

# 10

## Understanding the Role of School Management Committees (SMCs) in the Context of Effective Implementation of the Right to Education Act - 2009

Pooja Singh\*

### INTRODUCTION

People's participation is fundamental to the success of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) and for proper implementation of Right to Education Act (RTE). The objective of equitable quality for all children can be attained only with active participation of all stakeholders including parents, teachers, community, civil society and children. We have not been able to attain community support and implement effective strategies for community mobilization. It is required for translating RTE from a legal framework on paper to a vibrant movement on the ground.

Local governance of education is not a new phenomenon in India after independence. Education is a subject in concurrent list. Under the concurrent list, the central government is expected to have a meaningful partnership with the state governments for educational development. Further, local self-

governments, viz. Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural areas, Municipalities in urban areas have been entrusted with the responsibility of education of children in order to make the system more decentralized and responsive to local requirement through community participation and ownership. However, the decentralization of educational management has not taken its shape and structure even after more than two decades for effecting desirable changes.

Responsibility for implementation of the RTE Act has been vested to "appropriate government" at central, state and the community level. Local authority is defined under Section 2(h) of the RTE Act as: "local authority" means a Municipal Corporation or Municipal Council or Zila Parishad or Nagar Panchayat or Panchayat, by whatever name called and includes such other authority or body having administrative control

---

\*Consultant, SSA, Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, New Delhi-110016

over the school or empowered by or under any law for the time being in force to function as a local authority in any city, town or village; ...

The expectations from the local education authority have become considerably high in the Act. School Management Committees (SMCs) have a significant role to play in the local governance and functioning of schools under the RTE Act (2009). The Act gives immense importance to SMCs as the decentralized structure in which the parents will have a very significant role to play. The RTE guideline mentions specific functions to be performed by SMCs, which are:

- Monitor school activities and its working.
- Prepare and recommend School Development Plan (SDP).
- Supervising and supporting implementation of SDP.
- Supervision/monitoring of finance, management, academic progress, distribution of entitlements and other functions.
- Ensuring accountability and transparency in the system through the social audit mechanism.
- Keeping proper accounts of the fund available and its utilization
- Creating and maintaining an educational database.
- Co-ordinating with the local authority, generating funds from other sources for development of schools.
- Monitoring academic progress of the children.

- Instituting social audit mechanism and processes to bring transparency in the system and ensuring universal participation.
- Monitoring teachers' and students' attendance.
- Monitoring Mid-day Meal.
- Ensuring 100% enrolment of children in the age group of 6-14 years.

### **Need for Empowering SMCs**

Proper exercise of their powers by parents through the formation of SMC can be instrumental to initiate a process of improving schools. The SMCs will provide the support system to ensure that provisions pertaining to duties of the teacher as well as prohibition of private tuition are fulfilled. It will also monitor that teachers are not burdened with non-academic duties and take steps for making school development plan as per the requirement of the schedule of RTE Act. Apart from requirements of infrastructure facilities, adequate attention has to be paid by the SMC to quality issues including teacher training, teaching-learning materials in schools and use of child-friendly assessment methods. The SMC can also act as a bridge between community and school for garnering resource support. For communities/parents to be able to effectively play their role in SMC, they need to be empowered. This is required as it is seen that there is lack of knowledge and skills in

planning and management regarding the functioning of SMCs. An article by Emmanuel, L. (2012) reveals that (i) the SMC members were not even aware that they were members of SMC, (ii) members were not able to make the connections between their attending meetings and the quality of outcomes in the school, and (iii) sometimes they are made SMC member by the headmaster, and are never told what their roles and responsibilities are. Various researches by government and non-government agencies on the effectiveness of these bodies brought to light that they were not able to discharge their expected functions. It was found across states, that many SMC members were not aware of their membership of any such committees, let alone their roles and their powers. Some who were aware could not exercise their powers because of the non-facilitative, hostile environment and a lack of training. In many cases these committees were packed with those whose children were not enrolled in those schools. All these experiences bring to the fore, the importance of proper composition and representation in such a body during the process of formation and the need to equip the members to discharge their role and functions.

