sense of ownership that SMC members had towards the schools. The SMC members were reluctant to lose their daily wages when called for a meeting or training programme.
- Community members (76 per cent) responded in favour of partially completed activities for SDPs as planned by the SMCs. However, 21 per cent of community members gave their opinion that the SDPs as planned by SMCs had been completed in the schools.
- As seen for the financial functions, the community members including SMC members who participated in the FGDs mentioned that it

was mainly the head teachers of the schools who were solely responsible for making the SDPs, and SMCs were seldom consulted transparently.

- Community members (83 per cent) responded that no complaints were received by the SMCs. Nearly 1 per cent of members responded that complaints were received, and the nature of complaints as reported was about delay in the distribution of uniforms, irregular payment of honorarium to cooks associated with the mid-day meal. It is unfortunate to find that 16 per cent of members have no perceptions on the receipt of complaints by the SMCs.
- SMC Members (81 per cent) did not have awareness about receipt of complaints in the schools, whereas parents (19 per cent) of children of elementary schools were not aware in this regard. Community members (49 per cent) perceived that SMCs could receive the complaints, while (16 per cent) members responded that SMC members could not receive the complaints in the schools. About 35 per cent of total respondents were not aware or more appropriately were not aware of the provision to table complaints to the SMCs. As far as non-awareness among 35 per cent of responding community members was concerned, it was reported that of SMC members (51 per cent) and parents (non-SMC members) (49 per cent) of children attending the elementary level schools respectively, were not aware of the ability to receive the complaints by the SMCs.
- Community members (38 per cent) perceived that complaints received by the SMCs were related to the basic facilities regarding drinking water, toilets, books, and uniforms. However, 28 per cent of community members responded that the nature of complaints received by the SMCs were related to teacher's attendance. Nearly 23 per cent of community members perceived that the nature of complaints received by SMCs were about academic activities and mid-day meal-related issues, whereas 18 per cent of community members reported about nature of complaints regarding admissions and school buildings.
- Parents (non-SMC members) were more concerned than SMC members about the complaints associated with the school buildings whereas, the SMC members were more concerned about the nature of complaints on all other considered issues. However, in terms of per cent points, the response received from community members on the nature of complaints as received by the SMCs in the schools had been very low (less than 50 per cent in all cases), and this was a cause of serious concern.
- Nearly 88 per cent of community members reported on women's

participation in the affairs of the SMCs. Community members rated women's participation as 'active' for 71 per cent, followed by 'very active' for 14 per cent in SMCs. Only 4 per cent of community members gave a rating as 'neither active nor inactive' on women's participation in the SMCs.

- Community members (38 per cent) perceived that community members took special actions on the enrolment of drop-out of school children. Only 4 per cent of community members perceived those special actions were taken on the enrolment of SC and Muslim children.
- Community members (79 per cent) responded that SMCs were actively involved in the enrolment of drop OoSC, Girls, SC, ST, and EBMC children. However, only 1 per cent of community members responded that SMCs acted inactively on the school enrolment-related issues.
- Funds were inadequate for the schools, having justifications due to increase in school enrolment, expenses on extra teachers' salaries, repair work, and other items of expenditure.
- Trainings for the community members were reported inadequate, members were reluctant to act as SMC members due to loss of their daily wages.
- Head teachers were mainly involved in developing the SDPs, and SMC members were seldom consulted transparently.
- SMC members did neither receive nor were aware about the receipt of complaints in the schools. However, complaints were mainly on delay in distribution of uniforms, teacher's attendance, academic activities, admissions, school building, mid-day meal-related issues including irregular payment of honorarium to cooks, etc.
- Active women's participation in the SMCs was reported. Community members were involved in the enrolment of drop-out of school children.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions have been derived based on the information obtained from various schedules and FGDs, and reflect a positive and motivating trend concerning the roles of community members in the school management as below:

- Aware about source of funds and separate bank accounts for the SMCs, and head teachers had sole control over the financial activities of the schools.

The applicability of above conclusions would be within the prerogative of readers who might consider to what extent and in what context these results would be applicable. The conclusion of the present paper on the roles of community members, therefore, would be confined to the specific rural tribal area of Meghalaya state.

However, to attain the goals of RTE Act 2009 including provisions of NEP 2020, more stringent measures should be taken uniformly by the state, especially in empowering the SMCs in letter and in spirit.

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