### **Formation of SMC**

RTE Act, 2009 has provided specific guidelines for the development of SMC in schools. A School Management Committee is required

to be constituted for all the schools, except unaided schools as per section 21 of the RTE Act. The SMC should comprise parents, local authority and school teachers. Keeping in view the heterogeneous nature of the community and the power relations that exist, the Act has tried to ensure representation of different segments of the community in the SMC, especially earmarking fifty per cent seats for women. In the Central Model Rules, the composition suggested is as follows:

- Three-fourth (75%) members of the SMC from the parents/guardians. From them 50% will be women. Weaker sections will be represented in the SMC in proportion to their population in the village.
- Rest one-fourth (25%) will consist of representatives of local authorities, school teachers, academicians/students.
- Proportionate representation will be given to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections. Community members and parents should be aware of the roles of the SMC and the process of its formation. The quality of the SMC will directly depend on the level and quality of the participation of parents. Therefore, it is necessary that parents should be sensitised with respect to the provisions of RTE Act, the roles and responsibilities of the SMC, and also their accountability towards the Committee. Village

youth and women (in particular SHGs, wherever they exist) need to be especially trained to play an effective role in ensuring proper functioning of the SMC. A general observation is that mothers express more concern and are better informed about their children's education. So, provision of effective training and orientation to the SMC members and adequate sensitization and mobilization of parents, especially mothers, will pave the way for democratic and effective functioning of the SMCs.

### **Empowering SMCs**

Specific provisions have been made under RTE Act-2009 for democratization of schools and for parents and local communities to play their due roles in shaping and running of the schools in the form of School Management Committee (SMC) and preparation of School Development Plan. For communities to be able to effectively play that role, they need to be empowered and supported. This can be achieved by employing specific strategies like training, orientation, awareness campaigns, nukkad natak, media campaigns, etc. Training SMC members would be an important area of NGO involvement. The Act clearly outlines the functions to be performed by SMCs. It is, therefore, important that training covers issues like key provisions of the RTE Act-2009, preparing school development

plan, generating information using the school records, School Mapping and Focus Group Discussion.

### **Helping SMCs to Plan Better**

Empowered and technically equipped SMCs would be crucial for bringing in improved quality in school education of our children. The area where SMCs would need help are :

- SMCs should be able to focus on tracking each child's progress and continuously monitor critical indicators. For this the records of attendance and achievement must be generated through systematic record keeping and made available to SMCs for school level planning and monitoring.
- Maintaining detailed financial records of income and expenditure of school.
- Meetings of SMCs must be conducted by school on a regular basis and should include discussion about participation of children in school, their access and retention in education as well as funding and expenditure of school activities.
- SMCs need resources to build capacity and awareness among members to help them assess needs and requirements for effective teaching-learning in schools. Guidelines and checklists are needed for SMCs and therefore it should be made available to them as a framework.
- There is a need for co-ordination of child related programmes at the grassroot level and making

schools the nodal agency, where the SMC acts as the apex planning and implementing body to oversee children's wellbeing. The school development plans must be shared in gram sabha (village council meetings) organised from time to time.

- In order to achieve every child's right to education of comparable quality, programmes and strategies for inclusion of children with special needs, mainstreaming out-of-school children after their special training are important areas for SMCs to act.
- Monitoring teachers' attendance, children's attendance, overseeing that teacher teaches effectively and children learn meaningfully need strong leadership at community level having a shared vision about children and school.
- The active participation of parents and community members from disadvantaged groups in developing an inclusive education system addressing issues of 'meaningful access' is important.
- More people should be involved in the proper functioning of schools through media campaigns including hoardings, poster campaign, print and electronic media discussions.
- Financial support should be provided by the government for

the smooth functioning of the SMCs and implementation of school development plans as envisaged by the recent Right to Education Act.

### CONCLUSION

SMCs have a very crucial role in actualizing the goals of RTE. It has tremendous potential to transform the existing system of education, characterized by 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 actions by SMC will change the dynamics and solutions will begin to take shape, first at local levels and then at the larger systemic levels.

Parents and children are the primary stakeholders of an education system and it is they who bear the brunt of the faulting school system. They need to be given opportunities and support to bring about a change in the education system. Our role is to make them realize that they hold the powerful key to initiate the process of reversing the decline in schools, through their constructive and collective engagements with the school and other stakeholders.

## REFERENCES

- BANDYOPADHYAY, M. AND DEY, M. 2011. Effective School Management Committees, CREATE INDIA Policy Brief.
- DAYARAM. 2011. School Management Committee and the Right to Education Act-2009, American India Foundation.
- EMMANUEL, L. 2012. Empowering School Management Committees — Helping SMC members plan better. Retrieved from <http://www.accountabilityindia.in/accountabilityblog/2522-empowering-school-management-committees-smc-members-plan-better>
- GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. 2009. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, 2009. Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi
- MHRD. 2011. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* – Framework for Implementation (Based on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009), Government of India, New Delhi.